

Notice of Motion – Youth Engagement in the Political Process

- 1** The Chairman of the County Council referred the notice of motion on youth engagement in the political process, submitted to the County Council on 22 July 2016, to the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing (currently covering for the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) for consideration. The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and the Cabinet Member for Children - Start of Life met Ms James on 6 October 2016 to discuss the motion.
- 2** The aim of the motion on youth engagement in the political process is to increase the levels of youth engagement in the political process and strengthen the voice of young people.
- 3** The County Council supports young people's engagement in democratic and political processes in various ways. The Voice and Engagement Team, within Young People's Services, supports schools, youth voice groups and individual young people to be actively engaged in the development, design and delivery of services and policy. This includes engaging in the political process in a range of settings.
- 4** The Voice and Engagement Team also supports the West Sussex Youth Cabinet as the formal mechanism through which young people collectively and individually participate in the political process. The 48 elected representatives hold office for two years. In March 2015, over 23,000 young people voted to elect representatives in the West Sussex Youth Cabinet and West Sussex UK Youth Parliament elections. Eighty-one schools and organisations hosted elections with 39 of these achieving the West Sussex Democracy Award, (indicating that 50% to 90% of the young people in the school took part in voting). With such a large mandate the Youth Cabinet has strong foundations and a diverse membership.
- 5** The Youth Cabinet supported the Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) to engage schools and youth organisations in the national 'Make Your Mark' Ballot 2015. This campaign gives young people a say in what is discussed by their MYPs in their annual House of Commons debate and Democracy Day Take over Challenge, which was held on the 13 November 2015. A total of 20,872 young people aged 11 to 18 from 45 schools, colleges and youth organisations in West Sussex participated in the ballot.
- 6** The County Council recognises and draws upon national best practice to promote young people's engagement in civic, political and democratic processes through a wide range of initiatives. The Young People's Service approach makes effective use of available resources, utilising relatively small numbers of skilled and committed staff to lever in engagement and involvement of a wide range of key partners notably; schools, district and borough councils and the voluntary sector, to deliver activities and initiatives to promote engagement in different forms of civic and political activity. The number of young people who are registered to vote and the resulting turnout is one aspect of this work.

- 7 Whilst the Cabinet Member supports the sentiment of the motion the County Council already undertakes a significant amount of engagement with young people to encourage them to participate in the political process. With increasingly limited resources and bearing in mind the work currently being undertaken, the Cabinet Member is unable to support the motion.
- 8 The Cabinet Member's decision on this matter was published via the Executive Decision Database on 10 October 2016.

Christine Field

Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing (covering for the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills)

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Background Papers

None