



COUNCIL - 28TH JANUARY 2014

SUBJECT: ELECTION OF CAERPHILLY YOUTH CHAMPION

REPORT BY: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To detail proposals for the election process for the Youth Champion and outline the purpose of the role.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Youth Champion helps young people to understand the importance of engaging with the democratic process and promotes the priorities of the Youth Forum within the county borough. This report explains the proposals for a new election process for the Youth Champion and the reasons for the changes.

- 2.2 In particular, the role of the Youth Champion is designed to:-

- Strengthen links between elected members and their communities
- Boost participation in the democratic process
- Involve younger citizens in community affairs
- Increase their knowledge of local democracy institutions and processes
- Ensure the Council listens and understands the needs and expectations of their citizens
- Facilitate co-operation and the exchange of good practices between communities
- Raise the awareness of constituents and the workings of democracy in their communities
- Raise awareness of local councillors and staff of younger citizens' needs and concerns
- Stress that local democracy is one of the major components for building a democratic country.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Youth Champion is a key initiative in discharging the Council's responsibility to increase the number of people who vote at elections and provides the link between young people in the county borough and elected members.

- 3.2 The Participation Strategy for Children and Young People Aged 0-25, being driven by the Children and Young People's Partnership, recognises the role of the Youth Champion as a key aspect of promoting young people's right to have their voices heard on issues that affect them. The strategy outlines the further development of the role as an integral part of young people's involvement in local democracy. The Participation Strategy was endorsed by the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee on 2nd June 2009, and by Cabinet on 9th June 2009. This strategy is due to be replaced by the Local Participation Action Plan for Children and Young People, sitting within the Citizen Engagement strategy of the Single Integrated strategy, and will further embed the role of the Youth Champion. This plan is expected to be endorsed by December 2013.

4. THE REPORT

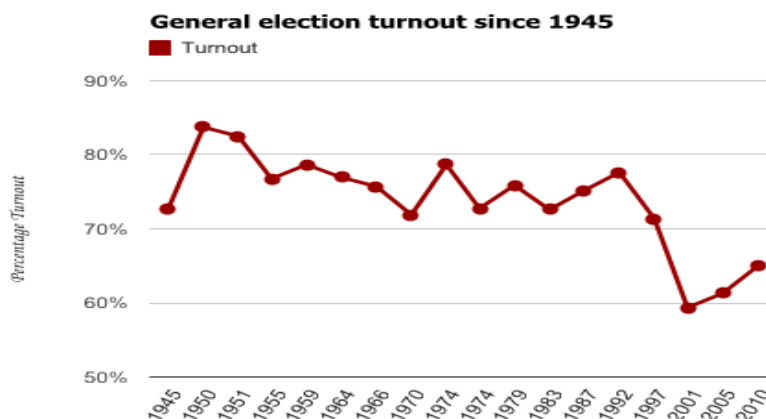
4.1 In previous years the Council has taken part in a national event called “I’m a Councillor, Get me out of Here!!” The event is a web-based competition where Councillors agree to stand for election as Youth Champion. Each Councillor involved in the competition publishes their manifesto on the Caerphilly pages of the “I’m a Councillor, Get me out of Here!!” website (www.bigvote.org). During the 2-week competition, young people submit questions and can also request a live web chat with each candidate. After the first ‘getting to know you’ week, a vote is undertaken at the end of each day. The candidate with the lowest number of votes following the daily ballot leaves the competition until the final candidate is crowned ‘Youth Champion’.

4.2 Since its inception, a number of initiatives have been introduced to improve the support provided to the Youth Champion e.g:-

- A safe interactive website, which allows young people to access the latest news, pictures, event information and also take part in forums has been launched. The website can be accessed through a seamless transition from the Youth Service pages on the Councils’ website.
- The Youth Champion has worked closely with the Youth Forum and attends Youth Forum meetings and events. The Youth Champion helps to promote the Youth Forum’s priorities as well as champion a positive image of young people within the county borough. One such example is that the current Youth Champion, Cllr Mike Prew, along with the Youth Forum and Trading Standards officers undertook a series of test purchasing projects where young people attempted to purchase alcohol from shops and pubs.
- The Youth Champion was involved in the successful project of “Smoke Free” play areas, where the Youth Forum changed Council Policy and ensured that all play areas in the County Borough were smoke free zones, the first authority in Wales to achieve this.

4.3 The company that organised the “I’m a Councillor, Get me Out of Here!” competition has withdrawn the service. Therefore, this year, it is proposed that the Youth Champion election will take on the format of an actual ballot. Ballot papers and ballot boxes will be provided to every participating comprehensive school along with all materials required to conduct an election. Schools will be encouraged to involve as many pupils as possible and there will be a prize for the school with the highest percentage of ballot papers cast. That said, each school would ultimately decide its own electoral arrangements.

4.4 This method is proposed in order to promote participation in elections to young people by preparing them for future electors. As the graph below demonstrates, there has been a decline in the number of voters taking part in Elections in the past 10 years.



Year	UK	England	Wales	Scotland	N.Ireland
2010	65.1	65.5	64.7	63.8	57.6
2005	61.4	61.3	62.6	60.8	62.9
2001	59.4	59.2	61.6	58.2	68
1997	71.4	71.4	73.5	71.3	67.1
1992	77.7	78	79.7	75.5	69.8
1987	75.3	75.4	78.9	75.1	67
1983	72.7	72.5	76.1	72.7	72.9
1979	76	75.9	79.4	76.8	67.7
1974 Oct	72.8	72.6	76.6	74.8	67.7
1974 Feb	78.8	79	80	79	69.9
1970	72	71.4	77.4	74.1	76.6
1966	75.8	75.9	79	76	66.1
1964	77.1	77	80.1	77.6	71.7
1959	78.7	78.9	82.6	78.1	65.9
1955	76.8	76.9	79.6	75.1	74.1
1951	82.6	82.7	84.4	81.2	79.9
1950	83.9	84.4	84.8	80.9	77.4
1945	72.8	73.4	75.7	69	67.4

Source: House of Commons Research Papers 01/37, 01/54, 05/33 & 10/36.

(<http://www.ukpolitical.info/Turnout45.htm>)

- 4.5 In order to include the Youth Groups (managed by the Council's Youth Service), it is proposed that an electronic vote will be made available via the Youth website. This site will also host information on each of the candidates, such as Manifestos, updates etc.
- 4.6 Ideally, there will be 4-6 Councillors standing for Youth Champion in order to give young people choice and make the event worthwhile. The election process will begin with candidates invited to attend a launch event to outline their manifestos to a selection of young people from across the county borough. The event will take place in the Council Chamber, Ty Penallta that has a capacity of 100-120 (approx 10 pupils per school and 20+ from Youth Groups/ Forum). Candidates will have the opportunity to discuss their manifestos. A demonstration of the election process, including Ballot boxes and voting papers will be displayed outside of the Chamber. Given the significant additional investment in time needed to arrange polling stations in each school, it is proposed to extend the Youth Champion term of office from 1 to 2 years.
- 4.7 Discussions are underway to launch a Facebook Page both during the election process and following in order to communicate with a wider youth based audience. Updates on the progress made in the elections and the role of the Youth Champion, including pictures, news feeds and event updates will be hosted on the Youth website with links made available on Social Networks.
- 4.8 As the successful candidate will hold the position as Youth Champion for 2 years, it is proposed that the Youth Champion will play host to a Question Time event in their second year (2014). The main event will involve young people from schools and Youth Groups to ask a variety of questions to politicians such as an MP, AM, Police and Crime Commissioner and Local Councillor and possibly a local celebrity about the issues that effect them.
- 4.9 The role of the elected Youth Champion will involve attendance and representation in Youth Forum meetings, visits to Comprehensive Schools in the borough for assemblies or surgeries, attendance at Youth Groups, continuing the work with the Youth Forum to develop projects such as Test Purchasing.
- 4.10 A new role description is to be devised outlining key responsibilities and events the Youth Champion is expected to take part in.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no equalities implications directly associated with this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposed Youth Champion Elections will be funded by Democratic and Electoral Services. The Launch Event, prizes and the elections is estimated at £2000 (£1000 p/a).

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no specific personnel implications arising as a result of this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses, which have not been incorporated into the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and continue to support the work of the Youth Champion.
- 9.2 Members are asked to endorse the proposed Election Process for the Youth Champion for 2 years.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To promote the positive role and work of the Youth Champion in the County Borough.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006, Section 69.

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