



COUNCIL – 25TH JULY 2017

SUBJECT: ELECTION OF CAERPHILLY YOUTH CHAMPION

REPORT BY: INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the support of Council to appoint the Caerphilly Youth Champion for a 5 year term (2017-2022) and detail proposals for the election process.

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 seeks to appoint a new Caerphilly Youth Champion.

- 2.2 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 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It requires public bodies to think more about the long-term, working with people and communities, looking to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach. This will create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. The Act puts in place 7 well-being goals and the content of this report links into all 7.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 In previous years, and in order to elect a Youth Champion, the Council has taken part in a national event called "I'm a Councillor, Get me out of Here!!", which was a web based event and required the Candidates to post their manifestos online and take part in a 2-week question and answer session with young people from Caerphilly CBC. At the end of the "Getting to Know you week", a vote was undertaken at the end of each day, the candidate with the lowest number of votes was eliminated from the competition. This continues until the final remaining candidate is crowned 'Youth Champion'.
- 4.2 The Company that organised the "I'm a Councillor, Get me out of Here!!" competition has withdrawn its services, and as a result, in 2014, Caerphilly CBC hosted a Youth Champion Election in the form of a ballot. Ballot papers and ballot boxes were provided to participating secondary schools and youth groups, along with all materials required to conduct an election. We plan to continue this process for all future elections.
- 4.3 In order to include the Youth Groups (managed by the Council's Youth Service); it was 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.
- 4.4 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 term of office of the Youth Champion from 2 to 5 years.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 As the successful candidate will hold the position as Youth Champion for 5 years, it is proposed that the Youth Champion will play host to a Question Time event in their second year (2018). 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 affect them.
- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 A new role description is to be devised outlining key responsibilities and events the Youth Champion is expected to take part in.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 The Youth Champion election process provides young people with experience of taking part in an election process, understanding manifestos and political aims, which through early participation and encouragement will provide them with experience and understanding of the democratic process. It is hoped that by engaging with young people they may develop an interest in the democratic process, and participate in decisions that will affect their future lives.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no equalities implications directly associated with this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The proposed Youth Champion Elections will be funded by Democratic and Electoral Services. The Launch Event and the elections is estimated at £2000 (£400 p/a).

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

9. CONSULTATIONS

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

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report and continue to support the work of the Youth Champion.

10.2 Members are asked to endorse the proposed Election Process for the Youth Champion for 5 years.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

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

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 The Electoral Administration Act 2006, Section 69.

Author: Jade Tyler, Administrative Assistant, Democratic Services
Consultees: Gail Williams, Interim Head of Legal Services
Cath Forbes-Thompson, Interim Head of Democratic Services
Dave Beecham, Electoral Services Manager
Clare Jones, Youth Forum Coordinator
Chris Burns, Interim Chief Executive
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer