

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



REPORT OF THE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

Councillors –

George Adam	Ken Turner
Sarah Cockburn-Price	David Whalley
Natham McCollum (Leader)	Lyle Davy (Co-optee)

What we wanted to do

We wanted to develop an understanding of the reasons for young people's reluctance to engage in the democratic process and find a way of consulting with young people on decisions the Council is about to take.

How we did it

We invited young people of the borough to complete a short survey and held meetings, both at Nelson Town Hall and at Nelson and Colne College. In addition, we consulted with organisations that work directly with young people and engaged with the local high schools.

What we found out

- The Council's website is very rarely accessed by young people.
- The Council is viewed as being quite distant, with things happening 'behind closed doors'.
- Of the 648 school pupils that completed the survey, only 117 have ever got involved with their school council.
- 72% of the 697 respondents had heard of Pendle Council before completing the survey.
- 83% had heard the term 'local councillor' but only one in five young people knew what a local councillor did.
- Nearly half of the young people surveyed had never tried to have their say on things that happen where they live and had no idea how to.
- Only 5% had had their say and felt it made a difference.
- Three quarters of those surveyed think they will vote when they are old enough.
- Initial engagement with local schools/colleges is one of the preferred methods to help young people understand what the local council does.
- A further preference indicated by the survey is the establishment of a youth forum/youth council.

Where we go from here

- We will seek the support of the Scrutiny Management Team and Council in forming a Pendle Borough Council Youth Council.
- We will recommend that a Working Group is established to determine the details of the Youth Council, taking into account the findings and conclusions of this Panel.
- We would also like to put a regular item on youth issues on the area committee agendas.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY PANEL

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 1.1 Following a request from Council in March 2016, a Panel was appointed to carry out a review of youth engagement.
- 1.2 The Panel was told that the number of 18 year olds registered to vote in Pendle was down by 24% in December 2015 compared with the year before.
- 1.3 There was concern at the lack of understanding amongst young people in the community about the role of Councillors and about the functions of the Council.
- 1.4 It was felt that there was sometimes a lack of communication between the Council and youth groups in terms of how policies and decisions may affect young people.
- 1.5 It was therefore felt that it was important to encourage as many young people as possible to engage in the democratic process.
- 1.6 The Terms of Reference for the review were as follows:
 1. To obtain information on the number of young people registered to vote in Pendle.
 2. To develop an understanding of the reasons for young people's reluctance to engage in the democratic process.
 3. To encourage more young people to join the electoral register.
 4. To establish a mechanism for better consultation with young people on decisions taken.

5. To ensure young people better understand the functions of Pendle Borough Council and what it does for them.

6. To draw conclusions and make recommendations as appropriate.

2. METHOD OF REVIEW

- 2.1 We devised surveys for completion by people under the age of 18 and for those between the ages of 18 and 24.
- 2.2 These were made available online and in paper form and distributed widely across the borough.
- 2.3 The online survey also invited comments and ideas from those aged over 24.
- 2.4 Our review was promoted via the Council's website; Facebook and Twitter; in the local media; and in local libraries.
- 2.5 We also consulted with organisations that work directly with young people and engaged with the local high schools.
- 2.6 We held a meeting with students of Nelson and Colne College and a number of public meetings where we listened to the views of young people.
- 2.7 Representatives of Lancashire County Council's Young People's Service also attended, as did local youth workers.

3. OUR FINDINGS

Youth Groups

- 3.1 **Pendle District Youth Council** is a group of young people aged 13-19 who meet regularly to discuss issues and concerns in Pendle.
- 3.2 They support the work of the **Lancashire Youth Council (LYC)**, who offer all young people between the ages of 12 and 19, (or up to 25 if they have special educational needs (SEN)), the opportunity to have their voice heard by key decision makers.
- 3.3 The LYC is open to all young people and is made up of representatives from each of the 12 district youth councils, LINX (Lancashire's Children in Care Council), Young Carers Forum and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Council (known as POWAR -Participate, Opportunity, Win, Achieve and Respect).
- 3.4 The District and Lancashire Youth Council hold fun, interactive meetings that are especially designed to enable young people to have their say about things that matter to them.
- 3.5 Young People are supported to meet with important decision makers such as Children's Trust representatives, Executives within the Children and Young People's Directorate and County Councillors to discuss issues and formal agenda points that affect their lives and the lives of their peers.
- 3.6 The LYC is organised and run by young people, with the support of Lancashire County Council's (LCC's) **Young People's Service**, part of the Wellbeing, Prevention and Early Help Service.
- 3.7 Every school in Lancashire is invited to take part in elections to the 12 District Youth Councils and elect two representatives.
- 3.8 Any member of the District Youth Council is able to stand for election to represent their district at a county and national level.
- 3.9 Each District Youth Council in Lancashire can elect one **Youth Parliament** Member and two Executive Members onto LYC, who stay in office for two years.
- 3.10 North West elected Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) meet with MYPs across the region to discuss issues, debate policies and plan events for young people.
- 3.11 These are known as **Youthforia** regionals and are hosted by **Youth Focus North West**, a charitable company that works with young people to help them reach their full potential and become active citizens.
- 3.12 The MYPs also attend two conventions a year, with MYPs from across the country, hosted by the **British Youth Council (BYC)**.
- 3.13 One is the annual sitting where they debate and decide 10 issues which will go on a **Make Your Mark** ballot paper.
- 3.14 Make Your Mark is the UK's largest youth consultation and gives young people (secondary school pupils) the opportunity to pick five top issues from the list.
- 3.15 The second convention is held in the House of Commons, where the MYPs debate the top five winning issues voted from the Make Your Mark ballot.
- 3.16 From these debates, the MYPs vote for the issue that will become the National campaign for that year.
- 3.17 Since 2011 the turnout in Lancashire for the Make Your Mark ballot has been as follows –

2011	2.05%
2012	3.85%

2013	13.36%
2014	27.70%
2015	32.04%
2016	25.91%

3.18 The 2016 Make Your Mark vote recorded a national turnout of 16.60%, with over 978,000 votes cast.

3.19 Lancashire registered the highest number of votes.

3.20 The result is that 'votes for 16 and 17 year olds in all public elections and referenda' is the UK Youth Parliament's (UKYP's) national campaign for 2017.

3.21 A 'curriculum for life' was chosen as their priority campaign for England for a second time, believing that the place of citizenship education and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) in the curriculum should be radically overhauled.

3.22 Youth Focus North West also co-ordinate **Youth Voice** in the North West on behalf of the British Youth Council.

3.23 Youth Voice is a contract between the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the British Youth Council to provide a range of youth participation services to young people so that they can influence public decision-making at a local and national level.

3.24 The initiative also includes a specific stream of work to support the UKYP.

3.25 The contract started in October 2011 under the Government's Positive for Youth Initiative and funding has been secured until the end of 2018.

Colne Town Council Youth Voices

3.26 Colne Town Council has recently developed a Youth Voices

outreach programme to primary and secondary schools.

3.27 The programme is linked to the national curriculum and will engage young people in the workings of the Town Council and encourage them to have a wider vision, beyond the school community.

3.28 To achieve this, a Colne Town Council link person is to be appointed on each school council.

3.29 Arrangements will then be made for the link person to visit the Council and for members of the school council to attend special meetings of Colne Town Council.

3.30 At the time of writing this report, the programme was in its early stages. Most schools had elected their representative and were awaiting details of the first meeting.

Pendle Pupil Parliament

3.31 Pendle Pupil Parliament is a Parliament which has 12 primary schools from around Pendle as its members.

3.32 Each school has two representatives (usually one Year 6 and one Year 5 child).

3.33 They meet at least once a term in the Council Chamber of Nelson Town Hall.

3.34 At the first meeting of the academic year, the Parliament decide on who should take up a post on the Organising Committee.

3.35 Those young people that are interested do a presentation on why they should be elected to the post. The Parliament then vote.

3.36 The Organising Committee has six members (Chair; Vice-Chair;

Secretary; Treasurer and Hospitality; Publicity Officer; and Official Photographer).

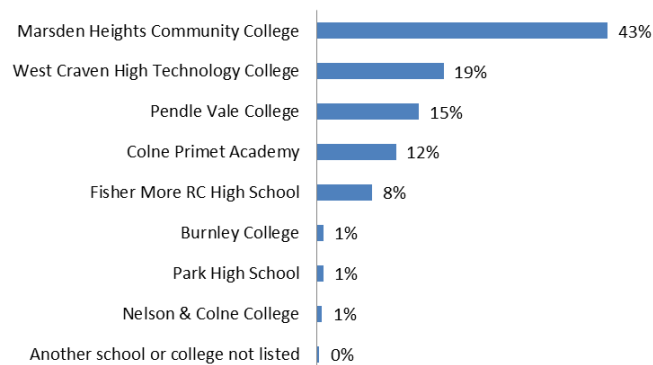
- 3.37 They meet in between each Parliament meeting; organise the next full meeting; and invite visitors to speak to the Parliament.
- 3.38 At each Parliament meeting, every school does a Powerpoint/Visual presentation on the issue that their School Council wants to bring forward for the Parliament to discuss. This is then debated by the children.
- 3.39 Last year the main work of the Parliament was on recycling and the elderly.
- 3.40 The children were also trained by professionals to become Dementia Friends.
- 3.41 A member of the police usually attends each meeting and guests attending have included the Member of Parliament for Pendle and the North of England Member of the European Parliament.

Survey

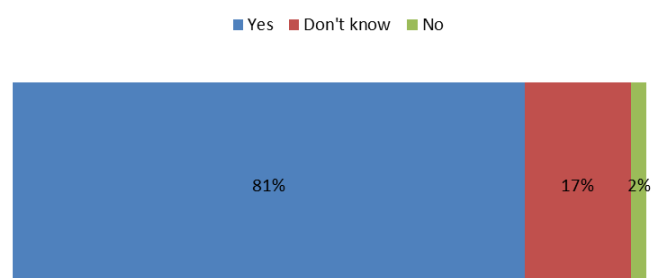
The Panel enlisted the help of the research agency Infusion in the design of the survey and the analysis of the results.

Percentages within the report have been rounded to the nearest percent and may mean some totals do not equate to 100%.

- 3.42 There were 697 responses received to the survey.
- 3.43 93% of the respondents were under the age of 18 and 6% aged 18 or over.
- 3.44 648 of the responses were from school pupils.

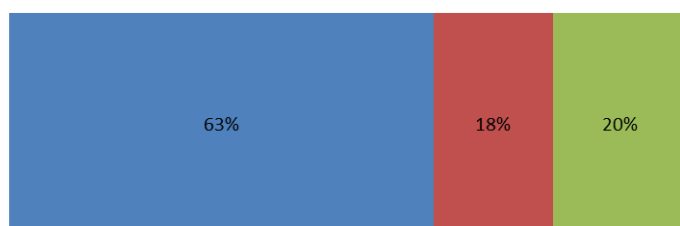


- 3.45 When asked if their school had a school council, 81% indicated that it did.



- 3.46 However, only 18% of these had ever got involved.
- 3.47 The main reasons for not doing so were that they 'weren't interested'; 'did not want the responsibility'; or 'didn't know how'.
- 3.48 Encouragingly, 72% of respondents had heard of Pendle Council before completing the survey.
- 3.49 This percentage increased to almost 83% when asked about the term 'local councillor'.
- 3.50 However, only one in five young people indicated that they knew what a local councillor did.
- 3.51 The remaining 63% had only heard of the term.
- 3.52 18% had never heard of a 'local councillor'.

■ No, but I've heard of them ■ No, and I've never heard of them ■ Yes

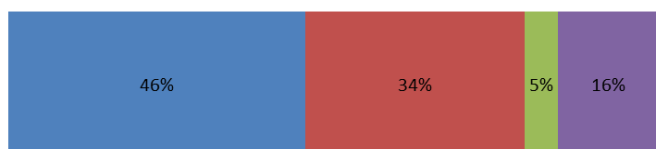


3.53 Nearly half (46%) of the young people surveyed have never tried to have their say on things that happen where they live and have no idea how to.

3.54 A further 34% have never tried to have their say but know how to if they wanted to.

3.55 Only 5% have had their say and feel it made a difference.

■ No, and I have no idea how to
 ■ No, but I would know how to if I wanted to
 ■ Yes, and I think it made a difference
 ■ Yes, but I don't think it made a difference



Voting

3.56 Three quarters (76%) of those surveyed under the age of 18 in Pendle think they will vote when they are old enough.

3.57 17% don't know and 8% indicated they would not vote.

3.58 Of the 46 people aged 18 or over who responded to the survey, 40 are on the Electoral Register and 43 understand how elections work.

3.59 Of these, 36 have voted –

35 in the General Election
 34 in local elections
 34 in the EU Referendum

3.60 Of the 46 people over the age of 18, 40 think that they will vote in future.

3.61 A mix of comments were received on voting, with some feeling it is an important democratic right, whilst others either don't understand it or don't feel it will make a difference.

3.62 A complete list of answers to questions in the survey are provided as appendices to this report.

Suggestions

3.63 Suggestions from the over 25s on what we could do to help young people understand what their local council does include –

- Engaging with local schools
- Q&A sessions at schools/colleges/youth clubs etc.
- Flyers in youth centres etc.
- Open days/events
- Local newsletters
- Posts on social media including Facebook and Twitter
- Youth forum meeting

3.64 Their comments on how they feel young people could have their say on local issues include –

- Creating a young persons' forum which meets regularly to discuss issues for young people/set up a youth parliament
- Recruiting social media whiz kids to engage their peers with social media
- Creating a Facebook feedback page
- More involvement online

- Educational role play from a young age. Offer encouragement and support.

3.65 Suggestions on ways to encourage more young people to join the Electoral Register and vote included –

- Set up an 'Electoral Registration Desk' during enrolment at Nelson and Colne College. (This has already been done by the Council's Electoral Team)
- Advertise at the college when recruiting poll clerks to give the polling stations a more youthful feel. (It should be noted that poll clerks need to be at least 18 years of age)
- Create an easy to read youth leaflet.
- Explain the Electoral Register and how they can influence direction through voting.
- Starting a campaign in school.
- Through social media.

Pendle Perception Survey

3.66 In late 2016, whilst the review was ongoing, the bi-annual Pendle Perception Survey was undertaken with local residents in the borough.

3.67 To capture the views of young people between the ages of 16 and 18, a focus group session was delivered with a group of students at Nelson and Colne College.

3.68 Approximately 20 AS Politics students took part in the session.

3.69 In response to a question on how the Council could involve them in the decisions it makes –

- The group suggested that a youth council or forum would be a good idea, although there was uncertainty and mixed levels of

awareness about an existing youth council at the College.

- The students highlighted that they would like to be involved in decisions at an early stage, as they might have some useful things to feed in as they develop e.g. location of lighting and CCTV along college routes.
- There was a discussion about social media. None of the students follow news and updates from the council or councillors but did have some appetite for knowing where they could report problems or give ideas in their area.

Meetings

3.70 The Panel's first meeting took place with a cross section of 19 students, with support from a staff member, at Nelson and Colne College.

3.71 At the meeting it was confirmed that the college does have a student council. (Later in the review we learnt that the topics considered generally focussed on issues within the college and not the wider area.)

3.72 The general feeling of the students was that –

- with regard to Council issues, they do not feel able to ask questions; they are not listened to; and their opinion is not considered.
- they are unaware of issues being discussed within the Council.
- 16 year olds should be allowed to vote.
- Courses on democracy and elections should be on the syllabus in schools/colleges.

3.73 In response to the final comment, the college has agreed to include more about local government and politics in the tutorial planning for the new academic year.

- 3.74 When asked if putting information on sites such as Facebook would be a positive way in which to connect with young people, the students said that, in its present form, this would likely be disregarded.
- 3.75 This was also the view of some of the young people in attendance at further meetings of the Panel.
- 3.76 The remainder of the Panel meetings were arranged in consultation with local youth groups and organisations that work with young people.
- 3.77 The first meeting held at Nelson Town Hall was highly promoted on social media; with the local youth groups and organisations; and in the local press, in addition to the usual information on the Council's website and noticeboards.
- 3.78 The attendance of only one young person illustrated the difficulty in engaging young people in the work of the Council.
- 3.79 Attendance at the Panel's next meeting was much greater, with 19 young people in the age range 13 to 23, two youth officers and two representatives of LCC's Young People's Services contributing to the review.
- 3.80 By listening to the views expressed by the young people we learnt that –

The level of interest in politics differs between generations.
Many young people think 'in the moment' and do not consider the benefits for the future.
The Council is viewed as being quite distant, with things happening 'behind closed doors'.
This creates a barrier, as it is felt that young people generally need an insight before getting involved.
As many young people cannot vote, they

feel that council issues do not involve them.
In many cases, young people do not know that Pendle Council exists.
The Council's website is very rarely accessed by young people.
Not many regularly check emails.
There is a need for more interaction between the Council and young people to help them realise the cost of things.
None of the young people present at the meeting knew who their local councillor was.
They were not aware that there was a different councillor for different wards and felt that this should be advertised better.
As referenced in the Pendle Perception Survey, many felt that they would like to participate at an early stage e.g. designing a youth centre/parks rather than just seeing the end result.
There is a feeling that young people are more likely to take care of things if given more ownership.

Suggestions

- 3.81 A discussion on ways in which the Council could engage more with young people prompted the following suggestions from all present –

Tweak the Council's official Facebook page, as it is currently viewed as 'something for mum and dad to look at'.
Explore the possibility of advertising on Facebook so that information would appear at the side of everybody's profile or having a closed Snapchat account.
Establish a Facebook Group. It is accepted that the success of this would be dependent on users sharing the page and would need promoting with eye catching/exciting looking posters. It is acknowledged that it may be difficult to draw themes.
It is still felt that decisions need to be made face to face. However, it was suggested that this be supported by a live video stream of the meeting through which those watching could invite others, share

the video, or comment.
Councillors to give a presentation in schools/colleges. This could be supported by the distribution of cards/leaflets about the Council's website and councillors.
Following this, an invitation to a meeting at the Town Hall to debate a specific chosen topic could be arranged.
One barrier to this would be the issue of transport to the meeting. Due to the age of those involved and the locations across the borough, many would find it difficult/impossible to get to the meeting.
The topic for discussion could be determined in a ballot similar to the Make Your Mark ballot.
A proposed alternative would be to debate a specific topic during a Citizenship lesson.
Lower the voting age to 16.
Form a youth council where young people can talk directly to the Council.

- 3.82 It was felt that the creation of a Pendle Borough Council (PBC) Youth Council would only be successful if the appropriate people were targeted through humorous propaganda in schools and colleges etc.; there was a sign-up process; and issues were fairly debated.
- 3.83 It is also thought to be important to promote what the young person would gain from joining the Youth Council and make them feel they had nothing to lose.
- 3.84 The approach to enrolling members would need to be direct and focussed.
- 3.85 The following incentives were suggested –
- an opportunity to enhance their CV and set them apart from others
 - A reference to support an application to university/an addition to their personal statement
 - free gym membership
 - free driving lessons

- a visit to Parliament and the Local Government Association (it is noted that many, if not all colleges and schools already run trips to the House of Commons)

Electoral Register

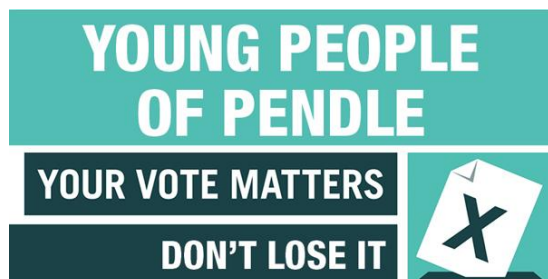
- 3.86 It is not possible to extract information on the number of 18-24 year olds registered to vote in Pendle.
- 3.87 However, the number of attainers (ages 16 and 17) on the register as at 1st August, 2016 was 814.
- 3.88 This is partly as a result of the Council's Electoral Team adding all school leavers to the system each year following receipt of information from LCC.
- 3.89 An invitation to register is then sent to all the names on the list.

Current use of social media

- 3.90 Pendle Council has a Facebook page and a Twitter account.
- 3.91 These are used to promote services; give advice; and share information from partners e.g. police, health organisations.
- 3.92 At the time of writing this report the Council had 8,607 followers on Twitter and 3,504 followers on Facebook.
- 3.93 We are also 'liked' by 3,578 people on Facebook.
- 3.94 Those people who 'like' the Council's Facebook page do not routinely see posts. However their endorsement shows on their personal page and may encourage others to take an interest and do the same.
- 3.95 Between 31st March and 17th April, 2016 the Council carried out a Facebook advertising campaign to

encourage young people to vote.

- 3.96 18 – 24 year olds across Pendle were targeted with the message ‘Young People of Pendle – your vote matters. Don’t lose it’



- 3.97 During this period the advertising campaign reached 21,386 people and 747 residents clicked through to the Council’s website to register to vote.
- 3.98 52% of those reached were women and 48% were men.
- 3.99 This Facebook advertising campaign cost £186.
- 3.100 In 2016 we also supported the Electoral Commission’s ‘Reg a Friend’ social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter.
- 3.101 The campaign used simple photographs which were relevant to younger people and encouraged them to register to vote.
- 3.102 Once they had registered they were encouraged to tag a friend to make sure they also registered to vote.
- 3.103 Information was also shown on the Council’s website.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. We have identified that many young people are reluctant to have their say on Council issues because –

- they do not feel able to ask questions
- they feel that they are not listened to and that their opinion is not considered
- the Council is viewed as being quite distant, with things happening ‘behind closed doors’
- if under 18, they are not able to vote and therefore feel that council issues do not involve them

- 4.2. We accept that the national minimum voting age is not something that this Council can change.
- 4.3. However, we do acknowledge the Youth Parliament’s 2017 national campaign on ‘votes for 16 and 17 year olds in all public elections and referenda’.
- 4.4. We also recognise that it is not possible to implement all the suggestions made during the course of the review.
- 4.5. Nonetheless, we feel that some of the reasons stated for not getting involved are issues that can be addressed locally.
- 4.6. According to our survey 72% of respondents have heard of Pendle Council, however only one in five young people know what a local councillor does.
- 4.7. We note that initial engagement with local schools/colleges is one of the preferred methods to help young people understand what the local council does.
- 4.8. This could be by way of a school assembly; a roadshow presented by local councillors; or a fair with councillors and the local MP in attendance.

- 4.9. We feel that this should be supported by an information sheet for display in schools/colleges alongside a poster of Pendle Councillors.
- 4.10. A further preference indicated by the survey is the establishment of a youth forum/youth council.
- 4.11. Both these methods are supported by the members of the Panel as a mechanism for better consultation with young people and to explain the functions of this Council.
- 4.12. The success of Pendle District Youth Council and Lancashire Youth Council is an example of how forums such as these work.
- 4.13. We feel that any youth council formed should be on the basis of –
- One independent youth councillor (no political affiliation) aged between 15 and 18 years to represent each borough ward (total 20)
 - Appointed for a one year term
 - They must live in the ward they represent
 - They each be appointed a mentor in the form of a borough councillor
- 4.14. We also recommend that recruitment of youth councillors be promoted in local high schools and colleges by way of a roadshow or school assembly; via social media; and via the local press/radio.
- 4.15. Selection should be made by random draw and not by interview so as not to deter people and to prevent political bias.
- 4.16. We note the comments made about transport to/from meetings and recognise that this may be a barrier to our proposals.
- 4.17. We also accept that there will be budget and staffing resource implications and consider that the area committees could be approached for a nominal contribution towards boosting social media posts.
- 4.18. We also recognise that, in working with young people, safeguarding issues are a priority.
- 4.19. We therefore feel that a Working Group should be established to determine the finer details of the proposal, including the possible need for Councillor Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.
- 4.20. There was a very mixed response from young people to our survey question about their preferred method of contacting the Council.
- 4.21. The most common response was to write or email. Social media/online was also a popular method, closely followed by surveys and phoning the Council. A small number suggested attending meetings.
- 4.22. However, the information is difficult to interpret. Many young people gave several methods as a way of communicating and it is unclear as to whether these are options that they themselves would prefer or whether their answers relate to methods in which they think the Council can be contacted.
- 4.23. Communicating by letter or email was not a method suggested during the meetings.
- 4.24. In fact it was noted that few young people checked their emails regularly and that online forums were a popular way of keeping in touch with issues.
- 4.25. The high volume of people reached during the Facebook advertising campaign to encourage young people

to register to vote demonstrates that social media is an effective method of communication amongst young people.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. That the Council be requested to consider this report and its recommendations and to respond to the Scrutiny Management Team, within two months, indicating what action is proposed.
- 5.2. That the Council endorses the conclusions of this review and agrees the following actions –
 - (a) That a Pendle Borough Council Youth Council be formed;
 - (b) That subject to agreement of (a) above, a Working Group be established to determine the details of the Pendle Borough Council Youth Council, taking into account the findings and conclusions of this Panel, in particular issues around safeguarding.
- 5.3. That a brief information sheet on the role of a local councillor be developed for distribution to local high schools and Nelson and Colne College, for display alongside the poster of Pendle Councillors.
- 5.4. That, in light of the success of the 2016 Facebook advertising campaign to encourage young people to vote, this be carried out on an annual basis as appropriate.
- 5.5. That consideration be given to adding a standing item on 'youth issues' to the area committee agendas or alternatively asking town and parish councils to consider this as a regular agenda item.
- 5.6. That progress on these actions be reported back to Scrutiny Management Team in six months' time.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Answers from the under 18 age group to ‘Please tell us about your involvement with the school council or why you haven’t got involved’.

Appendix 2 – Answers to ‘Please tell us what you think the Councils does’.

Appendix 3 – Answers to ‘What do you think a local councillor does?’.

Appendix 4 – Answers to ‘What is the best way for you to tell us what you think about where you live?’.

Appendix 5 – Answers from the under 18 age group to ‘Is there any reason why you would or wouldn’t vote in the future?’.

Appendix 6 – Answers from the over 18s to ‘Please can you tell us why you have or haven’t voted’.

Appendix 7 – Answers from the over 25s to ‘Do you have any comments or ideas about what we could do to help young people understand what their local council does?’.

Appendix 8 – Answers from the over 25s to ‘Do you have any comments or ideas about how young people could have their say on local issues?’.

Appendix 9 – Answers from the over 25s to ‘Do you have any comments or ideas about how we can encourage more young people to join the Electoral Register and vote?’.

**The Leader and Members of the Youth Engagement Scrutiny Panel
(Councillors G. Adam, S. Cockburn-Price, L. Davy (Co-optee) N. McCollum (Leader),
K. Turner and D. Whalley)**