

**NOTE OF A MEETING OF THE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, NELSON
ON TUESDAY 23RD AUGUST, 2016**

PRESENT –

Councillor N. McCollum – Chairman (In the Chair)

Panel Members – Councillors

*G. Adam
S. Cockburn-Price*

*K. Turner
D. Whalley*

Also in attendance

*Councillor M. Foxley
Annabelle Harvey
Lynne Rowland*

Committee Administrator



At the Scrutiny Management Team's first meeting of the current council year, Members agreed to a request by Council to appoint a Panel to carry out a review of youth engagement. It was felt that Pendle had a good network of youth groups whose insight would be valuable to Councillors in Pendle to help form their decisions. At that same meeting, it had been agreed that 18 year old Councillor Nathan McCollum be appointed as Panel Leader.

Councillor McCollum opened the meeting by explaining the purpose of the review. He referred to a briefing note, submitted by Committee Services, which provided an update on the work of the Panel so far. This had included a meeting with students of Nelson and Colne College and the launch of a youth engagement survey.

It was explained that this meeting had been arranged in consultation with local youth groups and organisations that worked with young people, to gather the views and opinions of young people in Pendle. It was agreed that the attendance of only one young person illustrated the current difficulty in engaging young people in the work of the Council.

Discussion

The Panel welcomed Councillor Foxley and Annabelle Harvey to the meeting. It was noted that Councillor Foxley had 38 years' experience as a senior school teacher and had experience of running school councils. Annabelle was currently in her final year of 6th form. Both were invited to join a discussion on finding ways in involving young people in decisions of the Council. The discussion prompted a number of comments and ideas from different viewpoints and covered issues as follows –

Social Media

- It was agreed that various social media websites i.e. 'Facebook', 'Instagram', 'Twitter' could be used to attract the attention of young people. However, it was stated that, although it would be

seen, it may not be paid attention to. It was noted that the name of the Council's official Facebook page was viewed as 'something for mum and dad to look at' and could perhaps be tweaked to appeal more to young people.

- The option of sponsoring a page that would appear at the side of everybody's profile could be explored, as could having a closed 'Snapchat' account.

Engagement

It was accepted that the level of interest in politics differed between generations and comments that many young people thought 'in the moment' and did not consider the benefits for the future were noted.

It was stated that the Council was viewed as being quite isolated, with things happening 'behind closed doors'. This created a barrier, as it was felt that young people generally needed an insight before getting involved. One suggestion to help with this was for Councillors to present a 'day in my life' interactive school assembly.

It was also a view for many that, as young people could not vote, Council issues did not involve them. If the voting age was lowered to 16, their interest would likely increase.

It was recognised that it would be difficult to get a group of young people together, particularly those over the age of 18, who would either be at university, in work or unemployed. It was felt that the 16 to 18 age group would be easier to engage, with help from schools and colleges. It was then hoped that their interest would be maintained from age 18 onwards.

Councillor Foxley reported on Colne Town Council's Youth Voices outreach programme to primary and secondary schools. She reported on plans for a link person to go into schools and for members of youth councils to attend special versions of Colne Town Council. It was their aim to engage more young people in the workings of the town council and encourage young people to have a wider vision beyond the school community.

The Panel was also advised of the interest of a local high school youth group. Members were keen to involve the group in its work, but agreed on a level of caution to ensure that this would not be at the exclusion of others.

Suggestions

In response to the information and feedback received it was suggested that -

- a Pendle Borough Council (PBC) Youth Council be created where members would be co-opted from across Pendle. A discussion was held with regard to the most appropriate age range for membership of the Youth Council
- it be chaired by the Mayor and/or Leader of the Council
- members of the PBC Youth Council be appointed a 'buddy councillor'
- meetings take place approximately four times per year
- when concluded, topics be referred to the Executive or Council for consideration
- the PBC Youth Council interact with national youth councils

It was acknowledged that this would only be successful if the appropriate people were targeted through humorous propaganda in schools and colleges etc. and issues were fairly debated. It was

felt that a sign-up process would be required and that, although interest may be slow initially, if successful, word of mouth would help it grow.

Incentives

It was advised that, when looking for youth councillors for the PBC Youth Council it would be important to promote what the young person would gain from joining the Council and make them feel that they had nothing to lose. 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 was noted that many, if not all, colleges and schools already ran trips to the House of Commons)

The Panel was made aware that the approach to enrolling members would need to be direct and focussed.

Promotion

The possibility of arranging a roadshow with local Councillors and the Member of Parliament for Pendle to promote the creation of a PBC Youth Council was discussed. It was agreed that this would need to be well advertised and the following suggestions were put forward -

- use eye catching posters displayed in schools/colleges and key places such as fast food restaurants etc. (It was stated that young people no longer tend to go to public libraries)
- possible endorsement by a local celebrity
- by way of an 'app' that showed upcoming events
- via social media

Conclusion

The Panel thanked Councillor Foxley and Annabelle for their valuable contribution to the review and it was –

AGREED

- (1) That the possibility of attending a meeting of the local high school youth group be explored.
- (2) That local youth groups be invited to the next meeting of the Panel, to be held on 25th October, 2016.
- (3) That the suggestion to form a Pendle Borough Council Youth Council be accepted and included in the final recommendations of this Panel.