



Mayor and Cabinet

Report title: Children and Young People Select Committee referral of ideas to amplify children and young people's voices within the Council

Date: 10 May 2023

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Children and Young People Select Committee

Outline and recommendations

On 15 March 2023, the Children and Young People Select Committee received a report and heard oral evidence from officers and young people regarding amplifying young people's voices within the council. This report asks Mayor and Cabinet to agree to direct officers to explore the feasibility of adopting suggestions made by young people who are already engaged with the council.

- The Mayor and Cabinet is recommended to direct officers to explore the feasibility of the suggestions at paragraph 4.1 and report back to the Children and Young People Select Committee.

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report refers to Mayor and Cabinet suggestions put to the Children and Young People Select Committee in a report entitled 'Amplifying the Voices of Children and Young People'. The Committee received an overview of the report from Katy Brown and Jacob Sakil and put questions to the Young Mayor and a number of Young Advisors. The Committee resolved to refer to the Mayor and Cabinet a recommendation that the feasibility of the young people's suggestions be explored and reported back to the Committee.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Mayor and Cabinet is recommended to direct officers to explore the feasibility of the suggestions at paragraph 4.1 and report back to the Children and Young People Select Committee.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 Scrutiny's work programme has regard to the corporate strategy¹ which sets out the Council's values, priorities and focus for 2022-2026. These are categorised under the following headings:

- Cleaner and Greener
- Strong Local Economy
- Quality Housing
- Children and Young People
- Safer Communities
- Open Lewisham
- Health and Wellbeing

4. Suggestions to amplify children and young people's voices in the council

- 4.1 At its meeting on 15 March 2023, the Committee received the following suggestions to amplify children and young people's voices in the council:

- a) *More awareness inside and outside the council about how young people can be involved and participate in decision making. Support with communications so more people know what young people are doing and how to get involved – social media.*

The Committee heard:

- the council's social media insufficiently features young people, aside from when there is a Young Mayor election;
 - the council can help by using its social media to promote the work of the Young Mayor and Advisors;
 - social media structures and algorithms favour certain types of content, and the council should consider how to maximise the reach of its social media content;
 - as almost a quarter of the borough's residents are aged under 19, the council should do more to engage young people via schools; and
 - opportunities for children in the care system to have their voices heard should be promoted to them in a targeted manner.
- b) *Regular meetings with senior officers and politicians, it is intermittent if it was established regularly young people, and everyone could contribute more*

¹ <https://lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/corporate-strategy>

purposefully. Senior Officers and politicians to know about the Young Mayor and Young Advisors and encourage their teams to engage not just about their services but as residents and citizens and be identified in the corporate and other strategies.

A Young Advisor told the Committee of their desire to discuss the inaccessibility of non-council venues with a senior officer. The Committee has referred the Young Advisor's concerns to the Cabinet Member for Business, Jobs and Skills.

- c) *Being involved at the beginning of consultations and hearing the results though we understand this can take years for projects to arrive at the outcome. Young people knowing what consultations are coming up and can decide which they want to get involved with, enabling a more in-depth participation in the decision making.*
- d) *Continue to develop the Curriculum for Life which is understood and contributed to by officers across directorates – what can we offer to young people so they can understand and be part of what we do? Everyone's responsibility to think about young people.*

The Committee heard that Curriculum for Life is valuable.

- e) *Work experience with politicians and officers, educate students in schools about what people in the council actually do for their jobs. Opportunities to learn about different roles and work experience. Young people learn how the council works, budgeting and decision making.*

The Committee heard that:

- young people recognise the importance of clear career pathways in a variable jobs market; and
- many young people are particularly interested in careers in law or politics, but pathways are unclear.

- f) *Develop other pathways for young people to be involved and paid for some roles, like the Downham Youth Ambassadors or if they are doing an officer role, monitoring, evaluating etc. – explore with HR how that can happen.*

A young person described entering a paid council apprenticeship after a period as a Young Advisor as invaluable but recognised that their experience was atypical.

- g) *Earlier work with commissioners about young people services, potentially develop a group specifically around commissioning so that they understand the processes.*
- h) *Officers and politicians spend time with the young people of Lewisham and can relate to their lived experience, in and outside of school.*

The Young Mayor suggested the council go to young people rather than the other way around. They suggested Question Time-style panels in schools and engaging young people in the streets as useful modes of engagement.

- i) *Young people could vote on different issues or decisions that affect young people, in order to do this they would need to be a process so they can understand all aspects of the decision being made.*

In connection with the comments noted above regarding career pathways in law and politics, the Committee heard that young people are keen to understand "how things work".

- j) *More projects to involve young people, there is so much to get involved with difficult for one group to do it all.*

A Young Advisor submitted that the council should organise more events for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, as they need a greater focus year round, and not just at set times such as Autism Acceptance Week.

- k) *A participation strategy created with and by children and young people which*

identifies the rights, roles and responsibilities of children and young people across the borough, and how they can get involved in decision making and influencing change in different ways that address their needs and interests.

NB: italicised text is copied from the report received by the Committee.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendation in this report.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The Constitution provides for select committees to refer reports to the Mayor and Cabinet, who are obliged to consider the report and the proposed response from the relevant Executive Director; and report back to the Committee within two months (not including recess).

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 The Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act included a new public sector equality duty, replacing the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The duty came into force on 6 April 2011. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.2 The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

8. Climate change and environmental implications

- 8.1 There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the implementation of the recommendation in this report.

9. Crime and disorder implications

- 9.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the implementation of the recommendation in this report.

10. Health and wellbeing implications

- 10.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the implementation of the recommendation in this report.

Background papers

[Amplifying the Voices of Children and Young People](#) – Children and Young People Select Committee, 15 March 2023

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