



CAI.21 16/17

Challenge and Improvement
Committee

1st September 2016

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Subject: Update from the Democracy Working Group

Report by:

Monitoring Officer
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Purpose / Summary:

To provide Members with an update on the work of the Democracy Working Group.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Members:

- i) Consider and note the work to date of the Democracy Working Group and request a further update in six months; and**
- ii) Note and approve the four year plan;**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None

Financial : FIN / 6 / 17 None

Staffing :None

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights : None

Risk Assessment :None

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :None

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
None

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Democracy Working Group (DWG) last reported to Challenge and Improvement Committee (C&I) on 22nd February 2015, where it was requested for a further report to be submitted in 6 months updating on progress.
- 1.2 At that meeting the proposed 4 year plan was amended and approved, the revised terms of reference for the meeting were adopted and further work of the Chamber Reconfiguration project was commissioned.
- 1.3 Since that meeting, the DWG have met twice, once on 16th March and again on 27th June. The Minutes of those meetings are available to Members. It is hoped that further progress will be made at the forthcoming meeting in September.

2. PROGRESS MADE TO DATE

- 2.1 Reconfiguration of the Council Chamber – Further consultation on a layout for Council meetings was commissioned by C&I Committee, which was undertaken with all Members of Council. Following full Council discussion, it was agreed that no changes to the current configuration would be implemented. However, it did air Members concerns and the following improvements have been made:
 - Screens located in the Chamber to provide all Members will a view of speakers, and for members of the public to see the debate.
 - New Microphone system installed to replace the faulty Beyer system, providing a better sound quality to meetings. This system has the potential to assist with electronic voting on all decisions, assisting with transparency on decision making. Further, assistance can be given to the Chairman and Vice Chairman through using the speaker queuing system. The DWG wish to further consider the potential of the system and trial at a forthcoming committee meeting.
- 2.2 Civic Matters Sounding Board – To date one civic matter has been discussed by the DWG. The DWG welcome any civic matters that Members wish to refer to the board for discussion, and the meetings are open for any Councillor to attend (the next meeting is scheduled for 6th September at 4pm).
- 2.3 Engagement with Schools – All primary schools within the district have received a letter from the Chairman inviting use of Council facilities to host their Youth Council meetings. No replies have been received, but it is expected that this is due to the summer recess. Further, all Secondary Schools have received a letter to arrange a series of visits over the remainder of the four-year term following a pledge to visit them all prior to the All-Out elections in 2019. Work is being considered on developing a pack to support Members of Council on the promotion of democracy in schools.
- 2.4 Flag Poles for Schools – Update awaited from Lead Officer, however indication has been given that there is little interest from schools.

2.5 Road Safety Partnership – Concerns have been discussed about officer ownership of work with the RSP. The lead officer on this is still to be identified.

2.6 Four Year Plan Changes – The DWG would like to add reintroduction of the 18th Birthday Card back on to the Four Year Plan. Research has been undertaken by the group to consult other local authorities on their arrangements, however, feedback was negative with many of them withdrawing the issue of birthday cards. Therefore, instead, the DWG would like to consider messages that can be added to the WLDC website and social media. This amended project has been re-entered in the four year plan for C&I approval.

3. FOUR YEAR PLAN

3.1 The DWG have been clear in their objectives and have developed a four year plan to stagger the work of the group over the four-year term meeting the priorities set. This revised plan is as follows:

CIVIC YEAR	PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 3	ADDITIONAL WORK
15/16	Reconfiguration of the Council Chamber to aid debate and democratic process	Road Safety Partnership	18 th Birthday notifications for new voters.	
16/17	Reintroduction and development of Primary Youth Council Meetings in the Chamber	Commence Secondary School Visits for all Members of Council	Flags and Flagpoles for Schools Initiative	Making best use of the new conferencing equipment to aid the democratic process
17/18	Road Safety Partnership	Focus on Scouting / Guiding	Focus on Cadets and Introduce a Chairman's Cadet	
18/19	Introduction of Youth Chairman and Youth Council for WL	Youth Council to lead on projects such as a Takeover		

3.2 The DWG welcome the views of all Members of Council on matters relating to democracy, civic and youth engagement and there is an open invitation for

attendance at their meetings (6th September at 4pm), or ideas can be fed back through C&I Chairs Briefing or by email to Members of the Group (Cllrs Welburn, Lawrence, and McNeill, with the Chairman of the Council and C&I Committee as consultees).

- 3.5 Challenge and Improvement Committee are asked to consider the proposed work plan, and agree for 6 monthly monitoring.