

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Date: 12 November 2020

Reporting officer: Committee & Scrutiny Assistant

Subject: Evaluation of The Gravesham Youth Democracy Scheme
2020

Purpose and summary of report:

To provide the Committee with an evaluation of the Local Councillor Shadowing Award 2020.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to:

1. Consider the effectiveness of the Gravesham Youth Democracy Scheme 2020 in its current form
2. Suggest any improvements to be made to the Gravesham Youth Democracy Scheme for future years
3. Note the contents of the report

1. Background

- 1.1 A report was submitted to Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee in September 2019 proposing that the Council should start a Local Councillor Shadowing Award under the banner of the Gravesham Youth Democracy Scheme.
- 1.2 The British Youth Council (BYC) scheme was devised to increase the Councils involvement with young adults with an interest in democracy from within the Borough. At the successful completion of the scheme it provided an accreditation for participants to use for their CVs/UCAS applications.
- 1.3 It allowed participants to gain knowledge surrounding the processes in Local Government and gave them an opportunity to engage with Officers and Councillors in a way that was previously unavailable to them.
- 1.4 The scheme gave Councillors the chance to work with young adults from a range of backgrounds and learn more about their views and explore how the Council and Government policies affected them.

2. Advertisement of the Award

- 2.1 In consultation with the Senior Youth Work Manager from the Gr@nd, a poster advertising the Award was circulated to a number of local schools and colleges. The Senior Youth Work Manager also offered to attend a number of school assemblies and give a short presentation to the students on the scheme and answer any questions they may have had. The poster can be found at Appendix Two.
- 2.2 The Award was advertised specifically to the below schools and colleges within Gravesham in order to give all secondary school students aged between 16-18 the chance to participate:
- Gravesend Grammar School
 - Mayfield Grammar School
 - Meopham Secondary School
 - Northfleet School for Girls
 - Northfleet Technology College
 - St John's Secondary School
 - St George's Secondary School
 - Thamesview Secondary School
 - North Kent College
- 2.3 The scheme was also advertised through the Council's website and social media accounts. The Senior Youth Work Manager attended a Head Teachers meeting in September 2019 to further promote the scheme.

3. Participants in the Award

- 3.1 After several months of advertisement, a total of eleven applications were received from five different schools. Originally the intention was to choose two students from each of the secondary schools on a first come first served basis in order to maintain fairness. However, since there was a lower amount of interest than anticipated all applications were accepted including from two students who went to school outside of the Borough but had connections to Gravesham through residency/family/Youth Council.
- 3.2 The Schools that we received applications from were as follows:
- Gravesend Grammar School – 5 applications
 - Mayfield Grammar School – 3 applications
 - Northfleet School for Girls – 1 application
 - Rochester Grammar School – 1 application
 - Newstead Wood School – 1 application

- 3.3 Unfortunately before the first meeting on the Programme of Events, two applicants had to withdraw from the scheme.
- 3.4 In total nine participants took part in and completed the Local Councillor Shadowing Award 2020. A full list of the nine participants can be found at Appendix Three.

4. Councillor Involvement

- 4.1 It was crucial that Members were involved in the programme and that the participants understood their role and were given the opportunity to meet and question them.
- 4.2 All Members were contacted informing them of the Award and detailing how they could be involved; twelve members responded and confirmed their interest. A full breakdown of the twelve Councillors that took part can be found at Appendix Three.

5. Programme of Events

- 5.1 The scheme ran between January – March 2020 and included a full programme of events and experiences such as a workshop afternoon, a talk with the Mayor, a visit to the Houses of Parliament and a number of committee meetings. The full schedule is attached at Appendix Four. During the Programme, a number of additional sessions were added to the schedule at the request of Councillors and with agreement of participants; they have been highlighted in green.
- 5.2 Participants achieved their accreditation by providing evidence of their involvement in the schedule of events for a total of 10 hours. As part of the BYC Scheme, all evidence was compiled in their own individual logbook.
- 5.3 In the logbook participants detailed their experiences, what activities they completed, how long they lasted for and what they learnt from them. The logbook also had other general questions which the participants provided answers for such as Council information and questions about themselves.
- 5.4 Upon completion, the logbooks were submitted to the British Youth Council for moderation and in turn submitted to the examination board – ASDAN.
- 5.5 The logbooks were received back, fully moderated, on 10 June 2020. All of the participants were successful in achieving their accreditation. Due to the lockdown measures in place, the BYC were unable to print off their certificates so PDF copies were emailed to Committee Section.
- 5.6 It was agreed with the Service Manager (Communities) that Repro would print the certificate off and send them out so that each participant received a hard copy of their certificate. The certificates were sent out on 12 June 2020 along with their moderated logbooks.
- 5.7 The BYC managed to print off the official certificates during August 2020 and each one was sent off to the participants of the scheme.

6. Tour of the Houses of Parliament

- 6.1 Originally an official Education Tour was booked called the Story of Parliament Tour however as only nine young people sign up to the Scheme it did not meet the minimum threshold of seventeen.
- 6.2 Instead, Adam Holloway's PA was contacted and a request was submitted for a 'Democratic Access Tour'. She booked the group consisting of eight participants and three Councillors on a tour with an official tour guide on Monday, 09 March 2020 at 10:10am.
- 6.3 The tour lasted for seventy five minutes and explained the inner workings of Parliament, highlighting important history and both the House of Commons and the House of Lords were visited.
- 6.4 Each of the eight schools head teachers were contacted prior to the trip and their written consent was attained for the Council to take the young people out of school on Monday, 9 March 2020.
- 6.5 The tour went exceedingly well and all the young people and Councillors in attendance spoke highly of the well informed guide and the content of the tour itself.
- 6.6 Upon conclusion of the tour, Cllr Meade and his colleagues allowed the group into the staff/MP lunch area to buy food from the canteen.
- 6.7 Photos were taken of the group together with the Councillors in the Hall of Westminster; they have been shared with the Communications Manager.

7. Councillor and Participant Feedback

- 7.1 The young people that undertook the Scheme were all very appreciative of the opportunity to take part in and learn more about Local Government democracy. The events were well attended and Councillors also reported receiving comments of praise from the young people.
- 7.2 Aside from the Tour of the Houses of Parliament, some of the most positive feedback received from the group was the opportunity to sit at the meeting of Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee with their own nameplate and actively contribute to the discussion with their views on the various items.
- 7.3 The Councillors were equally appreciative of the opportunity to work with the young people and learn more about their concerns and views on issues related to Gravesham and Local Government.
- 7.4 Feedback forms were emailed to both the Councillors and participants following completion of the Scheme.. One feedback form was received back from one of the participant which can be found at Appendix Five.

8. Post Programme and Certificates

- 8.1 The participants were all encouraged to pursue voluntary work in their local community and become further involved in local democracy. As such, the group were made aware of the Gravesham Youth Council and all invited to join; upon completion of the award applications were received from two members of the group who were both accepted onto the Youth Council.

- 8.2 Originally it was planned that the certificates would be awarded to the participants at the Annual Council meeting in May 2020 during the awards ceremony. A picture with the young people, Councillors and Mayor was to be taken and promoted on social media and in the 'Your Borough' magazine.
- 8.3 Once lockdown measures have been eased and if the scheme is continued a feature will be created that highlights positive points and events from the 2020 scheme to attract participants. The feature will be issued through social media, the website and 'Your Borough' in order to reach a larger audience.

9. Costs

- 9.1 The costs incurred were minimal with the expenditure on logbooks submissions, travel and food expenses.
- 9.2 For the induction evening in January 2020 and the workshop evening, food was provided as the sessions were scheduled during the typical dinner period for school children. The total Spotlites food bill was £220.00.
- 9.3 Due to the tour of the Houses of Parliament being rescheduled to 10:10am, fifteen peak train tickets were purchased at a cost of £400.50.
- 9.4 As Gravesham Youth Council are members of the British Youth Council the total cost of all the logbook submissions was at a reduced cost of £180. The total cost for running the Scheme was £800.50; the full breakdown of costs is below:

	Expense			Total:
	Spotlites Buffet Food Bill	Train Tickets	Logbook Submission	
Cost:	£220.00	£400.50	£180.00	£800.50

10. Improvements for Future Years

- 10.1 Due to Covid-19, Annual Council was held on a much smaller scale and the participants were unable to receive their LCSA certificates on stage. In future years, it would be beneficial if a LCSA segment was added onto the Community Awards portion of the evening which would allow the participant to get on stage, receive their certificates and then take a picture with the Mayor. The pictures would also be able to be used for further promotional purposes of the Scheme.
- 10.2 A more varied events schedule would make the scheme more interesting to potential participants; further activities that could potentially be added include a heritage tour of the Borough with one of Gravesham's guides, attendance at a Mayoralty event and helping to assist with one of the Councils community events.
- 10.3 Due to Covid-19, the scheme will not run again in 2021; depending on the situation at the time, the Council will look to resume the Scheme in 2022.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	There are no legal implications.
Finance and Value for Money	There will be a minimal cost to the Programme which is laid out within the report but it will promote youth engagement in the Borough and portray Gravesham Borough Council as an inclusive forward thinking organisation.
Risk Assessment	No risks associated with this report.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner’s Office website via the above links.</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk. N/A</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. N/A</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. Yes - Children of all backgrounds, ethnicity and capability were encouraged to volunteer for the Scheme.</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
Corporate Plan	None
Crime and Disorder	None
Digital and website implications	The Programme would be promoted on the website and social media.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	The steps taken to ensure the safety of the children taking part has been covered in the report.