

REPORT OF ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK 16-20 OCTOBER 2006

1 SUMMARY

This report sets out the proposed schedule of events for this years Local Democracy Week which takes place during the week 16-20 October.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Area Committees are requested to note and comment on:-

- (1) the proposed programme of events and related fringe activities for Local Democracy Week;
- (2) the specific arrangements for Councillor Cafes.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Members may already be aware that each year the Local Government Association runs a national campaign to promote local democracy and that in this year's campaign they aim to:-

- make councils more relevant and useful to young people;
- encourage young people to 'take part take power';
- make Local Democracy Week bigger and better than before;
- increase Councillor involvement in citizenship teaching in schools;
- get council's to devolve power wherever appropriate to local people.

3.2 At a local level, Nottingham City Council is seeking to adopt a more joined up approach to designing and delivering the events for Local Democracy Week, with different sections of the Council contributing to the preparation of the draft programme of events for the week, as detailed at Appendix 1 to this report. It is further hoped that alongside the promotion of local democracy, we will promote the importance of voter registration and voting itself in the run up to the Local Elections in May 2007.

3.3 The City Council has taken part in the Local Democracy Week for the last three years with a varied level of success. A particular weakness has been that not enough notice has been given to participants about the events. When involved at an early stage, the outcomes have been more successful.

Voter Registration, return and turnout

- 3.4 In the last 5 years, the City Council has seen an overall decline in city households registering to vote and as a result the vote turnout has been low. The Local Democracy Week programme of events is to be a small phase of a wider registration campaign which commenced in August and runs until 15 October 2006, followed by another campaign from March to May 2007, to encourage those residents registered to make use of their vote at the local elections in May 2007. Members may be interested to note that the personal canvass for Electoral Registration commences during Local Democracy Week.
- 3.5 The main external focus of the Democratic Services Department is *“to promote active citizenship amongst all sectors of the community through democratic processes, civic activities and Council House events”*. This national campaign provides the City Council with an ideal opportunity to promote democracy locally and to improve residents understanding and engagement.

4 PROPOSALS / TIMESCALES

- 4.1 Detailed in Appendix 1 to this report is a programme of events for Local Democracy Week and some related activities. Summarised below are some commentaries about each of the events/activities proposed.

Engaging City Schools - Competition

- 4.2 One of the main proposed events is to invite all secondary schools in the City to submit a proposal for spending £5,000 in their local community. The competition rules have been written so that the individual schools could not benefit from the money themselves but encourage schools to submit proposals that link with the strategy - ‘A safer, cleaner, ambitious Nottingham – a city we’re all proud of’.
- 4.3 The proposals are to be judged and voted upon by the Young People from the schools themselves at the event on Thursday 19 October 2006.
- 4.4 Once all the ideas are gathered together within the school, the pupils would then be asked to vote on which idea they most liked. They could do this by a show of hands or secret ballot. Their final choice would then be submitted as a proposal to the Council, with all the others from city schools and a winner picked. The winning proposal would then be actioned.
- 4.5 This event would give young people practical experience of what it’s like to debate local issues and make a physical difference to their area by getting the proposal actioned. It would provide them with a positive feel about democracy, councillors and the Council itself, and give them a chance to feel proud about their area, while also providing some publicity for the role of area working, which is a key strategic priority.

Youth Council Event

4.6 Youth Councillors are already discussing their own plans for an event at the Council House on Tuesday 17 October 2006. They will be supported by the Youth Engagement Unit and Democratic Services to develop their plans and will be encouraged to create plans that have clear objectives and a wide impact.

4.7 Councillor Café's

In previous years Councillor Café's have been set up outside the Council House to provide opportunities for the public to meet with Elected Members and to talk about their views and feelings on any council related matter or to use the opportunity to gain advice on City Council services.

4.8 This year, following an initial circulation of draft proposals to all City Councillors, Councillor Café's are to be held in each of the areas to encourage wider participation and engagement. Each event has been developed in liaison with local Councillors and Area Coordination teams. The format for each will vary depending on local preference and there will be one café per area.

4.9 A schedule of suggested activity is set out in Appendix 2.

Related activities

4.10 In addition to the programme of activities proposed for Local Democracy Week, a series of wider related events are to take place in the run up to the week that will involve and engage a wider section of the Community.

Film Festival

4.11 Discussions have taken place with the Broadway Cinema to establish whether they would be interested in becoming involved with Local Democracy Week activities. It is suggested that a Panel of Councillors and Officers be available after showing a democracy themed film to answer questions on how the issues in the film are being addressed in Nottingham.

4.12 Another proposal is to show matinee performances for schools during Local Democracy Week. Again these films would have a democracy theme and the use of speakers to assist and prompt debate would be used. The Broadway is also happy to consider showing screenings of films in the Ball Room or Council Chamber.

4.13 One of the benefits of partnering with the Broadway Cinema is that film is a great way to engage people, it could be a good means of creating debate that relates to democracy and it could be linked to issues at a local level. There would be the added incentive of being able to advertise in their monthly leaflet that has a wide city circulation.

Galleries of Justice - 'The Home of Democracy'

4.14 The Galleries of Justice have a lot of experience in working collaboratively with schools. It is suggested that the City Council should encourage a local school

to work with the Galleries and perhaps chart the history of democracy locally, (eg. the Luddites, Reform Act 1832 , Suffragette Movement etc)

Council Debate

- 4.15 The Council Business Steering Group decided earlier in the year to reserve the October full Council meeting to hold a wide debate on a local/national issue. It has now been agreed that the topic will be climate change, which should be of interest to all – particularly young people. Arrangements will be made for external speakers to attend the meeting and add to the debate.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that the costs of the 'Local Democracy Week' events could be met from existing Democratic Services budgets. Unsuccessful proposals submitted by schools would be then submitted to their relevant Area Committee and any projects approved at this stage would be financed via Area Committees.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

This national initiative seeks to promote local democracy by actively engaging with all sections of the community.

7 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

None

8 VALUE FOR MONEY

Democratic Services is significantly increasing the level of activity across the city around Local Democracy Week whilst working within existing budgets.

9 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

None.

10 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

None.

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LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK 16-20 OCTOBER 2006	
DRAFT PROGRAMME OF EVENTS	
MAY 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to be sent to all City Secondary Schools explaining that the City Council is currently working on plans for Local Democracy Week in October and would like at this stage to write to Head Teachers just to flag this up, make some initial suggestions for the sort of support we could offer to any schools events, indicate the availability of some resources the Electoral Commission has produced and also seek ideas from schools themselves about what they might like to see happening.
AUGUST 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despatch information packs to schools regarding schools competition, ready for the start of the new academic year. • Electoral Registration forms – first mailing
SEPTEMBER 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deadline for schools to submit an expression of interest for entering the Schools Competition. • Electoral Registration forms – second mailing (reminders)
OCTOBER 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>9 October 2006</u> – Full Council meeting – reserved for a special debate meeting (climate change) • <u>11 October 2006</u> – Deadline for submission of schools competition proposals • <u>15 October 2006</u> – Electoral Registration Forms personal canvass commences • Councillor Café's – to be held across the areas during 2 week period 11-25 October

APPENDIX 2

Area / Wards		location	Suggested dates / times (11am-3pm unless stated)
1	Bulwell Bulwell Forest	Bulwell Market	Friday 20 October
2	Basford Bestwood	Beckhampton Road Community centre	To be determined
3	Aspley Leen Valley Bilborough	Market at pelican crossing, Bracebridge Drive, Bilborough	Thursday 19 October -
4	Berridge Arboretum Radford and Park	To be determined	Wednesday 11 or 25 October
5	Mapperley Sherwood	To be determined	Thursday 12 October
6	St Anns Dales	Robin Hood Chase	Tuesday 17 October
7	Wollaton East and Lenton Abbey Wollaton West	Bramcote Lane shops	Saturday 21 October (12noon -2pm) / marquee
8	Dunkirk and Lenton Bridge	Meadow Library, Wilford Crescent; and Crocus Café, Church Street, Lenton	Monday 16 October To be determined
9	Clifton South Clifton North	Clifton Cornerstone	Monday 16 or 23 October
10	City Centre	Near to Council House	Saturday 21 October (marquee)