

**Minutes of the Select Committee
for Electoral Participation**

**14th December at 3.00pm.
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Melia (Chair);
Councillors L Horton, and P Hughes.

Rt. Hon. John Spellar MP

Apologies: Councillors Allcock and Webb.

7/18 Guest Speakers – School Representatives

In attendance - Ambassadors from the following Schools:-

- George Salter Academy;
- Wodensborough Academy;
- Q3 Langley Academy;
- Holly Lodge.

The Select Committee for Electoral Participation was informed about the workshops that the Participation Officer was undertaking with students in respect of Elections Leadership and Participation.

Q3 Langley was a new school and the opportunity to work with students and establish a Student Council had been undertaken since the school was created. Students had experienced voting and had received a presentation on Vision 2030.

Members asked if the schools had connected to SHAPE, the Shadow Cabinet, and the Youth Parliament.

Members were informed of cultural barriers that prevented some female students being unable to engage due to the meetings and conferences being held in the evening.

Three students at Wodensborough were currently running for election.

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Q3 Langley had been involved in a SHAPE conference which occur on a monthly basis, however it was felt that this could be held more frequently.

An Established programme had been rolled out fulfilling statutory obligations provided a tool kit to young people to assist in undertaking elections and provide good awareness of democracy.

Another barrier to engagement was transportation issues.

Members suggested the following activities for young people:-

- visit to the Mayors Parlour;
- observing Cabinet meetings;
- shadowing Councillors;
- shadowing MP
- TUC project going into schools.

Young people felt that the education and awareness of democracy was crucial to enable young people to make their own mind up on their political views. They felt that a lot of their peers had a lack of understanding and needed to be educated on democracy.

Ofsted stated that PHSE lessons should be used for a personal development programmes and these would include leadership, resilience and resource lesson plans for democracy.

Members asked if the young people felt that they should be allowed to vote at 16, the consensus was that young people need to be educated prior to being allowed to vote. They should be educated about democracy and explain why they should be participating.

It was considered that young people should be encouraged to apply for citizenship cards and schools should be encouraged to get young people registered when they are old enough.

The Ofsted request about the personal development programme for students in PHSE lessons meant that Schools would be more involved if a model was created in respect of working with schools.

The Chair thanked the Ambassadors for attending and participating in the meeting.

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8/18 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

9/18 Progress Briefing from Officers

Officers had investigated the Members proposal that a fine be imposed for not returning the Household Enquiry form.

Members were informed that any costs associated with the enforcement of the Civil penalty would be paid by the local authority and any money collected as a result of this would be returned to Cabinet Office to be paid into the consolidated fund.

Any form of prosecution would result in a significant workload for the local authority and no financial gain.

In respect to the analysis of those in receipt of Housing Benefit and the level of registration, a data matching and investigation exercise was ongoing and a further update would be provided at a future meeting.

Members received an update on the Canvass.

The response rate for the Housing Enquiry form was 93% compared to 82% last year. The number of non-responding properties this year was 8,600 and it had been established that 3,100 of those had been confirmed as void/empty. This meant that 4% of properties had not responded as opposed to 19% last year.

Comments from members were as follows;

- consider empty properties and Council tax charges for vacant properties;
- retirement homes – how often are they contacted due to the high turnover of residents;
- spoilt votes – most records – West Bromwich.

(The meeting ended at 4.45pm.)

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