



Surrey County Council's Local Committee in Epsom and Ewell

Local Democracy Week

29th September 2003

KEY ISSUE

To inform the Committee of events planned to support Local Democracy Week.

SUMMARY

Local Democracy Week begins on 13th October with the theme 'Tomorrow's voters today'. With its focus on young people, much of the activity proposed across the County has been planned and will be undertaken by young people and youth organisations. The Committee is invited to offer encouragement to these events and to consider any requests for practical assistance that might be forthcoming.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to note the launch of UR County, UR Say website, encourage the range of events and activities proposed by Yell for Local Democracy Week, to agreed to invite Yell to attend the Committee's meeting in December this year and to consider any practical measures of support that might be reported verbally.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 This year, Local Democracy Week has the theme 'Tomorrow's voters today'. Corporately, the County has chosen Local Democracy Week as the time to launch the new youth portal/website entitled 'UR County, UR Say'. This will provide information and links to other organisation's websites as well as giving support to the Surrey and National Youth Parliaments and the forthcoming elections for Youth MPs. In addition, the website will run series of debates with on-line voting to give a structured way for young people to make their opinions on relevant subjects known.

1.2 Locally, Yell has decided to run an event around Art and Politics. This will take the form of music that has been inspired by political issues and will take place in the evening of Tuesday 14th October at Lintons. Video and print material will be produced and used during the event and circulated in some form afterwards. There is financial and technical support from the County for youth groups to make videos about issues of concern to young people both for inclusion in the website and to promote debate locally. It is hoped that any video produced in Epsom could be shown to the Committee at its meeting in December when Yell are due to attend and discuss issues of concern. Video material will certainly be used to promote Yell itself, draw attention to the successes to date and encourage participation in the January Youth Parliament elections.

1.3 Yell are also considering:

- staging a mock general election in schools;
- presenting a local version of the national youth manifesto to the Local Committee;
- creating a web-based list of materials from nominations by young people for books, films and music that have inspired political thought, action or debate;
- timing the next issue of KT17, the youth newsletter, to appear during the week.

1.4 Given both the theme of Local democracy Week and the energy being devoted to it by Yell and the County corporately, it is suggested that the Committee itself should not seek to arrange any special events. Instead, the Committee may wish to devote a significant amount of time at its December meeting to listen to the issues that have arisen from Local Democracy Week locally and other matters that have been highlighted by either the Surrey or the national Youth Parliaments that could be progressed locally.

1.4 The arrangements for some of the activities proposed by Yell are developing rapidly and if any more practical forms of support are identified before the Committee's meeting, they will be reported verbally for consideration.

2. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Local Democracy Week is designed to promote the role of local authorities in the community and give people the feeling that they have a stake in the democratic process and a real say about the services provided locally. The current and continuing decline in interest in local and national politics and the associated fall in the turnout at elections can be redressed by encouraging the interest of the next generation of voters. The programme of events proposed by Yell seeks to engage young people in both their own political institutions and in helping the County in its ambition to be an exemplar of modern local democracy.

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Background Papers: