

Item 8

Local Democracy Week 2004

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL COMMITTEE IN SURREY HEATH

22nd July 2004

KEY ISSUE:

This report outlines Local Democracy Week 2004 and looks at activity options.

SUMMARY:

This years Local Democracy Week will run from 18th – 24th October. The theme will be “*Make your Mark*” which focuses on young people and voting. This report outlines possible events and projects that could support Local Democracy Week in Surrey Heath.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Surrey Heath Local Committee decides which options it wishes to support.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Plans are under way for Local Democracy Week 2004 which will run from 18-24th October. The focus remains on young people, although The Local Government Association (LGA) has extended the age range up to 26 years to make it even more inclusive than before. Last year the theme was ‘Listening to tomorrow’s voters’; this year the LGA are encouraging action from both councils and young people and will be encouraging everyone to ‘*Make your Mark*’ both in the local community and at the ballot box.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

2. A recent survey (LGA) found that only 2% of young people thought that their council had any ‘power’ and 50% thought the council had no direct control or relevance to their lives To address this Local Democracy Week 2004 (18-24 October) focuses on young people for the second year - but this time the age range is up to 26 years.

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

3. In October 2003 the Local Committee invited young people from around Surrey Heath to take part in the Local Committee meeting. This could be repeated this year at the meeting on 28th October in Windlesham. Reports

due to come to this Committee include Children's Services and additional reports on youth issues could also be brought to this Committee. Young people could even be asked to write the youth issues report themselves with the support of the Community Support Team.

4. The Community Support Team has a stand booked in Main Square on Saturday 16th October between 9am and 5pm. Members are invited to attend. There will be general information giving on the range of Surrey County Council services as well as a special focus on the Surrey Heath Local Committee. This event could also be used to display material relating to voting in Surrey Heath and could also link into the history of the suffragette movement, which was very strong in Surrey.
5. Members may wish to sponsor a creative consultation event with young people. "Picture This" events were successfully held last year in some London Boroughs and would be a creative and innovative way to hold consultation with young people in Surrey Heath. "Picture This" would be a competition asking young people to use a range of creative media, including drawing, photography and painting to explore what Surrey Heath means to them and how they would make Surrey Heath an even better place to live.
6. Local Schools and community groups could be offered free disposable cameras to encourage participation. Free processing of photos could also be offered to these groups. Sponsorship could be sought for prizes in a range of age groups. Winning entries could be used in local documents, displayed on websites, displayed in local places and used to promote democracy in Surrey Heath.
7. Financial support for this project would be needed. £1,000 would allow 100 cameras and processing to be provided and would also cover publicity and prize costs. Prizes could be awarded to both the individual and the winning organisation (eg school or cub pack) to encourage participation. This funding could be met from Members Allocations. It may be possible to reduce these costs with sponsorship from local businesses. Funding will need to be agreed at this meeting if this project is to go ahead in time for Local Democracy Week.
8. Centrally, the communications team are looking at various ways to involve people in local democracy including an essay competition, young people shadowing Members, public debates, schools visits and mock elections in schools, Question Time style events and celebrations of peoples first time voting.
9. Members may wish to suggest other activity ideas for Local Democracy Week.

CONSULTATION

10. "Picture This" would allow consultation to take place with young people in a fun and accessible way.

11. Consulting with young people in the Local Committee meeting itself was very successful last year and this can be built upon by supporting young people in bringing their own report to the Committee.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. Financial support is needed for the "Picture This" project

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

13. None.

CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

14. None.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

15. All schools and groups would be able to take part in activities.

16. Main Square is fully accessible to local people.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Surrey Heath Local Committee decides which options it wishes to support.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Jane Biscombe

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01276 702504

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None