

SUBJECT:	THE PROMOTION OF CITIZENSHIP WITHIN SCHOOLS
REPORT BY:	DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
LEAD OFFICER:	CAROLYN WHEATER – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Following members' requests at the meeting of 12 December 2012, this report is provided to offer background information on citizenship education in Lincoln and to consider the possibility of providing support for increasing awareness of local democracy among young people.

2. Background to Citizenship Lessons

- 2.1 Citizenship forms part of the national curriculum in English schools and was introduced in order to equip 'young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in public life'.
- 2.2 Local government does not form a core part of the provisions within the national curriculum at either key stage 3 (years 7-9) or 4 (years 10-11), although the broader emphasis on playing 'an active role in the life of... neighbourhoods, communities, and wider society' provides a clear link with the role of councillors and other neighbourhood activists.
- 2.3 In comparison with more traditional school subjects, citizenship is a relatively new feature in schools, having been introduced as a compulsory subject in 2002. The subject has been a source of some discussion in recent years with suggestions that citizenship could be removed as part of future changes to the national curriculum.
- 2.4 In addition to citizenship provision in the lower years of schools, topics of relevance to citizenship are most commonly addressed in sixth forms through general studies or government and politics A-Levels. These, however, are not universally studied.

3. Opportunities for Local Engagement with Citizenship

- 3.1 Following the resolution of the Committee at its last meeting, teacher and pupil representatives from a local school have been invited to attend the meeting of 11 March 2013.
- 3.2 Members will therefore have the opportunity to gain an insight into current local

practice in schools and to ask for teacher and pupil views on both their experience of citizenship lessons and, at a broader level, the ways in which councillors might be better able to engage with young people.

- 3.3 Citizenship fits clearly into the Committee's broader objectives as part of its responsibility to develop innovative and effective proposals to improve democratic engagement. Members may therefore wish to extend the discussion of this topic beyond the confines of citizenship towards democratic engagement with young people more generally.
- 3.4 In particular there is potential for councillors to engage with young people possessing a latent interest in local democracy. This would apply, for example, to those undertaking qualifications directly relevant to democracy, including subjects such as government and politics. While it is apparent that those already undertaking these qualifications are likely to be pupils who appear already to be the most engaged within their age group, there are specific advantages to this approach.
- 3.5 Specifically, targeting those who already have an interest in politics ensures a receptive audience for improving the quality and extent of democratic engagement. There is also the potential to give young people the encouragement and the information they may require to become actively involved in local democracy.
- 3.6 Some potential ideas that could be pursued in this direction include:
 - Seeking to engage with schools either to carry out mock school elections or to add councillors' input to existing schemes.
 - Taking more active involvement in the school councils project.
 - Councillors and officers visiting local schools, potentially in concert with other local elected politicians, to explain their roles and the structures which underpin them.
 - Inviting groups of young people to attend meetings of the Full Council.
 - Investigating the possibility of providing work experience opportunities, involving shadowing councillors carrying out their duties.
- 3.7 It is suggested that members may particularly wish to investigate:
 - How useful pupils and teachers have found citizenship lessons in the past, with particular regard to improving awareness and knowledge of democracy in general and local democracy in particular.
 - Whether school representatives have any specific ideas for how councillors could improve the level of engagement with young people.
 - What level of awareness young people possess regarding the role of a councillor and the responsibilities of local councils as a whole.
 - The practical steps councillors and officers can take to increase democratic engagement among young people.
 - Whether young people are aware of their opportunities to stand for election and what barriers, if any, might stand in their way.
 - How some of the contents of citizenship lessons might be continued within schools if citizenship were removed from the national curriculum.

4. Strategic Priorities

- 4.1 The Council's commitment to democratic engagement and the Committee's remit in this regard gives members a clear direction to investigate ways to improve the public's involvement in the Council's democratic process.

5. Finance Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications to this report. Any future commitments to additional engagement with local schools or young people would be the subject of further and more detailed reports, and are likely to be containable within existing budgets.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications to this report.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 That the Committee, having regard to how citizenship is currently addressed within the national curriculum, consider the manner in which the Council can seek to improve democratic engagement with young people.