

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>INCREASING DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>CAROLYN WHEATER – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES)</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To confirm arrangements for the first member-student engagement panel to be trialled in a local school.

## **2. Background to the panel**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 11 March 2013, the Committee heard representations from a delegation of the Lincoln Christ's Hospital School regarding young people's engagement with democracy. As an outcome of the meeting, members resolved that officers should seek to work with the school to establish a trial format aimed at aiding young people's engagement with local democracy.
- 2.2 The overall intention for the trial is two-fold: to increase students' knowledge of and engagement with the democratic process, while also helping the Council and councillors to understand the aspirations and views of Lincoln's young people. If successful, it is likely that the format could be extended and replicated both in future years and in different schools across Lincoln.

## **3. Proposed format**

- 3.1 As requested, the chair and officers have worked with Lincoln Christ's Hospital School to establish an agreeable format which will achieve the committee's aims. The following proposals are thought to be an effective starting point for a trial.

### **3.2 Format**

The initial project plan was for an event based around the idea of a Question Time style format. The proposals have been developed around this idea and a number of possible topics are outlined in section 3.3. A possible basic running order to the trial could be as follows:

- Introduction of the panel members.
- Brief outline of what councils do and how members are elected.
- Open floor for students to ask questions and debate the points raised.

### **3.3 Topics**

In order to ensure an active and relevant discussion it will be important to cover topics that are appropriate to the audience. There would also be significant advantages to generating a genuine dialogue between students and councillors

which will enable both parties to develop their understanding of each other.

3.4 As such, it is proposed that the following topics would be particularly relevant for discussion:

- The roles and responsibilities of councillors in the context of local government and communities.
- How and why young people should be involved in the democratic process.
- Whether and why young people may be drawn to alternative political movements or disengagement rather than local democracy or established political parties.
- How the Council and councillors can do more to engage young people in the democratic process.

It is suggested that matters directly relating to party politics, i.e. the specific policies and ideologies of individual political parties, should be avoided in order to make the most of the time available and prevent debate moving away from the core issues.

3.5 Timing

It is suggested that an initial session will be held on 27 September 2013 from 08:45 to 09:45. The time and date has been chosen at the request of the school to meet their timetabling requirements. This should also allow sufficient time to have a relatively full discussion of the relevant issues. Longer sessions could potentially be difficult to schedule within school timetables and could also be overly long for the likely audience. As with all aspects of the proposals, the timings of any further events would be subject to continuing review in order to find the most suitable options for students and members.

3.6 Membership

Some consideration should also be given to which members would be best suited to taking part in the panels. The size of the member panels is recommended to include no more than 4 councillors as a result of the limited time available. It is likely that there would be a benefit in the membership comprising both Ethics and Engagement Committee members as well as councillors from the ward in which schools are sited; this would contribute in both cementing local links and building towards the Committee's broader aims. For members' information, Lincoln Christ's Hospital School is part of Minster ward, although Glebe and Abbey wards are also directly adjacent to it.

3.7 For the initial trial members may wish to consider nominating only Ethics and Engagement Committee members to ensure the participating members are fully aware of the intent behind the project and able to report back their views to the Committee in due course.

3.8 While the initial trial will be carried out with members of the City of Lincoln Council, the possibility of having a suitable member of the Lincolnshire County Council in attendance should also be considered. While this would limit the number of places available to City of Lincoln Council members, it may help students to understand the difference between the tiers of local government and the varied perspectives that respective elected members may bring.

### 3.9 Evaluation

Given the nature of the trial, after the event it will be necessary to consider how successful the panel was in meeting the original aims of the project and whether it could be improved in future. A key part of this will be the views of teachers and students at Lincoln Christ's Hospital School; feedback will therefore be sought from them in the first instance. Having gathered this feedback, members will need to provide their own views on the event. A review of the trial's outcome is scheduled for consideration by the Committee at the first meeting after the trial (9 December 2013).

3.10 Having considered the feedback it is anticipated that the Committee will need to form a view as to the suitability of the format for any future events.

## 4. **Organisational Impacts**

### 4.1 Finance

No direct financial costs are anticipated as a result of any of the proposals outlined above.

### 4.2 Legal Implications

None.

## 5. **Recommendation**

- 5.1
  1. That members consider the proposals outlined above regarding the format of proposed member-student panels.
  2. That members agree a preferred membership for the initial panel meeting.