



**Children & Families
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
11 July 2007**

**Report from the Director of Children
and Families department**

For Information

Wards Affected:
ALL

Report Title: Progress on Brent Youth Parliament

Forward Plan Ref:

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of progress made in developing a youth parliament in Brent. An overview of the structure of the youth parliament is provided along with the priorities agreed by Brent Youth Parliament Members for the coming year. Details of discussions and decisions that were taken by members at their inaugural session held on 9 March 2007 at the House of Commons and at their 2nd session held on 23 June 2007 at Brent Town Hall are also provided.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the good progress made in developing the youth parliament and the three priorities that members of the youth parliament have selected to focus on during their term in office.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 In November 2006 Full Council approval was given to establish a youth parliament so that children and young people living in Brent could influence the way in which services that impact on them are planned and delivered. The parliament is comprised of representatives aged 10 to 19 from across Brent. Members of Brent Youth Parliament are drawn from primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, College of North West London, key youth groups and from voluntary and community groups based across the five Brent localities. A structure chart of Brent Youth Parliament is shown in appendix 2.

- 3.2 Terms of reference of the parliament include: discussing issues that affect Brent children and young people and presenting them to officers and council members; ensuring that views of all Brent children and young people are taken into account by the parliament; ensuring that everyone works by the 'Hear by Rights' standards (these standards, developed by National Youth Agency, are considered best practice to promote the participation and involvement of children and young people); look at ways of distributing the Youth Opportunities Fund in a equal and fair manner and participating in training programmes.
- 3.3 A full meeting of Brent Youth Parliament will take place once a term (3 times a year). Smaller task group meetings (based around their chosen three priorities) will take place more frequently.
- 3.4 Members of the youth parliament are responsible for reporting back to their constituents e.g. their schools / youth clubs any issues that are discussed at the youth parliament meetings and for bringing issues from their constituents to the attention of youth parliament to ensure two way communications between the youth parliament and Brent's wider youth population. To support members in cascading the work of the youth parliament, summary reports of each full session, as shown in appendix two will be developed to aid the process. These reports are designed to be circulated widely by youth parliament members.
- 3.5 Younger children aged 5-9 and under 5's will be engaged with the work of the youth parliament through other methods such as conferences and joint work with the Early Years service around listening to the views of children under 5. Planning for these events in the context of the Respect festival is currently underway.

Inaugural session of Brent Youth Parliament

- 3.6 Brent Youth Parliament had its inaugural session on 9 March 2007 at House of Commons. Dawn Butler MP, Cllr Bob Wharton and Cllr Mary Arnold attended the event with Cllr Hayley Matthews opening the session as the youth parliament's co-chair. At their inaugural meeting youth parliament members decided that they would like to meet on Saturdays, during term time and for the meetings to be held at Brent Town Hall. Evaluation of the inaugural event by youth parliament members was overwhelmingly positive with over ninety five percent of the members rating the day as good.
- 3.7 Forty seven of the fifty three youth parliament members attended the inaugural session. They spent time in this first session getting to know each other, understanding their terms of reference and agreeing on the three priority issues that they consider important to focus on in the coming year. These are:
- Crime and safety
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Sports and leisure

2nd session of Brent Youth Parliament

- 3.8 Forty Members attended the 2nd session on 23 June 2007. At this session the young members had the opportunity to raise their concerns with the Mayor, the leader of the council, Dawn Butler MP and Sarah Teather MP. The parliament held its own elections to appoint their co chair and vice chair, reviewed the Children and Young People's Plan and had a discussion about how they will listen to the voices of all Brent young people.
- 3.9 The parliament elected Fatima Kanji (aged 16) to co-chair meetings alongside Cllr Hayley Matthews. Two additional young people, Ezras Adams (aged 17) and James Abiwon (aged 10) were also elected as vice chair. The role of the co chair/vice chairs is to ensure that meetings are focused, conducted on time and with respect. As co chair Fatima Kanji and Cllr Hayley Matthews are formally members of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board. Fatima in her role as co chair will also represent Brent Youth Parliament on UK Youth Parliament.
- 3.10 At the 2nd session the parliament also reviewed the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). Overall they agreed with the six strategic priorities within the CYPP and identified some areas for improvement. Suggestions made by the youth parliament will be put forward to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board for consideration.

Next steps

- 3.11 The three task groups (set up for each of the three chosen priorities) will meet in July and then in September to discuss in detail issues within the three priorities and undertake research around specific areas.
- 3.12 Task group reports will be presented to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board. An annual report of the work of the youth parliament will be submitted to Scrutiny and to the Executive.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Resources to support the development of the youth parliament have been met from the existing Children's Fund grant. This has been used to appoint to a part time post of Principal Youth Participation Manager.
- 4.2 Operational costs associated with event organisation and hospitality for the youth parliament have been absorbed within existing Children & Families budgets.
- 4.3 External funding streams will be sought to enhance the work of the youth parliament.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The work of Brent Youth Parliament is well placed in the context of the wider participation agenda as detailed in the Children's Act, 2004, the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services and Every Child Matters: Change for Children Programme.

5.2 The rights of the child to be consulted and for their views to be acted upon are included in Article '12' of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 Brent Youth Parliament Members are representative of the six equalities strands i.e. age, race, gender, faith, disability and sexual orientation. The structure of the Youth Parliament ensures that diversity within Brent is reflected and a democratic selection process ensures that access into the youth parliament is equitable.

6.2 Members of Brent Youth Parliament are keen to ensure all young people living in Brent have a say in decision making and in how services are delivered to them.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 None

Background Papers

Report on Brent Youth Parliament's inaugural session (see attached PDF)
Brent Children & Young People's Plan 2006-09
Brent Children and Young People's Plan Review and Refresh 2007

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