

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 03 April 2016	Meeting Name: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Report title:		Southwark Youth Council	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All Wards	
From:		Stephen Douglass Director of Communities	
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1. SYC was transferred to the communities division from 1 April 2016 as part of the changes to youth service provision. It was decided to take this opportunity to review the working of SYC and refresh the model as follows..
2. The aim of the refresh has been to develop a model for the SYC that:
 - increases participation by young people across the borough,
 - ensures that SYC has a clear set of objectives throughout the members term,
 - recognizes that the group acts as the main voice for young people in the borough,
 - aligns the SYC to the existing political processes and acts as an opportunity for participants to develop leadership skills,
 - takes the lead in resolving with others issues identified by young people and,
 - delivers work streams to address some of the key priorities for young people living in Southwark.
3. Council officers worked with members of the existing SYC to develop these proposals.
4. The SYC membership is limited to young people who live in Southwark. The age for a member is 14 to 19, or school years nine to 13. The term of membership is for two years. Although everyone who attends school or youth provision in Southwark was able to vote even if they lived outside the borough.
5. Each school was asked to elect two members to SYC.
6. Youth activity participants were selected on the basis of which community council area they lived in. The aim was to achieve two representatives from each of the five Community Council areas chosen through their youth clubs.
7. Schools and youth clubs were able to nominate any number of candidates but voters were only able to select two. The two people from each school or area with the most votes were the winning candidates.

8. In addition to voting for the candidate of their choice, participants were able to choose the three priority topics for SYC to address during the course of their two year term. Council officers provided a list of topics or issues on the consultation form. The list provided a mix of local concerns and more general or national issues and participants had to choose at least one from each list. The council prepared the list based on conversations with young people officers had already been talking to through various youth engagements run by the team and suggestions of people working with young people and the nominated candidates. For the following years these topics will be chosen by the outgoing SYC.
9. SYC will operate on two tiers with an inner cabinet of between 20 and 30 members. The core group will be made up of a representative from each school or area who receives the most votes.
10. To develop close relationships and bring the work of SYC closer to the decision making within the council, it is suggested that each member of the core group is buddied by a Councillor.
11. The core group of SYC members will select members to represent Southwark at the national Youth Parliament from among their membership.
12. To facilitate actions to address the three priorities, investigate the issues or broaden participation SYC has a small budget to commission or deliver projects. SYC members will also be encouraged to access additional funds to support their activity and make change.
13. Members of the SYC who are not members of the core group will belong to the full council which will meet once every two months. These individuals will be deputies and work to assist the core members to talk to students and young people, investigate issues and run wider events. Attendance will be by invitation.
14. It is important that the council rewards the young people who are making a considerable commitment to and will be volunteering to deliver a better Southwark. It is suggested that SYC members join a preexisting points or time bank time scheme such as Advise Team's Local Offer points card and the council will issue of a log book so achievements and activity can be recorded to build an improved CV. In addition some form of vouchers in exchange for the volunteering work that young people undertake will be put in place.
15. The formal structure and constitution will be written in partnership with the first elected SYC.
16. SYC will present a report to the council's cabinet in 2017 identifying the priorities for SYC.

Elections of SYC

17. Elections took place in schools and youth centres following a period of outreach and engagement with young people. This was to ensure that the schools and youth clubs receive enough support from officers and young people have more opportunity to take part as well as campaign for their candidates.

18. The priority focus for our outreach work was with schools.
19. Consideration was given to electing the voluntary sector young people at a later stage, however a two tier election posed some threats around building a cohesive core group campaigning together on issues, the possibility that the voting may change the work plan priorities for SYC, meaning that the work below will need to be repeated.
20. However it was decided that if there was poor representation from the voluntary sector at the end of the elections the council would review this and run additional elections for representatives from this sector.

Work of SYC

21. Now the youth council is up and running SYC members will champion the views of Southwark young people, build wide networks with all sectors and work closely with leading groups and organisations to identify tangible solutions for young people around the key areas below.
22. SYC members will campaign, volunteer and fundraise for priority local issues as identified by Southwark young people. Some of the top priority topics that young people have identified so far were:
 - **Bullying:** SYC members act as anti-bullying ambassadors and support young people within schools and local areas.
 - **Relationships and sexual health:** Work closely with health services such as NHS and Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to find solutions on how more young people can be better informed on healthy relationships and know how to access services relating to their sexual health.
 - **Mental Health:** Working closely with CCG, Health watch SLAM and the NHS to address young people's mental health issues.
 - **Gun and knife crime:** Working closely with Met Police, Safer Neighbourhoods Board and Change Makers to address young peoples' fears and concerns and growing incidents that affect local youths.
 - **Young people's engagement:** Connecting young people with voluntary sector organisations, sign-posting to services, democracy, cross-schools participation.
 - **Training, careers and employability:** SYC will organise training, careers fairs and employability events and courses to upskill young people in a wide range of related topics. Cross-sector professionals will be invited to provide information, mentoring and training to young people. We will aim to have themed careers and employment events to attract young people who are looking to develop within specific fields.
23. This refresh of SYC responds to one of the emerging results of the youth and play consultation, with debate and democracy being a valued activity for older young people, and supports the delivery of one of the priorities in the emerging youth and play strategy.

Community impact statement

24. The delivery of a refreshed SYC has the aim of increasing the participation rate of an often hard to reach group and embedding the forum within internal structures

for engagement and decision making should contribute positively to meeting the council's equality duties.

25. Increasing the number of participants will ensure that a wider and more diverse range of young people are involved in SYC.
26. Seeking representatives from each school in the borough and youth clubs based in the different localities will also contribute positively to the diversity of the area.
27. The council will work with the Local Offer team and Speaker Box to ensure that young people with special needs also have a voice within SYC.
28. Although young people from year 7 will be able to vote in the elections, candidates will need to be year 9 or above. The reason for this is that the members need to have the confidence and independence to reach out to all members of their school or youth club community, be able to speak out and up for other young people and engage with service providers and officers to affect change.
29. As representatives will be directly elected by young people this may mean that there is not equal or reflective representation across gender, ethnicity, religion, disability and sexuality. However as part of the initial outreach the council will encourage people to register so the candidate list for each school and area is as diverse as possible. If the composition of the SYC is unbalanced the council will work alongside members to ensure other voices are considered and to develop a process to encourage a more diverse range of people put themselves forward for the following term.
30. With young people participating in the selection of topics for the SYC work plan the activity SYC will undertake will address those issues that are thought to be most important by all young people in the borough.

Resource implications

31. Delivery of SYC has been achieved within existing Communities division resources.

UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION

32. After a borough wide campaign elections were held 13 to 19 March with 26 out of 32 candidates successfully elected to the council. The first meeting of the new Council will take place in April.
33. Young people identified the following topics as their priorities
 1. Knife Crime
 2. Careers and employment opportunities
 3. Bullying

These three topics will form the basis of the Youth councils work plan over the next two years.