

28 July 2009

Oldham Council: *The 'Oldham Youth Mayor'*

Summary of policy/project

This project is designed to involve young people in the decision making process of the Council and to create a positive role model for the Council. It also presents and opportunity to promote cohesion amongst young people from different communities. It costs almost nothing to do and has many potential benefits.

Description

In 2008 Oldham Youth councillors were asked by the then Director of children's services what did they think of the concept of Youth Mayor. We set up a task and finish group to explore Youth Mayors, as part of this group we researched other areas within the UK that had established youth Mayors, exploring the effectiveness of these roles and the different structures that had been adopted. We looked at Youth Mayor models from the London Boroughs, Darlington, Mansfield, Worthing, Southend and Tending. We found that where Youth Mayors had been established they seemed to be working well. Some had developed task groups to look at particular issues (usually where there was no link to a Youth Council. Some shadowed the Adult Mayor in their duties; some attended their own civic duties that related to young people, some had a budget that they managed and that they could give to groups of young people for things to do and places to go. Some Youth Mayors were part of existing Youth Councils. The big Question we asked ourselves was – 'would a Youth Mayor be a positive addition to Oldham? Their conclusion was Yes. After 3 months of research and consultation within the Youth Council, the task and Finish group wrote a report that included 4 options that was to be presented to the Council. The one we recommended and that has been implemented was Option 1 The Youth Mayor will be the outgoing Chair of the Youth Council. This will enable us to have a confident, trained and experienced person Youth Mayor. The Deputy Youth Mayor will be internally voted for within the Youth Council. They will serve for 1 year. Should the outgoing Chair not wish to be the Youth

Mayor, there will be an internal election within the Youth Council. This model means we have a skilled person to take up this important role. This person will have good knowledge of young people's issues, how to work with a variety of people and will also have good links to the existing representative voice of Young People, The Youth Mayor will remain a member of the Oldham Youth Council and will have therefore be able to represent the views of Oldham Young people and also have a forum to feed issues back into. The Oldham Youth Mayor has the following responsibilities:

1. To attend at one civic Duty per month alongside the Adult mayor to represent young people (this can be more depending on the time availability of the Youth Mayor)
2. To be an advocate for Children and young people
3. To represent a positive image of Children and Young people in Oldham
4. To be an active member of Oldham Youth Council
5. To report to Oldham Youth Council each month and give an update of their work.
6. To represent the views and opinions of Oldham young people and Oldham Youth council.

What problems does the policy/project solve?

On studying existing models we felt the benefits of a Youth Mayor would be:

1. Promoting Young people in a positive way in the media and the community
2. Creating an opportunity for young people to further engage in politics
3. A Positive representative and role model for Young People in Oldham.
4. The Youth Mayor Could promote cohesion and work to bring people together
5. The Youth Mayor could be a link between Young People and The Councillors
6. It will show young people that they are valued and an

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important part of the Community

What were the difficulties of implementation?

We haven't really experienced any difficulties as the member 'buy in' has been extremely positive. A report was presented to the Council and were asked to meet with the Cabinet member of Children's Services and the Mayor to further discuss how the proposal could be implemented. With their support the proposal became a reality! The Elected members of Oldham liked the idea and gave it support, showing us that young people in Oldham are valued and their ideas and opinions are taken seriously. On the 27th May 2009 the first ever Youth mayor of Oldham was made – with an official Mayor Making ceremony within Oldham Council Chambers. This was an amazing event that enabled us to celebrate this monumental occasion. The Mayor of Oldham a, cabinet member of Children's services and other elected members attended the event alongside senior officers of Oldham Council.

What is the cost of implementation?

Just staff time and a commitment that members are behind the project. This includes the ongoing administrative arrangements of mayoral bookings.

What is the evidence of success?

Very early to say the real success other than that our Young Peoples views are important to the Council and its members. We are keen that Young people are portrayed in a positive way

Would this work elsewhere?

There is no reason why not

What advice would you give any Councils wishing to adopt this idea?

Member and senior Officer commitment is important. Also that it is important that existing mechanisms are used and in particular for mayoral engagements. The young person would also only ever do an engagement with the Mayor.

For more information

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