

Report of Deputy Chief Executive

Report to Executive Board

Date: 15 October 2014

Subject: Update on response to Leeds Students' Unions deputation of March 2014

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. On 26th March 2014 representatives of Leeds University Union, Leeds Beckett Students' Union and Leeds Trinity Students' Union ('the SUs') presented a deputation to full council, wishing to increase students' representation at a policy-making level in Leeds.
2. Officers have now met with representatives of all students' unions and are arranging a cross-sector workshop for 21st October 2014 to explore appropriate arrangements that build on the strong history of collaboration between the council and student bodies in Leeds.
3. The for Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel has agreed to champion this deputation response outside of Executive Board, in line with recent changes to governance practice.

Recommendations

- 1 Executive Board is asked to note the information in this report.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This paper provides a brief update on the council's response to the deputation presented to full council on 26th March 2014 by representatives of Leeds University Union, Leeds Beckett Students' Union and Leeds Trinity Students' Union ('the SUs'). The deputation was on behalf of all HE and FE SUs in Leeds.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The SUs' deputation was concerned with increasing the representation of the city's 63,000 students at a policy-making level. The deputation proposed the creation of a "standing council of student representatives to regularly meet with the relevant council executive officers to discuss how we can make this city even better".

3 Main issues

- 3.1 An assessment of the situation in Leeds reveals that SUs currently have no representation on any listed formal partnership- or decision-making bodies, unlike the University institutions themselves.
- 3.2 However, there are many examples of close working between the student body, council services and partners on a project or ad-hoc basis:
- Students training with Police and council officers and volunteering to door-knock to promote peer-to-peer community safety and cohesion messages. Volunteers also promote how to report environmental problems and learn more about recycling / waste management.
 - In 2012, Leeds Student Union, with West Yorkshire Police and Safer Leeds, created the Landlord Awards to help drive up standards in student properties and recognise good work by landlords. The event was well received and has since gone from strength to strength.
 - The council's Private Sector Housing team works closely with student welfare offices to resolve concerns over property standards in the student market. This allows the Students Union to raise concerns with us directly. In addition the SUs are involved in our Landlord Accreditation Scheme, providing commentary on landlords' applications from a student perspective.
 - The council supports a number of SU-led environmental waste and recycling initiatives, including the University of Leeds' Environmental Champions, Leeds Beckett University Student Union's environmental volunteering co-ordinator and Re-float (glass collections) scheme, and the partnership Leave Leeds Tidy wardens and website.
 - The council's consultation and engagement team and the students' unions enjoy a strong working relationship, with the unions being commissioned to tailor and deliver key consultations with the student population. The SUs were shortlisted as 'Partner of the Year' in the council's corporate staff awards in 2013.

- 3.3 A rapid review of practice in peer local authority areas found that most councils encourage student engagement through project work on specific issues and through existing channels such as citizens' panels. Where there is a 'student strategy' or similar in place, governance and engagement arrangements are in place to support this.
- 3.4 The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel has agreed to champion this deputation response outside of Executive Board, in line with recent changes to governance practice. The Executive Member has initially proposed SU membership of the Communities Board and Housing Forum.
- 3.5 Officers from the council's consultation and engagement team have held a number of meetings with SU elected representatives and core staff over the summer, and are arranging a cross-sector workshop for 21st October 2014 to co-design appropriate options. The SUs will lead on the structure of the workshop, with the council taking a supportive and enabling role. It is likely to:
- Explore the themes that SUs feel their voice needs to influence
 - Identify the most appropriate committees and boards to achieve this through
 - Consider membership of the Communities Board and Housing Forum
 - Explore the value of regular 'forum' events in bringing together diverse thematic issues to support strategic policy development
- 3.6 Key council officers will take part in the workshop to advise on any governance or legal aspects, and to ensure all involved have realistic expectations.
- 3.7 Future reporting on progress will be directly to the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

This paper responds to engagement from Students' Unions in Leeds, in the form of a deputation, and sets out actions for future engagement with both SUs and the wider student body.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

The paper does not request a decision, and as such no formal equality impact assessment or screening form has been completed. However, the focus of the activity described here is on including the student community in decision-making, and all actions that arise will undergo appropriate equality impact assessment.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

The activity described in this paper supports the council value of 'working with communities' and the Best Council objective of 'ensuring high quality public services - improving quality, efficiency and involving people in shaping their city'.

4.4 Resources and value for money

At present there are no resource or value for money implications for this work, and future activity aims to make best use of existing structures and ways of working.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

At this time, no legal implications have been noted. However, it is likely that in future recommendations will be made about student representation in decision-making that will require legal and governance scrutiny.

4.6 Risk Management

All recommendations that arise from the proposed working group will undertake appropriate risk assessment and mitigation. There is a strategic risk of failing to include a key community appropriately in local decision-making, should this activity fail to deliver.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The cross-sector workshop provides an opportunity to co-design and recommend sustainable ways for SUs to bring the voice of the significant student population closer to decision-making, building on the close operational working relationship with the student bodies a number of council services enjoy.

5.2 The council will continue to work closely with the HE/FE sector and students' unions to encourage individual students to take part in consultation and engagement activities in Leeds, including the Citizens' Panel.

6 Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to note the information in this report.

7 Background documents ¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.