

Young People's Scrutiny Forum

Protecting our Environment

Terms of Reference

Introduction

Last year's Young People's Scrutiny Forum inquiry 'Catching the Bus' was a great success, and examined the problems related to Transport faced by young people in Leeds. In autumn 2007, Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) approached the Youth Council to suggest a new topic for scrutiny in the current municipal year.

The Youth Council decided to focus on the Environment in 2007/08. This reflected the overwhelming concern of many young people, both in Leeds and across the country, about the future of the planet. The topic was also chosen as a manifesto theme by several of the candidates in the city's 'Mayor for a Day' election, which was held in Leeds Schools during 2007 Local Democracy Week. A Young People's Scrutiny Forum has therefore been commissioned by Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) to carry out an inquiry into the environment on behalf of the board.

Following the success of last year's arrangement, whereby young people from ROAR (Reach Out and Reconnect) were also invited to join the forum, it was decided to include them in this year's inquiry as well. As a result the Young People's Scrutiny Forum is very representative of young people from across the city and members are drawn from a wide range of different age groups and backgrounds.

At the first meeting of the forum in February 2008, the forum decided to focus its inquiry on three central themes: Waste Management, Education and Sustainable Buildings.

The forum will operate under the same rules and procedures as any other scrutiny board, combined with good practice with regard to youth work and youth participation. An officer from the Scrutiny Support Unit will provide the Young People's Scrutiny Forum with support and professional advice; professional youth workers from the Youth Council and ROAR will provide the youth work expertise; and officers from the Education Leeds and Leeds City Council will provide information on current policies and possible courses of action.

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) will project manage the inquiry, agree the terms of reference and receive and consider any recommendations in the final report.

Aims of the inquiry

1. To establish ways in which schools and other Leeds City Council services can reduce their impact upon the environment, and encourage them to implement these changes.
2. To encourage Leeds City Council and Education Leeds to play a part in raising awareness of environmental issues among the people of Leeds.
3. To ensure the opinions of young people in Leeds, with regard to environmental issues, are heard and acted upon by decision makers.

The themes

The scrutiny forum has identified the following broad themes, which have in turn each been broken down into key areas of concern:

- Waste Management
 - Measures which could be taken to improve recycling – for example collecting green bins more often; providing more community recycling facilities like bottle banks
 - Ways that recycling can be promoted. Establishing what techniques are currently being used and what other methods could be used to raise awareness
 - Encouraging recycling in schools, for example by introducing an award system for the school which recycles the most each year.
- Education
 - Examining ways that local government can educate the general public about the environment and recycling. For example by looking at what Leeds City Council already does and comparing it with 'best practice' in other local authorities
 - Encouraging schools to integrate environmental issues into all lessons
 - Carrying out research into the future impact of climate change, flooding etc on Leeds and creating a simulation of what could happen
- Sustainable Buildings
 - Ensuring that all new public buildings in the city are durable and adaptable, so that they are 'future proof' and sustainable
 - Examining ways that energy consumption can be reduced
 - Looking at green energy production, and ways of removing existing barriers such as planning constraints.
 - A focus on refurbishing old buildings rather than rebuilding, and making the best use of materials so that buildings last.
 - Rating businesses in the city on their energy efficiency

Methodology

The inquiry will be conducted over a period of 6 to 9 months, using a combination of scrutiny and youth work practice including:

- The submission of written reports
- The exploration of issues through discussions and games
- Consultation with young people by young people
- A delegate event or forum meeting where young people and decisions makers can discuss the emerging issues
- Site visits to organisations in the city involved with environmental issues – for example, recycling centres, environmental projects

The inquiry will conclude with a written report, and the possible production of a short film, which will be presented to the relevant decision makers. Young people will then be involved in monitoring the progress of any recommendations over time.

Outline timetable for the inquiry

23rd February

- Introductions
- Brainstorming
- Creating outline terms of reference

3rd April

- Finishing the terms of reference
- Further development of the main themes
- Discussion of possible consultation and which methods to use

3rd May

- Feedback on initial research carried out by forum members
- Planning of consultation events
- Establishing what background information will be needed

June

- More detailed planning of the questionnaire and other consultation techniques to be used at the consultation events.

July

- A series of site visits to relevant organisations across the city
- Beginning to make a short film about the inquiry

August

- Consultation event with young people, potentially tied in with the 'Breeze' festival

September

- A meeting (or series of meetings) attended by expert witnesses to discuss the issues raised so far and gather further information on each topic (as outlined under 'themes' above)
- Further filming

October

- A recap, and brief further consideration of the evidence gathered during the visits and at the meetings with expert witnesses
- Outlining of possible recommendations.
- Further filming

November

- Draft and agree final report
- Complete film

December

- Present film, final report and recommendations to the Children's Services Scrutiny Board, and any other relevant bodies.
- Arrange for a public screening of the film – potentially on the big screen on millennium square.

Witnesses

The following witnesses have been identified as possible contributors to the inquiry:

- Education Leeds
- Leeds City Council
 - Development Department
 - Asset Management
 - Waste Management/City Services
 - Procurement
- Voluntary and community groups in the city involved in work to improve the environment