

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 13 DECEMBER 2004

REPORT ON: YOUTH CONSULTATION

REPORT BY: HEAD OF COMMUNITIES

REPORT NO: 792-2004

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report seeks approval for recommendations arising from consultations with young people about how they wish to be consulted.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee approve the following:

2.1 the establishment of an annual event to facilitate consultation between elected members, representatives of community planning organisations and young people on a negotiated agenda covering young people's priority items.

2.2 the development of regular opportunities, at local level, to encourage young people to access elected member surgeries.

2.3 the establishment of a network of personnel skilled in youth consultation/ information practice to facilitate communication between young people and decision makers.

2.4 to encourage community planning partners to use the online web services, www.youngscot.org/dundee, provided by Dialogue Youth/Young Scot (Dundee) to assist in increasing consultation with young people.

2.5 the annual event outlined under para 2.1 as the election date for and the annual reporting of the work of members of the Scottish Youth Parliament.

2.6 the continued support of localised groups of young people to address need through participation in local community planning networks.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The costs associated with this initiative can be met from within existing resources.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This report describes a framework for the views of young people to be heard.

4.2 All actions arising from this Report will be held within the framework set by Local Agenda 21.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Opportunities will be created to enable young people to play a fuller role in decisions that affect their lives.

5.2 Specific consideration will be given to ensuring that the views of young people from different minority groups, or those with disabilities, are heard.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 In Spring this year the Communities Department was asked to bring forward recommendations to ensure that the views of young people are heard.
- 6.2 The Department led an initial survey entitled "Let Us Know", which sought the views of young people about how they wish to be consulted. The survey report summarising the views of 912 respondents is contained in Appendix I.
- 6.3 In October 2004 fuller discussions were held with 63 young people in eight small groups in an effort to understand more fully the thinking that lay behind the views expressed in "Let Us Know". The detailed findings from this second stage are contained in the attached report (Appendix II).
- 6.4 In summary, young people have advised that they want to be heard by adults but don't believe that they are listened to, that they welcome opportunities to express their views about topics of interest to them and in ways that enable them to participate, and that they want to see action taken as a result. Young people wish to be taken seriously by decision-makers and have their views respected.

- 6.5 As a result of the above the recommendation outlined under paragraph 2 are proposed.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation on the Report content has taken place with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executives (Finance) and (Support Services), Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) and Directors of Leisure & Arts, Social Work and Education.

- 7.2 In the preparation of this Report the views of 912 young people have been summarised.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 The following Background Paper was relied upon in the preparation of this Report:

Report No 26-2004 "Citizenship in Youth Work" approved by Communities Committee on 12 January 2004.

Signed: Stewart Murdoch
Head of Communities

Date: 3 December 2004



LET US

KNOW



'Let Us Know' - A Synopsis of Consultation with Young People, April 2004

Objective:

To ascertain, through consultation, how young people in Dundee wish to make their views known to Dundee City Council.

Methodology:

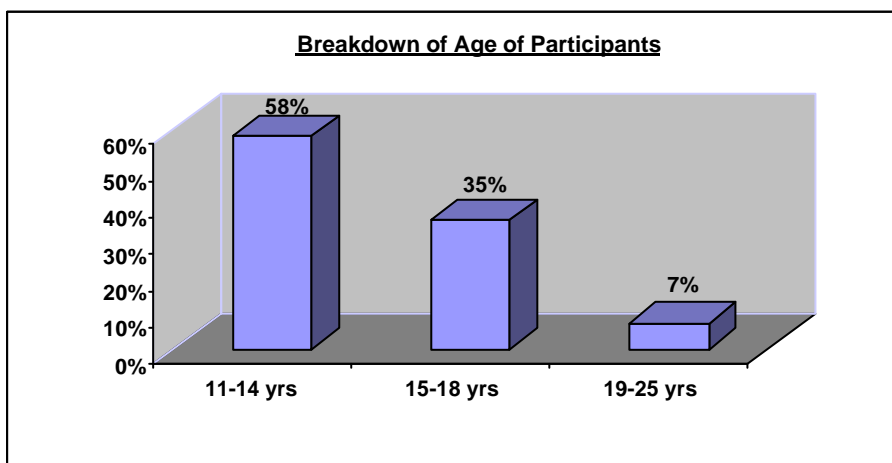
This consultation exercise was undertaken using a brief, user-friendly questionnaire. To attract a wide age range of participants the questionnaire was made available at differing locations city-wide, for example, community bases, schools and specific projects. In addition, data was collected through street work, and young people also had the opportunity of completing the form on-line via the Young Scot website, at www.youngscot.org

A copy of the questionnaire and a full report of the information analysis will shortly be available on the Young Scot site.

Synopsis of Results:

912 young people in the city were willing to participate in, 'Let Us Know', a very encouraging response. The age profile of respondents is represented in Figure 1, below.

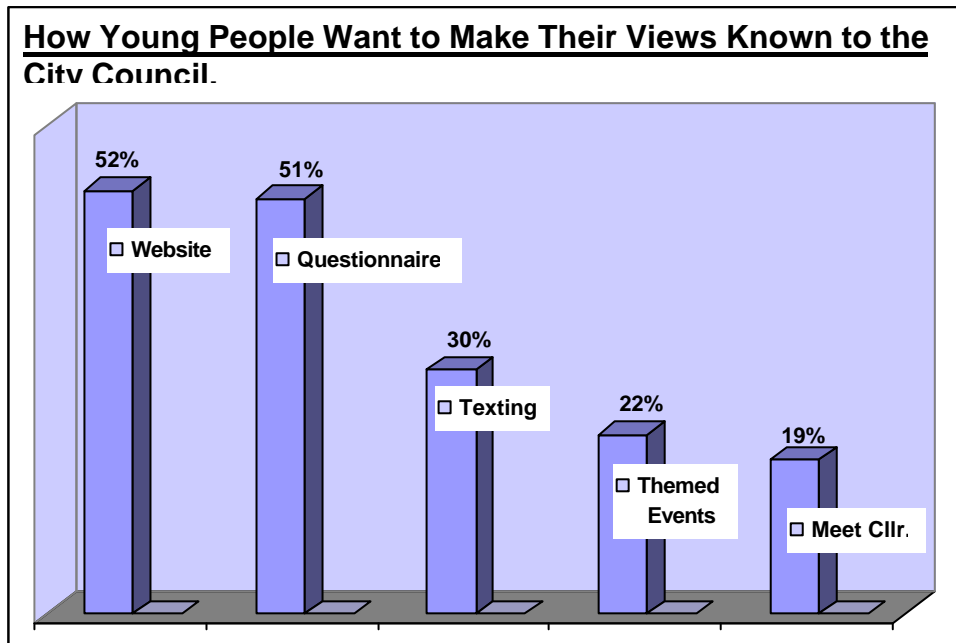
Figure 1.



This shows that the majority of participants are aged between 11 and 14 years of age, totalling 58%. The gender breakdown for all participants was 52% female and 48% male.

The young people were asked the question, ‘**How do you want to make your views known to the City Council?**’ Figure 2, below, illustrates their preferred means of communication.

Figure 2.



The evidence illustrates preferences expressed by participants when given the choice of the five options. Visiting a web site was the most popular choice (52%), closely followed by filling in a questionnaire, (51%). Sending a text message was reasonably popular, (30%), and attending themed events or meeting with a local Councillor less so, at 22% and 19% respectively.

When asked as to whom they would like to represent their views, ‘**Who would you like to represent your views?**’, young people made the following choices, outlined in Figure 3, below.

Figure 3.

Option	Choice
A Local Youth Forum	40%
A City Youth Council	37%
Adults in the Community	26%
Council Worker	23%

As well having effective mechanisms for young people to communicate with the City Council, there needs also to be an appropriate means of feeding back to them – for example, decisions made, results of consultation exercises, new developments and future plans. Respondents were asked, ‘**What is the best way for the City Council to let you know what has happened as a result of consultation?**’, Figure 4, overleaf, summarises their priorities.

Figure 4.

Means of Communication	Choice
Text messaging	34%
Report to Youth Council/Forum	24%
Report on a Web site.	22%
Feedback events.	20%

Text messaging proved a popular choice with 34% of respondents highlighting this option as their preference. The three additional options, ranked in order of priority, are still significant, ranging from around a quarter of the young people involved, (Youth/Council Forum), to a fifth, who selected 'Feedback events'.

Conclusion:

The young people of Dundee who took part in the survey would prefer to communicate with Dundee City Council via electronic means and also receive feedback in this way. In addition, support is expressed for local youth forums and a City Youth Council.

Next Steps:

It is envisaged that further work will be undertaken to provide additional qualitative information, complementing the findings from the recent questionnaire. This may take the form of small, issue-based focus groups and assist in eliciting opinions, attitudes and ideas about communicating with Dundee's younger citizens.

APPENDIX II

LET US KNOW FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Sixty-three young people participated in small discussion groups in Community Centres across Dundee. The majority of the thirty-two young men and thirty-one young women were in the age range 11 – 18 years. They discussed their views in response to the questions detailed in the survey format attached. The key findings from these discussion groups are summarised below.

How Do You Want To Communicate With The City Council?

Website

Majority support for the use of websites to facilitate communication. The view was expressed that sites need to be “youth friendly”. Particular comments were made that the City Council website is repetitive and not very appealing to young people. Access to computers does not appear to be an issue.

Questionnaire

Mixed feelings about the use of questionnaires. Some enjoy completing them and some don't and thus don't really think about the views they are expressing. General agreement that the use of incentives, eg a prize, is a good way to get young people to complete a questionnaire.

Texting

Some concerns expressed about the use of text messaging to communicate. Concerns include the cost to young people of sending a message, safety issues if they give out their 'phone number and the limited scope it provides for sending messages.

Themed Events

The most common comment about themed events was that young people will attend, but only if the subject is of interest to them. There were useful suggestions about how these events might be structured, ie should be held at week-ends, shouldn't be too casual and should be held in a central venue when it is appropriate to do so.

Meet Councillor

Only one of the young people involved could identify their Councillor. The majority said they would welcome the opportunity to meet their Councillor, but that this should be at a time and in a place that suits young people.

Concerns were voiced that the views of young people are not taken seriously and that they never hear about action taken. There is a clear willingness to engage with elected members, but this should be on young people's terms.

Who Do You Want To Represent Your Views?

A City Youth Council?

No indication of great enthusiasm for a City Youth Council, although this may reflect a lack of knowledge about what a Youth Council is or might be. Generally the view appears to be that if there is to be a Youth Council then young people should take part in order to represent other young people, that it should meet about twice per year and it should ensure that the views of young people are heard.

A Local Youth Forum?

More support for localised groupings as it appears to be the case that young people see them as more focussed on their issues in their neighbourhood. Possibly a concern that local issues can get lost in a City Youth Council.

Adults in the Community

Young people could not identify adults in the community who they would want to represent their views. This is linked to the views expressed that adults don't listen.

The only adults young people were happy to have representing their views are Youth Workers.

Council Workers

See above Adults in the Community.

How Do You Want The Council To Feed Back To You?

Text Messaging/Emailing

Support for use of these media, but advice that there are limitations with both.

Text messaging is less popular as messages would need to be short. More importantly, there appears to be more concern about giving out mobile 'phone numbers than email addresses.

Email is favoured as a means of communication, given these choices, but is limited as not every young person has easy access to a computer.

Report to a Youth Council/Forum

Young people consulted are, in general, supportive of Council reporting back about action taken, to a group or groups of their peers, however perceptions vary about what a Youth Council or Forum is.

Very few are aware of who their Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament is or what role they play.

Support for a newsletter, perhaps online, as a means of getting feedback to young people.

Some support for regular surgeries to be held by their MSYP.

Use of the Young Scot website is recognised.