

## Young People Scrutiny Engagement Group – 18<sup>th</sup> February 2026

### Attendees:

Precious (Chair)	YP Scrutineer
Eunice	YP Scrutineer
Eve	YP Scrutineer
Emperor	YP Scrutineer
Faizah	YP Scrutineer
Sebastian	YP Scrutineer
Ethan	YP Scrutineer
Ria	YP Scrutineer
Eunice	YP Scrutineer
	YP Scrutineer
	YP Scrutineer
	YP Scrutineer
	YP Scrutineer
	YP Scrutineer
	YP Scrutineer
R. Cowlam	Voice & Influence Forum Worker
C. Hartley	Voice & Influence Participation Youth Worker
J. Milnes	Young People Targeted Engagement and Participation Worker
P. Turner	Executive Director Children / Family Services / Deputy Chief Executive
A. Holgate	Head of Governance
Councillor Tock	Elected Member and Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Councillor Kennett	Elected Member
P. Todd	Scrutiny Officer

### 1. Welcome & Introductions

Introductions were made by those in attendance.

### 2. Young People, Elections and Engagement in Politics

A. Holgate provided an overview of the ongoing national project aimed at making political engagement more accessible and engaging for young people. The “At the Table” toolkit and the broader ambition to “gamify democracy” were highlighted as methods to help young people understand that politics and councillors were fundamentally rooted in community work.

It was explained that there was a need to move away from avoiding political discussions and instead remove formality and pressure so that such conversations could take place more comfortably. The group was informed that 16–17-year-olds

would soon be eligible to vote, and although legislation had not yet been passed, there was time to ensure that young people would be equipped with the right information when the changes came into effect.

Young people could currently register to vote at 16, and under new rules would likely be able to register from age 14. Officers stressed that registration was essential. It was also confirmed that the Elections Team worked year-round and that each ward had at least one polling station. Voters were reminded that photo ID was required, and that the government had introduced the free Voter Authority Certificate for those without acceptable ID.

An overview of postal and proxy voting was provided. It was explained that some adults had never visited a polling station and preferred postal voting because it reduced pressure. Voters could apply online, receive their ballot paper in the post, and return it either by mail or by delivering it to a polling station.

A ballot box was shown to the young people, and it was explained how ballot papers were checked, sealed, and tracked. Each ballot paper had a unique number, and the ballot paper account ensured no tampering. Multiple supervisors checked the process at each stage. Young people were told that marks other than crosses could be valid, depending on voter intention. Doubtful ballots were reviewed by supervisors and, if necessary, candidates at the count. If results were close, candidates could request a recount.

Schools' responsibilities regarding political education were also discussed. Officers stated that upcoming legislation would require schools to include relevant content within PSHE lessons. Work was underway with Children's Services to ensure accurate, practical information reached schools, and officers noted that Council staff might sometimes deliver these sessions.

The young people asked questions and the officer provided responses:

- i. What the Commonwealth was. Officers explained that it was a group of countries historically linked with the UK, treated in many ways as associated members.
- ii. What the Council could do to help them understand the voting process. Suggestions included providing information to schools, creating mock elections with ballots, and producing resource packs. Officers confirmed that they could produce such materials for schools and youth settings.
- iii. The importance of social media as a communication tool, noting that information needed to be engaging and accessible. Officers acknowledged this but highlighted limitations on what the Council could promote politically. They stated that the Council was exploring the use of TikTok for election-related informational content.
- iv. That peer-created TikTok videos would be even more engaging. Officers agreed to raise this with the Communications Team.

- v. Officers also proposed setting up a mock polling station to film a point-of-view walkthrough for online sharing. Young people responded that videos created by young people might be more effective. Officers agreed to consider this further and to speak with Communications colleagues.
- vi. Whether ID was required for postal voting. Officers explained that postal voting involved internal checking procedures and did not require presentation of ID, whereas polling station voters needed an accepted form of photo ID. Government changes would introduce additional ID options, such as bank cards.
  - i. Concerns about the security of bank cards or the possibility of impersonation. Officers explained that ID requirements increased protection compared to previous rules, where someone could simply state a name and address.
  - ii. Young people asked how people protected under domestic violence arrangements could vote. Officers explained that the Register of Anonymous Electors allowed individuals to vote without their address being publicly available. People could also opt out of the open register.
  - iii. Whether prisoners or young people in juvenile detention could vote. Officers clarified that individuals with a conviction resulting in a custodial sentence were not permitted to vote. Exceptions applied only in limited circumstances.
    - i. Preventing multiple voting, photocopying ballots, or disguising identity through plastic surgery. Officers clarified that each voter only received one ballot paper, unique identifiers prevented duplication, and ID had to show a recognisable likeness.
    - ii. Whether count staff were sworn to secrecy; officers confirmed that they were, and that candidates and agents were also legally bound to confidentiality.
  - iii. Procedures for tied results, including recounts and the potential use of a random draw if necessary, provided methods were clear and agreed.
  - iv. Why voting was not conducted electronically. Officers explained that electronic voting was not lawful and referenced international controversies regarding electronic systems.
  - v. Whether the Prime Minister could vote (officers confirmed they could), and whether London boroughs had their own parties. Officers explained the two-tier system of local government elections and elections for mayors and MPs.
  - vi. The role of political parties in schools and how young people—such as those involved in Youth Parliament—already experienced campaigning and voting processes. Officers expressed interest in working with the group to co-design future engagement activities.

**Agreed –**

- a. That information be provided off-agenda on elections employment opportunities;
- b. That information be provided off-agenda on voting rights for those in prison/ incarcerated;

- c. For discussions to take place with the Communications team on the use of TikTok, and young people being involved in creating content;
- d. To explore creating a resource pack on elections, that could include mock elections/ballot papers, which could be distributed to schools to aide in the teaching of voting.

### **3. Young People's Item**

Future meetings were discussed and advised that:

- The March meeting to focus Transport and Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Future topics to explore: Mental Health & Eating Disorders; Communications and Engagement with Young People; Environment and sustainability.