

## **Report to Constitution and Members' Services Standing Scrutiny Panel**



**Report reference:**  
**Date of meeting:**

### **Portfolio**

**Subject:** Youth Commission Consultation Document "Old Enough to Make a Mark"

**Responsible Officer:** I Willett (01992 564243)

**Democratic Services Officer:** M Jenkins (01992 564607)

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### **Recommendation:**

**That the Panel address and comment on the questions listed in the report to enable the Council to respond to the Youth Commission on the eight questions listed.**

### **Report:**

- ...
1. The Youth Commission has published a consultation document (attached) entitled "Old Enough to Make a Mark?" which explores whether the voting age should be lowered to the age of 16. Consultation on the document is open until 20 January 2009.
  2. **Executive Summary**
    - 2.1 The Panel is referred to Pages 4 and 5 of the Consultation Document (Executive Summary) which outlines the current legal position, international comparisons and some facts and figures arising from recent research about the relationship between young people and the electoral process.
    - 2.2 In summary, a person must be 18 years of age or older before they can vote. However the report points out that different minimum ages of responsibility are identified in legal terms. These are listed in the document. Reference is made to international practice which broadly favours 18 years of age as the lower limit for voting although some countries have moved to the age of 16.

2.3 The document also draws attention to how to engage young people with the electoral process and the part to be played by citizenship education in schools which has been operating since 2002.

### 3. Consultation Questions

These are set out on Page 24 of the document and the Panel is asked to review each of these in turn.

3.1 In regard to Question 8, there are references to the funding and administration of electoral registration and elections.

3.2 In terms of electoral registration, there will probably be an increase in workload in order to pre-register the rising of 16 and 17 year olds on the electoral roll. However, after the first year, adding those names onto the electoral roll will be very similar to the current process. It may be that additional staffing (temporary) might be required in that first year.

3.3 For the electoral process, the eligibility of 16 and 17 year olds would not make for any difficulties with running elections. However, with more persons registered to vote, it is possible that turnouts will fall.

3.4 Reference is made to education, advice and information for young people. Returning Officers are already under a duty to promote involvement in the electoral process and it is not envisaged that young people would be treated any differently from the rest of the electorate. The Panel may wish to bear in mind the civic ceremonial review where members felt that the Chairman of the Council should have an important role in forming links with schools and promoting the democratic process to liaise more closely with local schools in their citizenship programmes.

3.5 There have been a number of changes in the law in recent years where the Government has acknowledged that Returning Officers and Registration Officers will be incurring more costs. Additional work in connection with registration of 16 and 17 year olds will arise especially in the early stages. It is hoped that this would be recognised by the Government for additional funding. The Government should be pressed to ring fence the additional funding to ensure it is used for this purpose and not absorbed into the

Council's support grant settlement.

#### **4. Youth Council Discussions**

4.1 The Youth Councillors intend to consider the consultation document at Full Youth Council on 6 January 2008. They will be asked to decide whether they would like to respond to the consultation and if so to submit answers to the Youth Citizenship Commission and report their views directly to the Panel. This information will be supplied in a supplementary document or tabled at the meeting.

#### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To enable the Council to respond to the current consultation by the due deadline.

#### **Other Options for Action:**

To make no comments or defer to the Youth council to respond on behalf of the Council..

**Resource Implications:** Nil.

**Budget Provision:** Nil.

**Personnel:** Nil.

**Land:** Nil.

**Community Plan/BVPP Reference:** Nil.

**Relevant Statutory Powers:** Local Government Act 2000 and the Representation of the People Act.

**Background Papers:** Nil.

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CONSULTATION DOCUMENT.doc