



Young Mayor's Project

Background

The voice of the child has long been recognised as an essential component in shaping youth policy improving educational outcomes and contributing to civic life and community well being.

The UK government also strongly supports the effective involvement of children, and young people in policy making. ¹ As part of this the government published its white paper; 'Youth Matters: Next Steps' in March 2006 and set out the vision for empowering young people.² Which is reflected in "Aiming High" 2007, the Governments ten year Strategy for Children and Young People. Where the Young Mayor scheme is mentioned as an effective model for youth participation.

Lewisham has a strategic approach to engaging young people in the decisions that impact upon their lives and shape our community. Our framework for Children and Young People's Participation and Citizenship sets out how we do this and what we are trying to achieve:

- Maximise and co-ordinate participation in public policy, planning and decision-making;
- Ensure children and young people are consulted on the development and delivery of public services;
- Provide opportunities for children and young people to engage in citizenship activities of their own choice;
- Give children and young people access to guidance and support to make informed choices about their lives.

The Young Mayor's project is at the heart of Lewisham's Children and Young People's citizenship and participation strategy. As a key corporate priority for the Council, the project is an integral part of the council's commitment to provide opportunities for children and young people to engage in citizenship and to ensure young people are consulted on the development and delivery of public services.

Each Young Mayor receives an allocation of £25,000 and makes proposals on expenditure to the Mayor following consultation with young people in Lewisham during their one year term of office.

In April 2006, this innovative initiative was nationally recognised when the London Borough of Lewisham was awarded Beacon Status for 2006 – 2007 for its 'Positive Youth Engagement' (In the Community and Democratic Process by

¹Dfes- Every Child Matters (2004), <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/>

² Dfes – Youth Matters, 2006. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/youth/>

the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister & the Improvement & Development Agency).³

In June 2007, Wilf Petherbridge, former Young Mayor of Lewisham chaired a Cabinet meeting in Downing Street with the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers⁴. This was a result of the Young Mayor's contribution to the review and consultation that informed the Governments 'Aiming Higher (2007)10 year Strategy'.⁵ Aiming Higher sets out a transformational strategy to increase opportunities, activities and support services for young people in England.

Regionally they are helping to develop a Young Mayor's Network, are involved in planning and organising GLA events, consultations and supporting borough conferences around young people's participation.

Increasingly the young mayor's and their advisors are involved in national and European exchange programmes with their peers who are engaged in Youth Democracy in other countries. Working with colleagues in Prague and Sofia towards a joint manifesto

How does it work?

The Young Mayor is elected each year by young people from across the borough. The elections are promoted and held largely in schools but provision is also made for postal voting and ballot papers are sent to all home-educated young people as well.

Candidates must either live or attend school/college in Lewisham borough and be aged 14-17 years. To stand for election each candidate must obtain nominations from 50 of their peers and attend a one day training session. The training includes how to write a manifesto and run a campaign and what to expect if you get elected. Candidates are encouraged to set up a "Campaign team" of their peers to support them and they have just over 3 weeks to campaign. This has included young people taking assemblies in different schools, campaigning with leaflets on the street and using social networking to spread their message to their peers.

On polling day, our electoral services team run an election in the same way that they do for the adult elections. Ballot boxes, voting booths and electoral staff are stationed at each secondary school and college in the borough for

³ Beacon Award for Positive Youth Engagement, March 2006.
<http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/NewsAndEvents/News/NewsArchive/MarchApril2006/LewishamScoopsSecondBeaconAward.htm>, also see Appendix A.

⁴ <http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page12685.asp>. Cabinet meeting, Downing Street, July 2007.
<http://www.4children.org.uk/information/show/ref/1049> . View Appendix A for photos and press release.

⁵ Aiming Higher, 2007.
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/tenyearyouthstrategy/docs/cyp_tenyearstrategy_260707.pdf

the duration of the school day (+half an hour either side). All young people resident or attending a school in the borough aged 11 – 18 can vote. The count is held the following day, again with the support of electoral staff, and young people assist in this process. A results ceremony is then held and the new Young Mayor, Deputy Young Mayor and Young Advisers are announced that day. Elections now take place during Local Democracy week each year and Voter registration, for 16-18 year olds, is promoted at the same time.

The successful candidate in last years election in October 2008, and the fifth Young Mayor for Lewisham, was Miguel Gutierrez Astudillo. A total of 9327 young people voted from across the borough with a turnout of 49%. The turnout has increased each year since the beginning of the programme.

The Young Mayor's duties include representing and advocating for young people locally, nationally and even internationally. He/she therefore responds to press requests, attends conferences and local community events. In addition the Young Mayor has a budget of £25,000 to spend on projects that benefit young people in the borough.

Young Advisors

The second place candidate automatically becomes the Deputy Young Mayor and the third and fourth candidates from the election are automatically invited to serve as Young Advisors to the Young Mayor and the Deputy Young mayor.

The Young Advisors are a group of around 25 young people who act in a similar capacity to a cabinet. Each member is 'elected' onto Young Advisors either through the Young Mayor's election or by a specific group whom they represent. For example there are representatives from local groups such as young carers, contact-a-family, town centre (regeneration) project, young citizens panel, young people's health project, community safety inquiry, leaving care group etc.

This group meets weekly or fortnightly to support the business of the Young Mayor and to deputise at events where appropriate. They are regularly consulted on key decisions that the council needs to make and their recommendations are sought on numerous issues. The Young Advisors have also been involved in the appointment process for key Council posts such as the Head of Commissioning for Children and Young People, and also for the post of Participation Worker for the Youth Service. The Young Mayor and advisors contribute to strategic documents such as the Children and Young People's Plan and regeneration programmes within the borough, and have been part of Corporate assessments and Inspections; discussing their roles and the effectiveness of the project. They also participate in and support the Looked After Children Group and Corporate Parenting Group, the Police Independent Advisory Group, Lewisham Police Consultative Group, Schools Councils, and Young Managers Board to name a few.

The young advisors share the work load of the young mayor and deputy young mayor, and importantly help in formulating ideas for spending the £25,000 budget. Having identified ideas and consulted with other young people the Young Mayors budget is presented to Mayor and Cabinet for approval.

Young Citizens Panel

The Young Advisor's Group has a limited capacity as a group which is why there is a Young Citizens Panel, which is open to any young people who want to get involved in having a say and decision making in Lewisham .. The Young Citizens Panel has an entirely open membership which any young person aged 11-18 either living or at school/college in the local area is able to join. The Citizens Panel is an overarching group which aims to comprise of many different groups who work with young people around citizenship, politics and local issues..

The panel has in excess of 300 members and exists in a virtual format. Members are invited to participate in various opportunities throughout the year; these include one off consultations, ongoing groups and training opportunities related to participation (e.g. peer evaluators of the youth service), telephone and postal surveys.

The topics that panel members are consulted on are wide and varied and both specific to young people and more generally related to the whole community. In 2009 the Young Citizens Panel will link into wider community participation initiatives which will reflect young peoples developing interest in the wider community.

Running the project

The Office of the Young Mayor employs 2 qualified youth and community staff full-time and relies on additional personnel time and resources across the Council and Public Agency Partners to deliver the programme throughout the year. The lead member of staff is the Advisor to the Young Mayor who is responsible for the Young Mayor's diary and activities, delivering projects and supporting the Young Mayor to achieve what he/she hopes to with their year. The second post is dedicated to the development of the Young Citizens Panel and supporting the Young Advisors.

Partnerships and networks with other participation projects in the borough, the youth service and schools are key in making the opportunities available to as many young people as possible in the borough.

The project sits distinctly from the Youth Service in Lewisham and instead is attached to the Mayor's Office. This is key in providing genuine dialogue

between the Executive Decision Maker (Directly Elected Mayor) in the council and the Young Mayor and his/her advisors.

Including personnel costs, but excluding the Young Mayor's own budget, the Office of the Young Mayor costs around £150,000 per year. The largest outgoing, after salaries, is running the election.

How the Young Mayor's Money is spent...

The budget of £25,000 is normally spread across projects that correlate to their manifesto pledges as well as priorities identified in consultation with the young advisors. Below is an illustration of some of the activities the budget has been used to fund both at present and in the past. In this year's budget the young mayor and advisors reflected their developing awareness as citizens by showing a commitment and understanding to working with the wider community. They allocated part of their budget to "Block Parties" and "police hotspot boxes" which confirms their progression from focusing on young people's issues to seeing themselves as members of civic society with an increased awareness of their responsibilities and commitment to the communities in which they live.

- Youth Conference, planned, organised and facilitated by young people from across borough for other young people to look at issues of interest and concern to young people.
- CD of local young people representing different genres of music all with a positive message about unity and bringing together young people from different areas of Lewisham.
- Feel Safe, Be Safe – In direct response to young people in the borough informing a former young mayor that they felt unsafe in some areas in Lewisham. He initiated workshops with the police and local young people exploring issues of community safety and how they themselves can contribute to it. The workshops were delivered to 800 young people aged 8-18 across the borough. Participants included those with special needs and the programme continues to run.
- Text Book – An A5 Youth Directory, designed by young people themselves in a cartoon format. The Directory contains information of organisations to contact and places to go about a number of issues such as health, careers, sports and advice. The Directory incorporates a facility to text for more information and 20,000 were distributed across the borough.

Achievements and outcomes

The elected Mayor leads across the local authority as a whole with high visibility and a consensual style that fosters high – trust partnerships. For young people there is added leadership from a Young Mayor, a high profile, well-supported role that has real impact on mainstream policy. Strong external communication promotes good understanding and engagement.

Lewisham's first directly elected Young Mayor took office in April 2004. The election took place across Lewisham's secondary schools and sixth form colleges, and all pupils were eligible to stand as candidates and to vote. Lewisham residents attending secondary schools and colleges outside the borough were also encouraged to vote through local youth centres or on-line. Forty candidates, under the age of 18 years were nominated to stand in the election and the turnout was 44.6% representing 7653 votes cast.

Lewisham's second directly elected Young Mayor was elected in October 2005, using a similar democratic process that include postal votes, and direct mailing to home educated pupils. There were thirty three candidates aged 14 - 17 years, and the election turnout was increased to 46.9% representing 8110 votes cast.

- In 2006, 46% of young people in schools voted in the election of the Young Mayor; and subsequently the authority achieved beacon status for its work in this area.
- Youth participation has increased each year in a variety of community programmes and volunteering initiatives. There are some good examples of young people helping to shape projects at a local level for example, in the commissioning and evaluation of our Summer Activities and PAYP Programmes. And supporting the Youth Opportunities Fund programmes.
- The turn out has continued to rise each year cumulating in a turnout of 49% in 2008.
- The Residents survey indicates that young people in Lewisham feel considerably more informed and involved than young people in equivalent boroughs.
- Lewisham's third directly elected Young Mayor, Siobhan Bell, was elected in October 2006. she was the first Young Woman to be Elected as Young Mayor in the UK.
- The project works with European partners (Czech Republic/Bulgaria), through the British Youth Council where organised groups of young people, working with politicians and officers have met to discuss a joint manifesto, models of participation, impact and commitment of senior politicians and officers to support young people's involvement in local governance and political processes.

- Between 2007 and 2008 Young Advisors held Fringe Party Meetings at all the major Political Party Conferences to discuss the Young Mayors Project and young people's participation in local democracy and politics.

Over the years the Young Mayor has been able to draw on a very wide range of young people's opinions to influence his/her thinking and has had the opportunity to attend events, conferences, meetings and discussion groups, as well as carrying out their own budget consultation process through youth clubs, schools, Website and the Young People led Conference.

Increasingly due to the knowledge and experience of young mayors and advisors who have been involved in the project over 5 years, they are requested to participate in organising and advising at regional and national level with, for example, the Greater London Authority and the 4Children Health Review.

In October 2007, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, named Lewisham as an empowerment champion for its work in getting young people involved⁶. The Secretary of State recognised the young mayor's project for engaging young people in the policy making process and giving them the chance to contribute and shape policy and programmes that empower young people in the community.

Testimonials/ positive comments

"In 2004 Lewisham's elected Mayor introduced the country's first young mayor – an innovation that other authorities are now following". (Councillors Commission Report 'representing the future', Department for Communities and Local Government December 2007)⁷

"Lewisham's Young Mayor's project is a model for youth engagement across the country". (Ed Milliband, Minister for the Cabinet Office)

"Lewisham is one of the local authorities leading the charge for empowering people and doing excellent work through its young mayor's project". (Hazel Blears MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government)

"I think the Young Mayor of Lewisham is a great idea. It will give the young people a real say in the future of the area. We know the good things about

⁶ DCLG, Lewisham named empowerment champion, Oct 2007.

<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=324089&NewsAreaID=2>

⁷ Councillors Commission Report, DCLG 2007.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/councillorscommission/publications/representingthefuture/>

living in Lewisham, and some of the things that need to be improved". (Ian Wright, Former Arsenal and England footballer)

"By giving young people a real say and genuine decision-making power within the borough, we believe we can make Lewisham a better place to live in, not just for young people, but for everyone". (Lewisham Mayor, Sir Steve Bullock)

APA Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community

Progress in 2007-08

Lewisham was the first borough in the country in 2004 to elect a Young Mayor and advisers. The Young Mayoral election is now part and parcel of the democratic process in the borough. Since 2004, three more Young Mayors have been elected – most recently in October 2007 with a voter turn out of 45%.

Working with the young mayor are 25 'Young Advisers' who act in a similar capacity to a cabinet. Young Advisers are 'elected' either as runners up in the Young Mayor's election or by groups that they represent (covering a wide range of interests including young carers, contact-a-family, town centre (regeneration) project, young citizens panel, young people's health project, and the community safety inquiry.

The Young Mayor and advisers' duties include representing and advocating for young people locally, nationally and even internationally. They are consulted on key local decisions and issues and involved in conducting interviews to appoint senior staff in the council. They were involved in writing both the adult and young person's versions of the Children and Young People's plan. They have a budget of £25,000 to spend on projects that benefit young people in the borough.

Elements of the Young Mayor and Young Advisers programme in 2007-08 included involvement locally in the Equalities audit, the Joint Area Review, the Enhanced Youth Inspection, the Corporate Performance Assessment, the Mayoral commission, the Borough's Transport Strategy, the annual Young People's Conference and the Regeneration Strategy. Nationally they participated in government and London wide organisations on the Aiming High launch, the Youth Cabinet at Downing Street, Good practice seminars at the Ministry of Justice, LBL's own Empowerment beacon day, the GLA budgets, the GLA international Youth Conference, a conference on looked after children and the role of corporate parenting and an LCPCG event around knives, guns and gangs.

16th October 2007 Lewisham Corporate Assessment Report

Executive summary

6. For young people there is added leadership from a Young Mayor, a high-profile, well-supported role that has real impact on mainstream policy. Strong

external communication promotes good understanding and engagement for the Mayor and Council's work.

Ambition

30. The Council gives top priority to and is especially strong at engaging young people. It has Beacon status for it. It has a well-supported and high-profile Young Mayor with a team of advisers, elected from youth centres, schools and other young people living in the Borough. The role has considerable influence on the Mayor and on mainstream Council policies as they affect young people. The Young Mayor not only achieves improved representation for young people but the role's high visibility and real influence encourages children and young people in feeling that active citizenship is worthwhile.

Supporting statements from the Young Mayor/ex-Young Mayors

“I’ve got the chance to put my ideas and plans into action and I just can’t wait” (Justin Cole, Young Mayor of Lewisham, 2008)

“Being Young Mayor is a great experience. It opens up lots of new opportunities including meeting new people, being involved in new ideas and activities and having responsibility for influencing decisions on behalf of other young people” (Siobhan Bell, Young Mayor 2006 – 2007)

“It is great opportunity to demonstrate the way in which adults and young people can work positively together” Wilf Petherbridge, (former Young Mayor of Lewisham)

“I have been to places where I have never been to before, and I met with Prime Minister Gordon Brown, worked with London Mayor Ken Livingstone lots of times, at events like an evening reception for women’s week. It has helped me learn more about politics” (Luzianne Tchiegue-Nouta, former Deputy young Mayor of Lewisham)

Future Plans

The Young Mayor’s initiative has raised the profile of Lewisham and our young people. It continues to attract considerable attention from the media, with features in the Times Education supplement, the Daily Telegraph and the Local Government Chronicle amongst others.

The challenge now is to ensure that policy makers do take notice. As well as to ensure that the young mayor remains central to local democracy now and in the future by providing a voice for young people and crucially showing them they really can make a difference.

The plans for 2009 and the future are to continue working and strengthening the four areas of work that the young mayor and advisors are currently involved in, locally, regionally, nationally and in Europe:

As well as continuing to represent young people and their issues,, interests and concerns in Lewisham, the young mayor and advisors will work with the Young Citizen's Panel, school councils and local assemblies to support young people in Lewisham to become active in their local communities. By engaging young people through their networks and by engaging with the voluntary and community sector to identify young people who are organising and participating but may need support to further their ideas within their communities. The project is well recognised by young people in Lewisham and has the required legitimacy, experience and knowledge to capacity build in local communities.

Regionally the young mayor and advisors, with their colleagues from other London boroughs (who are linked through the Young Mayors Network) will identify and support other boroughs and young people to develop their participation strategies and how this can link to the GLA.

Nationally the young mayor and advisors will identify and visit young people, organisations, politicians and officers across different regional local authorities to research, promote and support the development of effective youth participation strategies and then share ideas and good practice through a national/European conference.

Across Europe the young mayor and advisors will increase their European network of young people, organisations, politicians and officers. In order to promote good practice and share experiences of being European and explore the possibilities of influencing and participating in European democratic processes.

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Appendix A

Influence and Achievement



Justin Cole, Young Mayor of Lewisham in conversation with Minister for the Cabinet Office, Ed Miliband MP.



Former Young Mayor of Lewisham, Wilf Petherbridge with Prime Minister Gordon Brown participating at a Youth cabinet meeting in Downing Street.



Wilf Petherbridge, Young Mayor of Lewisham Chairing a Youth Cabinet Meeting with Prime Minister Gordon Brown beside him in Downing Street.

27 July 2007

Former Lewisham Young Mayor chairs special Youth Cabinet

Former Lewisham Young Mayor, Wilf Petherbridge, chaired a special cabinet meeting at Downing Street ahead of the launch of the Government's 10-year Youth Strategy.

Gordon Brown swapped places with 16 year-old Wilf yesterday, to allow him to chair a Youth Cabinet made up of a selection of young people from across the UK. They were given the chance to put questions to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet ministers about opportunities and facilities for young people.

Joining Gordon Brown for this special session was Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, The Rt Hon David Miliband MP, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, The Rt Hon Ed Balls MP and Children's Minister, Beverly Hughes MP.

Wilf co-chaired the year-long Make Space Youth Review which examined lives of young people in the UK today. The inquiry asked over 16,000 young people what provisions they needed to ensure healthy, fulfilling and exciting teenage years. The findings of the Review informed the development of the Government's new 10-year Youth Strategy.

Wilf said, "This was another great opportunity to demonstrate the way in which adults and young people can work positively together, the way we do in Lewisham.

"Through the Make Space Youth Review, we have talked to thousands of young people across the country and we are all saying the same thing -- we want to positively contribute to ensuring that youth provision meets our needs and helps us to fulfil our potential."

Councillor Robert Massey, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said,

"With his excellent report and now a meeting with Gordon Brown, Wilf has demonstrated just how much our young people can achieve.

"To see a young man from Lewisham sitting in the Prime Minister's chair demonstrates that local and national politicians alike take the Young Mayor scheme very seriously indeed.

"I hope this encourages even more of our under-18s to think about running in the elections this autumn - just look where it might lead them!"

11 July 2007

Lewisham young people present key report to Prime Minister

Former Lewisham Young Mayor Wilf Petherbridge and current Deputy Young Mayor Luziane Tchiegue-Nouta presented Prime Minister Gordon Brown with a report calling for action to save today's generation of teenagers.

The Make Space Youth Review, co-chaired by Wilf and former MP Oona King, consulted 16,000 young people across the UK to find out what life was like for a teenager today. Young people were asked what they wanted from the Government and what services they needed to have the most healthy, fulfilling and exciting teenage years.

The year-long enquiry found that 80% of the teenagers consulted said they had nowhere to go and nothing to do outside school, so hung around the streets bored as a result. It also revealed that 70% of those interviewed believed that young people got involved in anti-social behaviour because they were bored.

The Review, undertaken by children's charity 4Children and supported by Nestlé, comes at a time of intense debate about the welfare of young people in the UK.

Wilf Petherbridge said: "It's been really exciting co-chairing this Review and knowing that the opinions of 16,000 young people across the UK will have to be taken seriously by the new Prime Minister.

"I think it's brilliant that all the young people I met during the inquiry seemed to think that the kind of Young Mayor scheme Lewisham has should be everywhere so that all young people can get their voices heard."

Recommendations from the year-long review include:

- * A Youth Centre in every community providing dedicated spaces for young people to meet, as well as access to music, creative arts, sports, classes and specialist intervention and support for teenagers in difficulty.
- * The provision of a Young Mayors scheme in every area to give teenagers representation and a say in their community.

Mayor of Lewisham, Sir Steve Bullock said: "Young people are the key to our future. In Lewisham we recognise the value of their views and opinions and have a proud record of listening to and working with our younger residents.

"Lewisham has long supported the case for electing young mayors across the country because we believe it is important that we engage with young people and involve them in democracy and decision-making."

The Review is calling for an urgent transformation of support for teenagers, recommending a programme of Government investment and action to create a "Sure Start" approach for older children. This would provide positive opportunities for all young people with early support and intervention for troubled teenagers to prevent difficulties escalating.

13 March 2007

Former Lewisham Young Mayor presents report to Chancellor Gordon Brown

Former Young Mayor of Lewisham Wilf Petherbridge and former MP Oona King led a delegation of young people dressed in hoodies to 11 Downing Street and presented Chancellor Gordon Brown with a report calling for more resources for young people.

The Chancellor accepted the interim findings of the Make Space Youth Review, which is intended to influence the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, due to be published in June 2007.

The year-long inquiry, co-chaired by Wilf Petherbridge and Oona King consulted with 7000 young people across the UK to find out what life was like for a teenager today. Young people were asked what they wanted from the Government and what services they needed to have the most healthy, fulfilling and exciting teenage years.

The interim findings revealed that young people need a centre or space of their own, in their local communities, that offer fun activities with support from adults. The report said having this resource would mean fewer young people wandering the streets and getting into trouble. The report also found that young people wanted a say in their local communities and to be involved in decision-making and recommended a system of Young Mayors backed by Youth Parliaments in every area.

Former Young Mayor of Lewisham, Wilf Petherbridge said: "We're very fortunate in Lewisham to have successful and effective initiatives including the Young Mayor programme. It really encourages young people in the Borough to get involved in their local community, and gives young people an influential voice. This is part of what we are asking from Government, as well as places to go and things to do.

"The Make Space Youth Review has given young people across the UK an opportunity to have their say. Now we're asking the Government to listen and to act on what's been said."

13 October 2006

First female Young Mayor elected in Lewisham

Last night Siobhan Bell was elected Lewisham's Young Mayor -- the first female to reach the post.

The 17 year-old from Crossways Academy won after taking 1,948 votes and was joined by a female deputy.

The business student ran on a manifesto which promised constructive changes in environment, health and education and homelessness.

The new Young Mayor said: "I'm so excited. It's good girls have been elected.

"The past two years have been boys, but now we've got a chance to show we can do the job and do it in a different way.

"The fact we're black as well shows people what can be done if you work hard.

"I'd like to thank everybody who supported me and helped in my campaign."

Steve Bullock, the adult Mayor of Lewisham, said: "I am delighted that once again the young people of Lewisham have shown they believe in democracy.

"We've proved wrong those who said young people cannot be engaged and have lost touch with democracy.

"I congratulate Siobhan on a great campaign and I hope she will continue to give the borough's young people a genuine voice.

The new deputy Young Mayor was announced as Luziane Tchiegue-Nouta, 15, from Sydenham School at a ceremony held in the council's Civic Suite on October 12.

In total 7,967 youngsters voted in the elections -- a 43 per cent turnout.

Bridget Prentice, MP for Lewisham East, and Democracy Minister at the Department for Constitutional Affairs said: "Clearly Lewisham is leading the way in helping young people express their views on things that matter to them. That's what electing a Young Mayor is all about. It's what politics should be all about.

I'm very proud of Lewisham's young mayor and tell other councils across the country about it. The Government's aim is to get more young people involved in the democratic process and that means firstly getting them registered to vote, then they can have their say, just as Lewisham's young people have done today."

The Young Mayor received 1,948 votes, while her deputy polled 1,434. Third place went to Margaret Oybambi, 16, from Deptford Green school, with 684 votes and in fourth was Jasmine Jarvis, 14, from Sedgemoor school with 583.

Guests included Wilf Pertherbridge, last year's Young Mayor, Bridget Prentice MP, Steve Bullock, Mayor of Lewisham and delegates from the schools council in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Councillor Robert Massey, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said: "Once again we've demonstrated how enthusiastic our young people are about engaging with issues which really matter to them.

"In Lewisham we give our young people real power which past young mayors have used excellently and I'm sure Siobhan will do just the same this year."

18 October 2005

7000 young people get engaged in Lewisham

The votes of more than 7000 young people will prove that it is possible to engage young people in democracy when Young Mayor elections are held in the London Borough of Lewisham tomorrow.

The race will be contested by 33 young people aged 14 to 17. The Young Mayor will be in office for one year and hold a budget of £25,000, as well as advising Steve Bullock, the elected Mayor of Lewisham on issues affecting young people.

The idea for the election came from Steve Bullock,

"I wanted to make sure that young people in Lewisham are listened to. This way they get a real opportunity both to influence the agenda for young people and develop projects of their own."

"Our first Young Mayor, Manny Hawks, did a fantastic job. He showed that young people are interested in politics and that they have great ideas for improving where they live. I am delighted that interest in this unique campaign is making such an impact." he said.

Young Mayor for 2004, Manny Hawks said, "Being Young Mayor was an amazing experience. I hope whoever wins this year's election enjoys their year as much as I did, and makes Lewisham more cool than it already is."

All candidates have attended specially organised workshops where they learned about what young people expect a young mayor to do, how the election process works, and how to present a manifesto.

02 July 2008

BBC London Young Londoners' Youth Democracy - Yixiang Zeng

A group of young Londoners from the Lewisham Young Mayor's Project visited Prague as part of a youth exchange visit. Find out more about the issues affecting young people in different cities.

Prague Visit

Justin Cole, the Young Mayor of Lewisham, along with his nine Young Advisors visited Prague as part of a British Council funded project. It was an opportunity for them to experience foreign culture, work with different nationalities and improve their awareness of local democracy and decision-making processes.



Young advisors & locals in Prague

During the meeting with a group from Gorna in Sofia, Prague, they discussed several issues relating to their local communities, such as the young coach project, which aims to train young people to become sports coaches.

But top of the agenda was improving the relationship between the local police force and young people.

The Young Advisors from Lewisham spoke about how they think the capital's police perceive them and the impact that has on how young people feel. The Lewisham advisors also expressed concern at what they said was the automatic stereotyping of young Londoners, who are often associated with gun/knife crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour.

Building Bridges

One solution to these perceptions is to work at building better relationships between the police, founded on trust and respect. It's hoped this will then ultimately lead to better safety awareness among young Londoners.

Another way to diffuse the tension is to engage the young people through creative arts such as acting and performing in their local communities.

While in Prague the Lewisham advisors watched the show 'Commedia Dell'arte XXL', performed by the students of The College of Acting in Prague.

Nathan Edoe, one of the Young Advisors, had a great experience on the trip: "It was really fun and we're absolutely interested in developing acting and performing activities for young people."

He also went on to comment on how he hoped these opportunities would be open not only to young Londoners, but all the young Europeans and hoped their voice could be heard by local government.

Young Europeans' Cultural Integration

Apart from discussing hot issues, they were also actively socialising with other nationalities, sharing different experiences and learning from each other. They also visited Prague Zoo and Planetarium.

The Young Mayor and his advisors said the trip had been a great opportunity to see how the same issues, surrounding young people in London and Prague, are being tackled. Both countries have the same aim, same dream and belief to help young Europeans achieve their full potential.

Young Mayor Project

Lewisham's Young Mayor Project implemented in 2004, provides young Londoners from the borough (either living or attending school/college) with the opportunity to be elected as the Young Mayor of Lewisham.

The Young Mayor runs a budget of £25,000 each year for implementing different projects, which aim to improve the lives of young Londoners in Lewisham. Since 2004 they have run various projects around youth safety, sports and social activities.

All photos taken by Nathan Edoe - Arcadeia Photos