

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	1 June 2021
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Scottish Youth Parliament Elections
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide an update on the process and timescales for South Lanarkshire Scottish Youth Parliament elections

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the arrangements to elect young people to be members of the Scottish Youth Parliament be noted;
- (2) that the commitment and contribution of South Lanarkshire Youth Council and Scottish Youth Parliament to the youth agenda be noted; and
- (3) that the continued contribution and participation in local planning issues be noted.

3. Background

3.1. Members of South Lanarkshire Youth Council (SLYC) and Youth, Family and Community Learning Service (YFCLS) staff in partnership with secondary schools, colleges, universities, local youth groups and uniformed organisations, organise and deliver council wide elections to democratically elect 9 South Lanarkshire members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP).

3.2. The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) was set up to act as the voice of young people in Scotland. It offers young people aged between 14 and 25 the opportunity to get involved in the decision-making processes in Scotland and the UK.

3.3. The SYP has 200 members, elected from local youth forums or national youth organisations, and from young people who have stood as individuals. The SYP represents and advocates the views of young people in Scotland and aims:-

- to offer young people in Scotland a collective national youth voice
- to make a difference in society by increasing young people's participation
- to promote a positive image of young people
- to connect the process of policy making and development with young people
- to be an independent and youth-led organisation free from influence where young people can give their views to policy makers without hindrance, fear or barriers

4. 2021 Election Process

4.1. The format for voting will be a paper ballot and is fully supported by the South Lanarkshire election office, using the same boxes and resources used in local and national elections, replicating their same processes and promoting an inclusive approach. We are aware that, due to the Covid pandemic, a paper ballot in education establishments may not be possible due to Covid restrictions. We are, therefore, also preparing for online voting using young people's National Entitlement Cards (NEC). A final decision on which voting format we will be able to use, will be made before voting begins.

4.2. Below is the outlined process for South Lanarkshire: -

- From 1 April 2021, candidate registration has been open online for young people aged 14-25 to stand
- Candidates are required to complete an online registration and will be automatically sent a confirmation e mail and contact details of the local election co-ordinator
- The registration process requires candidates to complete a simple online module to ensure they are aware of what the SYP does and the roles and responsibilities of elected MSYPs prior to their registration being accepted
- Online posts using appropriate social media sites are uploaded and preparation for visits to schools, youth groups etc., are planned. It is recognised that any visits will be carried out in line with South Lanarkshire Council, Public Health Scotland and Scottish Government guidance, guidelines and procedures
- To supplement planned visits and inputs such as presentations to school assemblies and classes, notice boards, school TV screens and emails will be utilised to alert pupils of the opportunity to stand for election
- For young people in the community, information will be distributed through planned street work, social media, partners and organisations engaged with young people eligible to stand, to ensure as many young people are informed of this opportunity as possible. Visits to groups may take place when current lockdown restrictions are reviewed and allow for activity to resume
- During promotional visits, school management and youth group staff will be informed of the details of the voting process due to take place in November
- Deadline date for end of registration is flexible but is expected to be at the end of June 2021. After this date candidates can be registered at our discretion
- Candidates will then be supported to produce a manifesto to help with their campaign for election
- From now until the election voting takes place, candidates are grouped into their constituencies and campaign visits are normally arranged to local schools, colleges and youth groups. These visits are arranged and supported by Youth, Family and Community Learning Service staff. This aspect of the election process will be directed by current and future restrictions under COVID-19
- Throughout this time, discussions are ongoing with partners to arrange the voting process
- The voting process involves partnership work with South Lanarkshire's election staff to arrange for ballot boxes and polling station resources to be loaned to set up approximately 50 polling stations. Arrangements with South Lanarkshire's printing services are in place to print ballot papers for all polling stations, up to 25,000 ballot papers are required
- Throughout October 2021, the polling station resources, and ballot papers will be delivered throughout South Lanarkshire
- After voting has closed, the count must be organised, and all ballot boxes are collected and delivered to the count venue

- The count has always taken place in East Kilbride Universal Connections games hall, as its large enough to accommodate counting staff and resources
- The count is organised by South Lanarkshire elections staff and up to 30 young volunteers from a local school. All candidates and their families are invited to observe the process and the final election results. South Lanarkshire's Chief Executive will be invited to act as returning officer
- Once the results are announced all used ballot papers are stored in a secure place until the next election and all polling station resources are returned to the election staff
- Throughout December 2021 and January 2022, the new elected MSYPS attend training and workshops on the roles and responsibilities and planning for their first national sitting in February/March 2022
- Each polling station is run by local staff in schools, Youth, Family and Community Learning centres and supported by SLYC members and Youth, Family and Community Learning staff. Young people not involved in the election process are encouraged to volunteer to assist. In previous years this has encouraged young people to vote as well as offering a learning opportunity for the volunteers. Volunteering is recognised through the Saltire volunteering awards

4.3. A letter is provided to Heads of Establishments, from the SYP elections coordinator, which sets out the election process and timescales.

4.4. Alternative election processes are being considered should there be complications to holding a paper ballot election in light of Covid-19. This would involve an electronic process by which young people would use their National Entitlement Card unique number, to access an online voting page and enter their selection. The option will only be used as a contingency as the plan is to replicate the current national/local election process as much as possible.

5. Employee Implications

5.1. There are no employee implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

7.1. There are no significant implications for climate change, sustainability and the environment arising from the recommendations in this report.

8. Other Implications

8.1. There are no risks arising from the recommendations in this report.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

9.2. Consultation continues to be carried out with appropriate stakeholders including young people, South Lanarkshire Youth Councillors, Scottish Youth Parliament Members, Youth, Family and Community Learning Services staff and partners.

Tony McDaid
Executive Director (Education Resources Resources)

12 May 2021

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- Protect vulnerable children, young people and adults.
- Deliver better health and social care outcomes for all.
- Support communities by tackling disadvantage and deprivation and supporting aspiration.
- Improve achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning.
- Ensure schools and other places of learning are inspirational.
- Encourage participation in physical and cultural activities.

Previous References

None

List of Background Papers

None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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