

Subject: FW: Student Advisors

From: Town Council

Sent: 25 July 2007 12:46

To: 'Margaret Olive'

Cc: 'office@ringwood.hants.sch.uk'; Christine Ford; Jeremy Heron

Subject: Student Advisors

Dear Margaret,

We were very pleased to meet with you on Thursday and for the very positive response to the Town Council's initiative to try to involve students of the School in Council business.

As you know, Councillors Mrs Ford and Jeremy Heron were asked to meet with you to discuss the arrangements, which were generally set out in the report previously copied to you. They will now report back to Council in September when I expect that the arrangements we discussed will be agreed so that students can be appointed to attend meetings from 1 October.

In terms of operational details, we would expect to move the appointments forward on the following basis:-

- 1) Two students would be appointed as student advisors to each of our four main committees which are Policy & Finance; Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces; Planning, Town & Environment; and Town Plan Co-ordinating Committee. In addition, the student advisors would be encouraged to attend Council meetings as members of the public, although physically they would not normally take any part in proceedings at those meetings. Attached is a copy of the programme of meetings for the current municipal year through to May 2008, together with a further copy of the Terms of Reference of each committee. The programme of meetings beyond May 2008 will be fixed in the spring of that year.
- 2) The School will be responsible for interviewing and selecting the eight students who will take part in this initiative. Members of the Town Council will subsequently meet with the selected students to give a general overview of the work we are doing and our expectations of the involvement of the students in the Council's affairs. The Town Council will expect students to be appointed for the whole of the period from October through to July 2008 and clearly that will mean that the students will need to have a commitment to be involved. I would emphasise that the Town Council understands that the students may not be able to make every meeting, indeed there are occasions when Councillors have to apologise for non-attendance. However, we would expect students to attend most of the meetings of the committee to which they have been appointed.
- 3) Whilst the students will be appointed by the School they will be expected to represent the views of all the young people of Ringwood, including those who have not reached an age to attend the School and also those who left the School. They will also need to represent the views of students who attend the School but are resident outside the town.
- 4) The students will not be formal co-opted members of the committee and will not have voting rights. However, they will act in the capacity of advisors to the committee in the same way as any other specialist is appointed to advise Members. They will, therefore, be encouraged to give their views on proposals in the same way as Town Council officers or other professional staff appointed to assist Members coming to reasoned conclusions and decisions.

- 5) As advisors to a committee, the students will not always have to leave when confidential matters are discussed. However, there will be some occasions when we will need to ask the students to leave. I hope that they will understand the position especially as some staff also have to leave meetings when confidential items are discussed.
- 6) Student advisors will receive copies of agendas, minutes and reports in exactly the same way as Councillors and for this purpose, we will of course need to have an address to which we can send the papers.
- 7) Whilst the Council expects the students to discuss issues with other young people, any information received of a confidential nature must not be disclosed. As advisors, they will generally be expected to abide by the same rules of conduct as Council staff. A new national Code is being prepared and for the moment we would normally apply to staff the same Code of Conduct as applies to Councillors and copies of that will be made available as part of the Handbook.
- 8) Whilst the Town Council would not ordinarily remunerate student advisors we would want to make sure that the students could get to the meetings and home from meetings safely. If this necessitates the use of a taxi then the cost would be met by the Town Council. We will discuss this with each student as necessary.
- 9) We will provide all student advisors with a copy of our Members' Handbook, which is an A4 loose leaf folder containing various rules, protocols and documents relating to the administration of the Town Council.
- 10) In recognition of the work that the students will be undertaking, the Town Council will present each one with a Certificate of Appointment as an advisor and which we hope will be of use to them in future years and indeed as recognition of the work that they have put into the community within the town.

I hope I have covered all of the main points of our discussion and indeed of the arrangements that we will need to put in place. I believe that the Town Council is probably one of the first, if not the first, Town Council to involve students in its affairs in such a detailed manner and in particular at committee meetings which make decisions. The Town Council believes that this is good for the community and it will help Councillors to understand the needs and aspirations of young people and will lead to better decision-making. I am currently working on a short press release to issue in the next week about the arrangement and intend to follow that up at the end of September with another one with a photograph of the students meeting the Council and formally launching the initiative. I will let you have a copy of the draft of the first press release as it will need to emphasise our partnership working and will, therefore, need to have some quotes from both the Town Council and the School to reflect our respective thoughts on the arrangement.

Yours sincerely,

Terry Simpson