
**REPORT 7
(1215/52/IM)**

REPORT BACK – YOUTH IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE, PORIRUA 8 AND 9 APRIL 2010

1. Purpose of Report

To report back to all Councillors on the Youth in Local Government Conference including the subjects covered and an opinion of the value of attendance by Elected Members.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.**

3. Details on the Conference

The Youth in Local Government Conference 2010 was held at the Te Rauparaha Arena in Porirua from 8th – 9th of April 2010.

The theme of the conference was ‘Total Expression – Expressing yourself to youth, community and beyond’.

Due to the late notice of the conference, a report in relation to confirming the attendance at the conference did not come before the Strategy and Policy Committee. An email was circulated to Councillors to seek expressions of interest.

The Council at its meeting of 28th June 2004, gave the Mayor, the Chair of the appropriate standing committee and the Chief Executive delegated authority to approve the attendance of elected members at conferences and seminars where there is insufficient time to refer the matter to Council (or committee) for consideration.

Councillor Hayley Wain was approved to attend the conference through the process outlined above. Georgie Rhoades Youth Advisor at Wellington City Council also attended the conference along with some members of the Wellington Youth Council.

4. Subjects Covered

The first day of the conference was a youth day where all the youth councils worked together on planning. The feedback from the National Youth Council Forum was reported back by a group of young people.

The Youth Councils explored what they enjoyed about being part of a Youth Council. They felt empowered, it gave them confidence, opportunity for personal development which can flow on to benefits within the community. They also presented some issues that Youth Councils face such as tokenism, not taken seriously, some council processes not youth friendly, intimidated by the council and limited access to funding and resources.

Workshop – Youth Council Advocacy

I attended a workshop run by Ben Mills from the Community Law Centre focused on youth council advocacy. Ben talked about the purpose of youth councils, they give youth a voice, a place that Councils can come to get youth opinion, raise awareness of issues, provide a positive way for youth to get involved and influence policy from a youth perspective.

Ben used Toronto City, Canada as an example of the way they view youth councils.

- Improves representation
- Improves decision making
- Improves service delivery
- Improves perceptions of youth
- Improves perception of government
- Improves youth development
- Improves youth political engagement

Ben challenged us to consider what are ‘youth’ issues. There was a range of opinions but the workshop came to the conclusion that everything involves or impacts on youth in someway, hence every issue is relevant to young people, even though it may be considered boring.

Ben finished his presentation by getting the workshop participants to think about how youth councils can influence policy decisions. The workshop considered a number of options including:

- Building relationships with the media.
- Presenting as a united front.
- Working with community groups.
- Understanding and learning about processes.
- Ensuring there is a mixture of experience on youth councils.

Many of the young people in Ben's workshop found it to be interesting to share ideas with others, however due to time constraints Ben didn't manage to get through his whole presentation although he managed to make it interactive and relevant.

Investigating What Works with Engaging Young People

This workshop was more of a presentation about the work of The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs. Bry Kopu who has conducted some research for The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs presented her research findings about the success and challenges going forward in relation to the modern apprenticeship scheme.

The modern apprenticeship scheme was set up to encourage the recruitment and retention of young people, although it has not been without its challenges. The scheme has produced over 6000 graduates within 34 industries, although participation rates have not peaked over 39%.

According to Bry's research the keys for success are:

- Providing support for the young person and employer.
- Needs to be centred around the young people.
- Co-ordinators need to be real and credible.
- The young people need to feel they belong to the community they are working in.
- Need to ensure that people have high expectations of them.

Mayor of Otorohanga and current Chair of The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs, Dale Williams spoke of his experience. Mayor Williams was previously a motorcycle mechanic so had previous experience with apprenticeships. In Otorohanga with a population of 3000, many young people were moving away as they didn't see any career prospects or many remained unemployed, that's when they developed the modern apprenticeship scheme.

Mayor Williams spoke about when he undertook his apprenticeship there was no celebrating success, your certificate just arrived in the mail. He felt it was important to ensure those people who pursue a career in a trade are celebrated just as much as those who choose to go to university. Mayor Williams emphasised the importance of working with employers to meet their expectations as there appeared to be a gap between what employees wanted and what was being delivered.

As a result of identifying these gaps a trade centre in Otorohanga was set up, to provide support and taster courses to help prepare apprentices for the workforce. The trade centre also provide weekly night classes where they can interact with other apprentices and learn together. The trade centre has been very successful with Otorohanga having no registered unemployment for young people under 21 years of age, for the past 3.5 years.

This was an informative workshop, although it was aimed at youth workers not young people. It was also more of a presentation then an interactive workshop.

Alcohol-related harm – Young People Leading Change

This workshop was run by employees of The Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand (ALAC). The workshop gave a brief update on Sir Geoffrey Palmers report. They stressed the importance of ensuring young people are feeding in to processes. They could do this by informing Councils of stores that are selling to underage drinkers, they can provide input into proposed liquor bans and licensing policies e.g. hours of liquor licences.

Many of the Youth Councillors who attended this workshop felt it would be helpful to have a regular update from Liquor Licensing Officers. There was a lot of discussion about our current drinking culture and the need for young people to lead campaigns against the abuse of alcohol.

The young people who participated in this workshop requested that they receive information about the role that Councils have in liquor licensing.

Career Options – Being a Mayor

Mayor Dale Williams, Mayor Jenny Brash and Mayoral candidate Nick Leggett spoke about the how they got to become the Mayor or Mayoral candidate, what skills, qualities and qualifications are required.

There were a number of questions raised by some young people such as what was a casting vote, how do you get elected, what is the difference between governance and management and what is the time commitment required.

From Bebo to Twitter: Getting Online with Youth Participation

This was an interactive session run by a group of young people from around Wellington, explaining how to use Twitter. The majority of participants had used either Facebook or Bebo, so it was decided that the session focus on Twitter. The group spoke about how using social networking is about ‘creating a following’ within a community.

Twitter has over 26 million users worldwide with 65% of its users under 25, hence it is a great tool to tap in to the youth market. The group spoke about the way we do things is changing e.g. Wellington College students can now subscribe to Twitter and receive school notices via text message.

This workshop was very hands on and well run by the group of students.

5. Benefit to Council/Elected Members

Having been to previous Youth in Local Government Conferences, this conference was disappointing. In previous years there had been a mixture of politicians, youth workers and youth councillors, this year myself and another Councillor from Porirua were the only two councillors that had registered for the conference. In the past interaction between the three groups has been valuable and I feel that this years conference was a lost opportunity.

The organisation of the conference appeared to be poor, when registering for the conference I only received a name badge, not even a conference programme. Many of rooms that the workshops were run in were too small and there were not enough seats for everyone.

There was a wide range of workshops on offer, however due to the majority of conference delegates being youth councillors some of the workshops were pitched at a high level and many of the young people appeared to be bored and disinterested. Other workshops were specifically designed for youth workers, however this was not made clear in any of the material.

I was disappointed with the whole conference and I felt that I did not learn anything new. In the past the Youth in Local Government Conferences that I have attended, have been well planned, organised and a great way for Councillors, Youth Workers and Youth Councillors to come together to focus on developing youth strategies.

I believe that this disappointing conference will be a one off occurrence and I would hope that a Wellington City Councillor attends future Youth in Local Government Conferences as I know from previous experience that there is a lot to be gained by attending.

Report prepared by: *Councillor Hayley Wain*