

## **Cabinet**

**17 December 2024**

### **Young Mayor Initiative Update**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Adam Price, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Report from: Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive

Author: Amy St Louis, Child-Friendly Medway Lead

#### **Summary**

This report is brought to Cabinet to celebrate the good news that the Young Mayor Initiative will bring to Medway. Cabinet approval of the initiative is requested.

#### **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1. The Cabinet is requested to note the existing gap of youth democratic opportunities for children and young people in Junior Schools.
- 1.2. The Cabinet is requested to agree to adopt the Young Mayor Initiative, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report subject to funding outside of the Council's revenue budget being sought (option 2).
- 1.3. The Cabinet is requested to support the following elements of the Young Mayor Initiative:
  - The introduction of a Young Mayor to Medway
  - The introduction of 7 Deputy Young Mayors to Medway
  - The introduction of an Engagement Officer to facilitate these roles.

#### **2. Suggested reasons for decisions**

- 2.1. The Young Mayor initiative is a great way to empower children/ young people and amplify their voices, pushing Medway closer to its goal of being a child-friendly city. This programme will also provide an opportunity for children to have a leadership role in their community and encourages and promotes a knowledge of Medway Council's role in the community. The Young Mayor introduces children and young people to democracy from an earlier age, as well as building profile and public relations for Medway on a national and international level. This position is voted by children and young people, to represent their voice.

### 3. Budget and policy framework

3.1. There is no budgetary provision for the one-off cost for the Mayoral celebratory outfit, and an annual cost for an Engagement Officer to support the Young Mayor and Deputy Young Mayor positions, therefore, alternative funding will be sought.

3.2. This initiative contributes to the Council's overarching values and beliefs as outlined in the Council Plan (2023-2024)

- Proud to be Medway
- Caring
- Respectful
- Trusted
- Ambitious
- Collaborative.

3.3. This initiative contributes to Child-Friendly Medway's core themes based on feedback from children and young people.

- Cleaner and Greener
- Creativity and Culture
- Health and Wellbeing
- Safety
- Aspirational
- Engaging
- Inclusive and Community Focussed.

3.4. This initiative contributes to upholding the UN "Rights of a Child" article 12 (Respect for the Views of the Child), article 13 (Freedom of Expression) and article 31 (Leisure, Play and Culture).

### 4. Background

4.1. The idea of this initiative was initially brought to Child-Friendly Medway by former Director of People and Deputy CEO, Lee-Anne Farach based on a model delivered by Leeds City Council. Further details on the consultation of this initiative can be found in Section 8 of this document.

4.2. This initiative will see the election of a Young Mayor and 7 Deputy Young Mayors. The Young Mayor, and deputies, will mirror the adult mayor and attend a wide variety of events across the year that is suitable for a child figurehead to be involved with. They will play a key celebratory role in local events and celebrations and be an inspiring role model for children in Medway.

4.3. These positions are set for children of Year 5 (and home educated children/young people of the same age) to represent junior school's pupils. This role will complement the Medway Youth Council and two Youth Parliament Members which is for secondary school age pupils. The Young Mayor and Deputy positions will be voted for by children and young people living in Medway up to 18 years old.

- 4.4. The Deputy Mayors would be selected based on following highest votes and would ideally be selected as champions based on their passion and interest in one or more of the Child-Friendly Medway core themes set by children and young people. These core themes are; Creativity & Cultural, Health & Wellbeing, Community Focused, Cleaner & Greener, Safety, Engaging, Aspirational.
- 4.5. The Child-Friendly Medway team would be expanded to include an additional Engagement Officer to support the Young Mayor workstream. Supervision and support for this role would come from the wider Child-Friendly Medway team on tasks and events when required. This new Engagement Officer will be the liaison to parent/carers to coordinate Young Mayor and Deputies' participation at events as well as attending events with the elected individuals to support them.
- 4.6. Timeline (subject to funding)
  - Nominations Open – Beginning of May.
  - Nomination Closing Deadline – End of June.
  - Shortlisting (top 20) – July.
  - Young Mayor Voting - August and September.
  - Young Mayor and Deputies announced – October.
  - Duties take place from October – August.

## 5. Options

- 5.1. Option 1 – The Cabinet to fully support the Young Mayor Initiative and agree to request Council for the outlined funding in full.
- 5.2. Option 2 – The Cabinet to fully support the Young Mayor Initiative but request to seek funding outside of the Council's revenue budget funding for the initiative. This is the recommended option.
- 5.3. Option 3 – The Cabinet to not support the Young Mayor Initiative.

## 6. Advice and analysis

- 6.1. Changes in the youth democracy systems in Medway have not changed since the introduction of Medway Youth Council, formerly Medway Youth Parliament in 1999. This system, although beneficial for amplifying youth voices, is not accessible to those in Junior School. The Young Mayor initiative will ensure that voices of those in Junior Schools are heard on a wider democratic platform.
- 6.2. Our Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) (Appendix 3) states that we need to ensure that we are proactive in managing this initiative to guarantee the representation and involvement of all groups.
- 6.3. Adoption of the Young Mayors initiative has the potential to put Child-Friendly Medway and Medway Council on the national and possibly international stage raising the profile of the importance of children and young people roles in their community, youth voice, and helping to put Medway on the map.

- 6.4. The cost of this initiative is low for its positive public relations return for Medway Council and any potential sponsors, and for the children and young people we serve and this may put Medway Council on the national and possibly international stage. This is something that children and young people have indicated that they are interested in and will help ensure that their voices are heard, and they're represented at community events.
- 6.5. It is recognised that local government faces a number of budgetary challenges, therefore, it is recommended that alternative funding is sought and once in place, the initiative will be progressed.

## 7. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
A lack of engagement from Junior Schools.	We must consider that there may be a poor response from Junior Schools in Medway.	We will ensure that there is suitable marketing for all schools to raise awareness for this initiative. We will ensure that there is an Engagement Officer available to answer any questions from schools regarding the initiative. As this complements the new Child-Friendly Medway Young Citizen award scheme running in junior schools we will be able to promote Young Mayor alongside our schools engagement.	BIII
A lack of engagement from home educated children and young people.	We must consider that there may be a poor response from home educated children and young people in Medway.	We will ensure that there is suitable marketing for all home educated children and young people in Medway to raise awareness for this initiative. This marketing will	BIII

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
		<p>also be shared with the Virtual School.</p> <p>We will ensure that there is an Engagement Officer available to answer any questions from schools regarding the initiative.</p>	
<p>A lack of engagement/uptake from vulnerable groups such as those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).</p>	<p>We must consider that there may be a poor response to this initiative from those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities which may be due to a perception that this initiative is not for them. A poor response level may also be due to a lack of awareness or accessibility to initiative resources.</p>	<p>We will ensure there is suitable, accessible marketing for those with SEND, considering the language used and where/how the initiative is promoted to targeted groups.</p>	<p>BIII</p>
<p>A lack of engagement/uptake from minority and other vulnerable communities.</p>	<p>We must consider that there may be a poor response to this initiative from diverse groups such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and other vulnerable communities.</p>	<p>We will ensure that there is suitable accessible marketing for diverse groups such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and other vulnerable communities, considering the language used and where/how the initiative is promoted to targeted groups</p>	<p>BIII</p>

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Negative Impacts from a child/ young person being exposed to the public and media.	We must consider that the children and young people elected into these roles may be exposed to negative and hurtful comments as well as situations beyond their experience.	We will ensure that there is an Engagement Officer who has undertaken Safeguarding Training present at every event that these elected children and young people attend. Risk Assessments will be undertaken before the elected individuals attend any event. All possible measure will be taken to ensure the wellbeing of those elected.	BII
Unforeseen costs involved in this initiative.	We must consider that there may be unforeseen costs involved in this initiative.	A full review has been completed to ensure all costs of the Engagement Officer role have been considered and an accurate cost has been provided. Costings for the Mayoral Ceremony outfits have been provided by Member Services and are accurate at the point of writing.	BIV
Backlash from communities regarding Council spending	We must consider that members of the community may question the spending on this initiative.	Community members are able to request funding details about this initiative through a Freedom of Information Act request. We must ensure the community	BIII

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
		understand and value this initiative which we will achieve through our marketing.	
Security and Privacy concerns of the Young Mayor and Deputies' personal details.	We must consider that those elected (and their parents/carers) are exposed to the public and media, and that this may result in them being targeted outside of their Mayoral role.	We will take all possible measures to avoid any breach in GDPR procedures in order to protect the elected members and their families.	CII
Elected individuals (and their families) act in a way that does not align with the figurehead role.	We consider that those elected, and their families, may act in a way that is negative to this initiative.	A Code of Conduct will be produced outlining the expected behaviour from elected individuals. This must be signed by elected members and their parents/carers prior to taking up the role. Elected individuals will be asked to resign from their role if they break the signed Code of Conduct.	CIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table (please **retain** table in final report):

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

## 8. Consultation

- 8.1. The idea of this initiative was initially brought to Child-Friendly Medway by Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy CEO, based on a model delivered by Leeds City Council. We have presented to and discussed with

the following stakeholders regarding the Young Mayors initiative: Medway Educational Partnership Group, Cllr Adam Price – Portfolio Holder Children’s Services, Cllr Vince Maple – Leader of the Council, Youth services, Democratic Services and Mayors office including former Madame Mayor Cllr Nina Gurung and current Mayor of Medway Councillor Marian Nestorov. All had positive feedback on the initiative.

- 8.2. The Young Mayor initiative has also come from the voice of children and young people as this, or similar ideas, have been suggested on our postcards.

## 9. Climate change implications

- 9.1. This initiative is supporting the Climate Change agenda as part of the Young Mayor focus will be based on the seven Child-Friendly Medway core themes, including Cleaner and Greener. Helping to combat Climate Change and encourage sustainability. The introduction of a Deputy Mayor with a passion for climate change and the environment, will help raise awareness of climate change issues amongst children and young people.

- 9.2. Where possible, we will encourage the use of public transport or car sharing, as well as other climate friendly actions, from our Young Mayor, Deputies and guests.

## 10. Financial implications

- 10.1. The Child-Friendly Medway team is requesting £35,000 annually to run this initiative and looking for a one-off payment for the Mayoral Celebratory outfit of £1,790. A breakdown of the finances can be found in Appendix 2. It is noted that funding outside of the Council’s revenue budget will be sought for this initiative.

## 11. Legal implications

- 11.1. Whilst this role is elected via a process administered by Child-Friendly Medway in partnership with schools and the wider community, the role of Young Mayor and Deputies is not a representative function and holds no legal standing in the governance of the council.
- 11.2. Whilst this will be a celebratory role not a political one, the role will widen the voice of the child in Medway. Members of both the current administration and the opposition have been consulted on the concept and are supportive.

### Lead officer contact

Amy St Louis  
Child-Friendly Medway Lead  
Level 3, Gun Wharf  
01634 337335  
[Amy.stlouis@medway.gov.uk](mailto:Amy.stlouis@medway.gov.uk)



## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Description of Young Mayor initiative

Appendix 2 – Financial Breakdown

Appendix 3 – Diversity Impact Assessment

## Background papers

None