

Scrutiny Committee – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2011

## 9. Student Participation with Scrutiny

*Lead Officers:* Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager  
Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager

*Contact Details:* emily.mcguinness@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462566  
or joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462077

### Purpose of Report

This report sets out proposals to engage students in the Scrutiny function.

### Action Required

Members of the Scrutiny Committee are requested to consider and comment on the proposals contained in this report.

### Background

Enhancing community involvement in the decision making process has long been an objective of South Somerset's Scrutiny function. This combined with our successful Local Democracy student engagement track record, has led to proposals to involve local 16-19 year olds in a more structured way.

The impending Localism Bill places great emphasis on active community engagement in local democracy and decision-making, and asks local authorities to remove the barriers to active engagement. South Somerset District Council's Scrutiny Committee is seeking to do this through inviting local students to play an active role in the work of the Committee.

It is proposed that students are invited to apply to work on a Task and Finish Group with members of the Council. All local establishments providing 16-19 education have been asked to participate and there has been a pleasing level of interest.

It is hoped that the pilot project will provide the council with valuable first hand perspectives from local young people as well as affording students with valuable 'real life' experiences of submitting applications, attending interviews, completing allocated tasks and presenting their final reports.

It is important to note that the successful students will not become Scrutiny Committee members, they will instead be working on a more informal Task and Finish basis alongside elected members and officers. The Council has successfully used the Task and Finish approach many times. The successful students will be involved in all stages of the review – from suggesting an appropriate review topic, participating fully in meetings, conducting individual research tasks and submitting the final report – all skills which future employers and further education providers will look for in an increasingly competitive market.

The feedback we have received from interested schools and colleges has so far been very receptive.

It is proposed that the Task and Finish Group (established through our normal processes) reports back to the Scrutiny Committee in April 2012 – to fit in with both the academic and our Council year.

As already mentioned, this is a pilot project, but if it proves successful, it could be continued and extended in the future.

**Background Papers:**        *None*

---