

STAFF REPORT

TO: Community Services Committee

FROM: Administration Advisor

REFERENCE: E300

DATE: 22 November 2006

SUBJECT: Kids Voting 2007 and Beyond

PURPOSE/REASON FOR REPORT

To inform the Community Services Committee about the forthcoming "KIDS VOTING 2007 and Beyond" programme.

BACKGROUND

At a recent Electoral Officers Forum Helena Catt, Electoral Commissioner, gave a presentation on "KIDS VOTING 2007 and Beyond".

KIDS VOTING emanated from a "Growing Active Citizens" project which was initiated by Local Government New Zealand in collaboration with a range of interested groups. The aim of "Growing Active Citizens" is to increase active participation in local communities, local government and other decision making processes. Research has shown that starting young is important, and indicated that those who do not vote in their youth are less likely to vote in their adult life. The project will initially focus on developing resources for use in New Zealand schools, with the first being KIDS VOTING.

KIDS VOTING has been effectively used in Auckland to introduce school children to voting, and the project will now be extended in time for use in the 2007 local body elections throughout the country.

COMMENT/DISCUSSION

The objective of KIDS VOTING is to provide students at Year 9 with an authentic election experience, which will hopefully demystify the voting process and encourage interest in elections amongst kids and their parents/caregivers.

School students will vote for the real Tasman District Council candidates on a real ballot paper (with KIDS VOTING in large print on the top to avoid confusion).

KIDS VOTING is not compulsory, and teachers will be encouraged to adopt and implement this module into their social studies curriculum. Interested teachers will register on the website provided, and will be sent an introductory pack comprising background information, instructions on conducting an authentic election, elections timetable, and details for seeking further information. The appropriate local council will be advised that the school is interested.

After Council candidate nominations close, candidates are told about KIDS VOTING. VOTEXT (the Datamail Website which enables all councils to create voting documents) will create a KIDS VOTING version of the voting documents, the appropriate ones of which will be forwarded to participating schools. Voting takes place on the Wednesday prior to the election day, and the teachers will email the results to the national resource person. After local government elections the kids will be able to compare the results of their election with the results of the real council election.

It is planned to have KIDS VOTING on a three year rotation, viz:

- 2007 Local Body elections
- 2008 Parliamentary Elections
- 2009 Possibly School Board of Trustees

Councils are encouraged to take an active role by encouraging local schools to participate and providing liaison for teachers.

RECOMMENDATION

That this report be received.

Sandra Hartley
Administration Advisor