
Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities

22nd January 2014

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities – Councillor Townshend

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director, Resources

Ward(s) affected:

N/A

Title:

Evaluation of Local Democracy Week 13 - 19 October 2014

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

The purpose of the report is to review and evaluate the programme of activities delivered during the Council's Local Democracy Week 2014. Each year the programme is adjusted to try new events and improve other regular events. As a result of feedback and take-up levels in 2014, the report recommends that the successful activities are repeated (including the Year 12 schools debating competition, Lord Mayor for a Day, Lord Mayor's Youth Quiz, Virtual Council, Question Time and the Democracy Day). The programme for Local Democracy Week 2015 will be improved and refined during the year and further activities may be added to those repeated from 2014.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities is recommended to:

1. Note the review of activities undertaken during Local Democracy Week 2014.
2. Approve that, if resources permit, the successful events be repeated in 2015, including the Lord Mayor's Youth Quiz, Lord Mayor for a Day, the Year 12 School Debate, Virtual Council, Question Time and Democracy Day.
3. Approve the other actions relevant to future Local Democracy Week initiatives as set out in the report.
4. Approve that officers explore other avenues for democratic engagement amongst young people throughout the year.

5. Request that officers explore opportunities for income generation arising from democratic engagement activities.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix A – Results of Feedback

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it, or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:

Evaluation of Local Democracy Week 13 – 19 October 2014

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The City Council has an objective to promote engagement in democratic processes and through Mayoral functions and events. Local Democracy Week (LDW) is a Europe-wide campaign, aimed at encouraging local people to get involved with the work of their local Council and it is an important element of the Council's overall democratic engagement programme. There has been a focus historically on engaging young people during LDW, with a hope that their engagement with local democracy will continue into later life.
- 1.2 This report evaluates the programme of events run by the Council for LDW 2014 and sets out recommendations for future democratic engagement activities for LDW 2015.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 There was a number of events during LDW aimed at developing civic pride, encouraging young people to take part in local democracy, and targeting specific groups using social media and the internet.
- 2.2 Engaging Young People in Local Democracy – Virtual Council
 - 2.2.1 LDW started with school pupils running their very own "Virtual" Council on Monday 13th October 2014 in the Lord Mayor's Hospitality Suite. The Lord Mayor, Councillor Hazel Noonan, opened the event and welcomed the students to the Council House. The event saw young people given responsibility for Council directorates and they were required to make funding decisions to improve the outcomes for their virtual local community. Students from Whitley Academy and Foxford School were put in the shoes of Councillors, Council Directors, and external partners as they experienced the cut and thrust of local politics and were required to make the same difficult decisions that Councils are faced with on a daily basis. Several Councillors joined in to assist the young people and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ann Lucas OBE, also visited and proved very popular as she gave the young people the benefit of her experience. The aim of the event was to keep the political party in power, which they did by a number of votes.
 - 2.2.2 At the end of the event, students were asked to complete an evaluation form giving feedback from the day. 81% of students rated the overall event as excellent or very good, 81% rated the venue at excellent or very good, and comments included that participants had enjoyed working with others and learning how local authorities operate.
 - 2.2.3 When the event was advertised a total of five schools had secured places on the day. The week before the event, disappointingly, three of the five schools had pulled out, leaving the numbers lower than expected. Members of the Coventry Youth Council had been invited to attend along with two political students from Coventry University to use their experience to facilitate the session and act as elected members. Their attendance boosted the numbers and we had a total of 22 people taking part in this event, out of the expected 35.
 - 2.2.4 Virtual Council can be a very successful event. Feedback over the years has been very positive and it is disappointing that schools who signed up for the event withdrew less than a week before (in some cases, the day before). The Council pays an annual licence fee of £500 and there may be an opportunity to promote this activity more widely to outside bodies and organisations (including schools/academies, colleges and both Universities in

Coventry) and charge a fee for the day, which would generate some income for the City Council.

2.2.5 It is recommended that the Council continues this event for future LDW activities and that officers explore the possibility of promoting the activity more widely for income generation throughout the year.

2.3 Developing Civic Pride in Coventry – Lord Mayor for a Day

2.3.1 This event was held on Wednesday 15 October, 2014. The Lord Mayor, Councillor Hazel Noonan, is on the Board of Governors at Alice Stevens School and pupils were invited to compete to be the "Lord Mayor for a Day". Pupils were asked to paint a picture for the Lord Mayor's official Christmas card, showing Coventry as a multi-faith community. The Lord Mayor picked her three favourite paintings from over 40 submitted, and the winning pupils were invited to participate in the Lord Mayor's activities for the day. The winning painting will appear on the front of the Lord Mayor's Christmas card for 2014.

2.3.2 The three pupils and their teacher were collected from Alice Stevens School in the Lord Mayor's Civic Car and assisted the Lord Mayor with her duties for the day, including:-

- Presiding over a Citizenship Ceremony
- Working Lunch with the Lord Mayor, Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Education
- Attending a civic tour of the Council House, including some areas not open to the public.
- Attending a Question Time event in the Chamber

2.3.3 Feedback from the pupils and teacher was very positive and the pupils and the Lord Mayor have been quoted as commenting very favourably on the event. As with previous years, the schools involved were chosen due to the links with the Lord Mayor at the time, which enables the Lord Mayor to build on existing links with schools in their area. This also ensures that different schools are invited from year to year, as different Lord Mayors are appointed. This year, all the entries from the painting competition were on public display in the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum during LDW and the comments and feedback have been very positive. It is recommended that we continue this relationship with the Herbert Art Gallery and display the LDW artwork there each year.

2.3.4 Due to the level of interaction between the Lord Mayor, the schools, and the pupils, and in light of the positive feedback, it is recommended that the Council continues to host this event in future years in consultation with the incoming Lord Mayor.

2.4 Developing Civic Pride in Coventry – Lord Mayor's Youth Quiz

2.4.1 This event was arranged in partnership with the Coventry Youth Council and was held at the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum on Wednesday 15th October, 2014. All the City's Councillors and young people from various youth groups and schools across the City were invited to attend and/or participate. The Lord Mayor hosted over 30 young people, who enjoyed the opportunity to meet and talk to the Lord Mayor and elected Councillors. It was a closely fought contest with the winning team winning by just 2 points. The young people also enjoyed a free raffle, with the top prize being a handheld tablet. Local radio celebrity Bob Brolly MBE had taken up the Lord Mayor's offer to be Quiz Master for the evening and he proved very popular with the young people taking part.

2.4.2 Prior to the evening, teams were asked to register and 11 teams were expected on the night (66 young people in total). Disappointingly only five out of the 11 teams turned up. This may have been due to the bad weather on the evening of the quiz. To increase attendance in 2015 it may be wise to explore options such as starting the event immediately after school to encourage higher attendance.

2.4.3 After the event, we asked for feedback from attendees. Overall the comments were very positive: 78% rated the event as either very good or excellent, and 69% said the venue was either excellent or very good. 96% of those surveyed told us that the Quiz Master was either excellent or very good. Feedback in 2013 had identified that the questions were too difficult for the age group. This year the Coventry Youth Council wrote the majority of the questions to ensure that they were age-appropriate and 61% rated the standard of questions as excellent or very good, compared with just 25% in 2013.

2.4.4 It is therefore recommended that the Council continues with the quiz night, in consultation with the incoming Lord Mayor and the Coventry Youth Council.

2.5 Engaging Young People in Local Democracy – Question Time

2.5.1 This was an exciting new event for Local Democracy Week and saw the Council engage with politics students from Coventry University. It was held on Wednesday 15th October between 1 and 3pm. The Council Chamber played host to a lively Question Time event as our expert panel was asked a series of questions relating to democracy and other hot topics. We filled the Chamber with 95 enthusiastic students willing to ask questions of our expert panel whose members included -

- Jacques Gallagher, Senior Politics Lecturer, Coventry University
- Councillor Faye Abbott, Labour, Coventry City Council
- Councillor Tim Sawdon, Conservative, Coventry City Council
- Simon Gilbert, Reporter, Coventry Telegraph
- Kristian Sucilia O’Sullivan, Coventry Students` Union
- Marvin Nkemdirim, Democracy and Campaigns Rep, Coventry Students` Union

2.5.2 Questions included whether the panel thought 16 year olds should be able to vote, whether MPs should have a lower salary, the Ricoh Arena, living wage and rogue landlords. The event was publicised through Coventry University networks and students were invited to submit their written questions in advance of the event so that panel members could prepare suitable responses.

2.5.3 The Council's Elections Office set up a stand at this event encouraging the students to register to vote online. Staff were on hand with laptops and iPads to assist and they had a high level of engagement.

2.5.4 This event was webcast live on the Council's website and can still be viewed at www.coventry.gov.uk/webcast. It has been view on 456 occasions, compared to just 77 who watched a Full Council meeting on 11th November 2014. The feedback from the event has been very positive; 73% of respondents said that the venue was excellent or very good, 66% rated the overall event as excellent or very good. The vast majority of the students who attended the event had never been inside the Council House before and they spoke very favourably of the event and of being given the opportunity to take part and suggested that we hold more events, such as this one, throughout the year.

2.5.5 It is therefore recommended that due to the high level of interest from political students at Coventry University we repeat the Question Time event in LDW 2015 and build on existing links to hold similar events throughout the year, where possible.

2.6 Engaging Young People in Local Democracy – Democracy Day

- 2.6.1 This was another exciting new event for Local Democracy Week involving sixth form students from Cardinal Wiseman and Stoke Park School and took place on Thursday 16th October 2014. The day involved a democracy workshop and the students were able to witness the HMS Diamond being granted “Freedom of Entry” to the City of Coventry, which took place at the front of the Council House. The workshop was designed taking activities from the Democracy Cookbook, which is a publication produced by the Electoral Commission and elements of Rock Enroll!, which is a lesson framework from the Cabinet Office involving young people in politics.
- 2.6.2 The workshop introduced the participants to politics and democracy and encouraged them to think about democracy on a local, national and global scale. The workshop was also aimed at inspiring discussions about voting, demystifying the registration process and emphasising the enormous power young people have.
- 2.6.3 In future years it may be ideal to hold the event on a day of Full Council so that the participants could see democracy in action and observe a Full Council meeting.
- 2.6.4 We had a very interactive workshop and the students were also granted access to the Council Chamber to experience debating and play the roles of elected Councillors. We had some excellent feedback from the students who attended. 92% of respondents rated the day as either excellent or very good and 85% rated the organisation of the event to be either excellent or very good. The students spoke very highly of being able to debate in the Council Chamber and take part in the interactive activities.
- 2.6.5 As this was the first time this event was staged, we held a mock workshop with 16 Modern Apprentices from across the Council on Wednesday 24th September 2014. This enabled us to try out different activities and gather feedback from the attendees which was used to build a successful framework of activities for the day.
- 2.6.6 When the event was publicised, interest was registered from five schools (totaling 30 young people). In the days leading up to LDW, three of the five schools withdrew from the event with only Stoke Park and Cardinal Wiseman School and two politics students from Coventry University remaining. On the day we had 13 young people taking part, which was a much lower figure than we expected.
- 2.6.7 This was the first year of holding this event, but the feedback we received was very positive from both students and Councillors. A positive suggestion would be to promote this event by inviting young people into the Council House providing them with the opportunity to take part in democratic activities.
- 2.6.8 Citizenship is a statutory subject in the English National Curriculum, and Democracy is a key concept of the framework. Consideration could be given to providing this activity throughout the year on an income-generating basis and to promote democratic engagement to outside bodies/organisations (as well as schools, colleges and both Universities in Coventry) throughout the whole year.
- 2.6.9 It is recommended the Democracy Day be repeated as part of LDW 2015 and that officers explore the possibility of holding democracy workshops in the Council House in the meantime.**

2.7 Engaging Young People in Local Democracy – Year 12 Schools Debating Competition

2.7.1 This event was very popular with schools and is our flagship event for Local Democracy Week. It was held on Friday 17 October 2014 and open to all secondary schools in Coventry. The competition was held in the Council Chamber. After extensive promotion within teachers' networks, pupils from nine schools took part: Coundon Court, Barr's Hill, WMG Academy, President Kennedy, Cardinal Newman, Grace Academy, Stoke Park, Cardinal Wiseman and Lyng Hall. Approximately 60 pupils plus their teachers participated in this event which was a great success.

2.7.2 On Tuesday 16th September 2014 a training session was held for students taking part in the debating competition to prepare them for the day. A total of 24 students attended the session and they were able to visit the Council Chamber and practise debating for the big day.

2.7.3 The event was webcast live on the Council's website, and this can still be viewed at www.coventry.gov.uk/webcast. In the first round of debates, Barr's Hill and WMG Academy were the highest scorers, and went on to debate the following motion in the final:

- *"This House believes that the internet encourages democracy"*

2.7.4 WMG Academy won the competition, and was presented with a trophy by the Lord Mayor and Mr Geoffrey Robinson MP. Medals were also given to the runners-up and the best speaker from each of the remaining schools. The team from WMG Academy will also receive tickets to attend Prime Minister's Questions in the House of Commons.

2.7.5 Mr Geoffrey Robinson MP attended the competition and proved very popular in the question and answer session with the young people.

2.7.6 The standard of debate in the competition was very impressive and feedback from the event has been excellent; 87% of people rated the event as either excellent or very good. The Council Chamber was an inspirational environment for the young people, with 91% rating the venue as excellent. A number of Councillors also attended and commented on the high quality of debate held.

2.7.7 It is recommended that the Council continues to host the annual Year 12 Schools Debating Competition in LDW 2015.

2.8 Internet and Social Media

2.8.1 To complement the events programme during LDW, officers from the Communications Team sent Twitter updates from a number of different events and public meetings. These included the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) meeting, Question Time and our Year 12 School Debate. During LDW we sent a total of 24 tweets using #ldw2014 which would have reached over 18,000 of the Council's Twitter followers. Officers received good feedback and there was a good level of interest, which included a total of 75 re-tweets or shares.

2.8.2 Facebook was also used to publicise events during LDW. During LDW we sent three separate Facebook posts, which would have reached almost 34,000 of the Council's Facebook followers. We also used Flickr to publish photos from Lord Mayor for a Day (including the entries in the Herbert Art Gallery), Question Time and our Year 12 School Debate. Combined they have been viewed 78 times.

We also webcast two of our events: Question Time has been viewed 456 times and the Year 12 School Debate viewed 381 times.

2.8.3 All the events during LDW were advertised on the Council's website on www.coventry.gov.uk/ldw, which was viewed 187 times during the week.

2.8.4 It is recommended that the Council continues to use Twitter, Facebook and Flickr to publicise democratic engagement events as appropriate and explore any other ways to promote the Week.

2.9 Feedback and future planning

2.9.1 During LDW 2014, we received some very positive feedback and even attracted attention from the Democratic Engagement Programme from the Cabinet Office in London. Compared to our neighbouring authorities, the programme of events in Coventry is very busy as we continue to improve and add new events each year. In the Democracy Workshop, we used Rock Enroll, which is a framework of activities published by the Cabinet Office engaging young people in Democracy. Due to the success of LDW 2014 the Cabinet Office has indicated that it would like to conduct a case study on our activities to use as best practice in engaging young people in democracy.

2.9.1 The Cabinet Office were encouraging us to arrange events for Parliament Week (17-21 November 2014). Given the short notice, we were unable to put an event in place, however we were able to promote #ParliamentWeek and #DoDemocracy using the City Council's Twitter pages. Next year, we will have more time to prepare and organise events in Parliament Week.

2.9.3 The Coventry Youth Council (CYC) were actively involved in our events for LDW and were invited to attend each event to promote the work of the CYC and recruit new members. A high level of young people had expressed an interest and the CYC are currently in the process of recruiting new members as a direct result of LDW activities.

3. **Results of consultation undertaken**

3.1 Each event was fully evaluated in order for us to make improvements in 2015. We asked each individual participating in activities for LDW to tell us what they thought of each event. The responses are detailed in Appendix A – Results of Feedback.

4. **Timetable for implementing these decisions**

4.1 In time for Local Democracy Week 2015.

5. **Comments from Executive Director, Resources**

5.1 Financial implications

5.1.1 Officers made a successful bid for funding to the amount of £1700 from the Corporate Communications Board. Some costs are still being finalised but the total spend for activities during LDW 2014 was in the region of £1,400 which was within budget. The spend for each event is set out below –

Event	Cost (£)
Virtual Council	190.50

Lord Mayor's Youth Quiz	676.19
Question Time	65.67
Lord Mayor for a Day	39.60
Democracy Day	127.50
Year 12 School Debate	318.60
Total Spend	1418.06

5.1.2 The above costings do not include the support given by Governance Services Officers, but it is considered that the events represent a very good return for the resources committed.

5.2 Legal implications

There are no particular legal implications associated with this report.

6. Other implications

Commitment of officer resources.

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / LAA (or Coventry SCS)?

Local Democracy Week encourages members of the public to get involved with their Council, increases participation in decision-making, encourages active citizenship, and promotes civic pride in Coventry.

Encouraging transparent decision-making, working with communities and voluntary groups, celebrating Coventry, and encouraging civic pride are all key corporate values.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

N/A

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The City Council has benefited from positive media coverage on Local Democracy Week events and improved democratic engagement. It is hoped that through promoting democracy to young people it will encourage them to engage in democratic processes and the hope that they become Councillors and even MPs of the future.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

LDW is aimed at encouraging young citizens to engage with the City Council and is a positive equality impact in this regard.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

Report author(s):

Name and job title:

Matthew Rossi, Governance Service Officer

Directorate:

Resources

Tel and email contact:

024 7683 3079

matthew.rossi@coventry.gov.uk

Enquiries should be directed to the above.

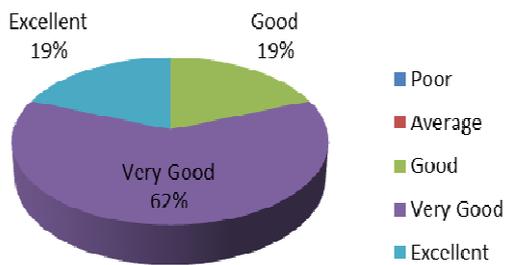
Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Contributors:				
Usha Patel	Governance Services Officer	Resources	13.11.14	14.11.14
Hugh Peacocke	Governance Services Manager	Resources	13.11.14	13.11.14
Adrian West	Members and Elections Team Manager	Resources	13.11.14	17.11.14
Names of approvers: (officers and members)				
Finance: Kathryn Sutherland	Lead Accountant	Resources	13.11.14	21.11.14
Legal: Andrew Burton	Solicitor	Resources	13.11.14	14.11.14
Director: Chris West	Executive Director, Resources		15.12.14	13.01.15
Members: Councillor Townshend	Cabinet Member (Policing and Equalities)		07.01.15	07.01.15

This report is published on the Council's website: www.coventry.gov.uk/moderngov

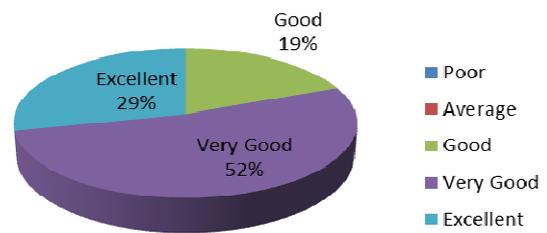
APPENDIX A – RESULTS OF FEEDBACK

Virtual Council Lord Mayor's Hospitality Suite Monday 13 October 2014 21 Responses

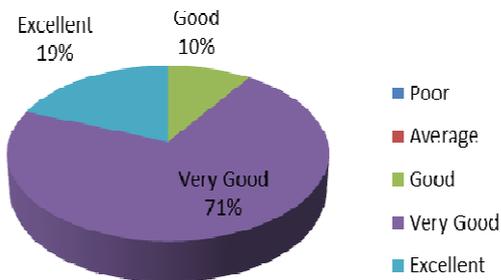
1. The overall event



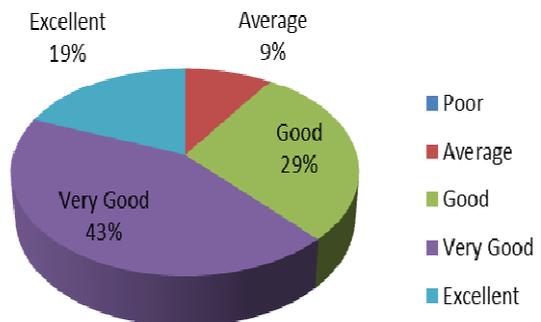
2. The venue



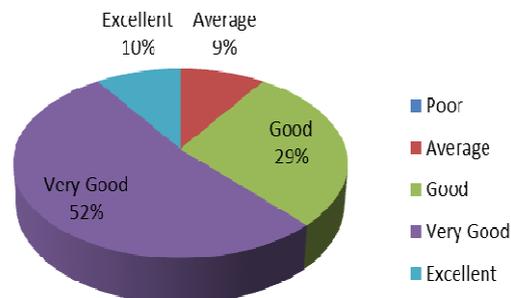
3. The organisation of the event



4. The pace of the day



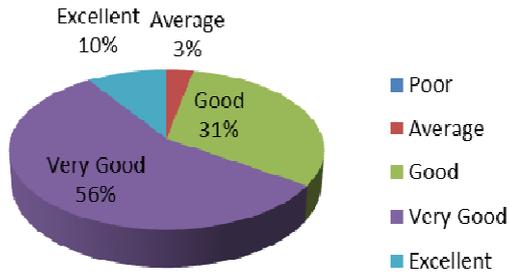
5. Your experience of working with others



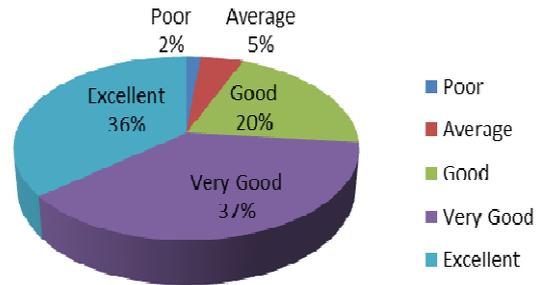
APPENDIX A – RESULTS OF FEEDBACK

Question Time The Council Chamber Wednesday 15 October 2014 64 Responses

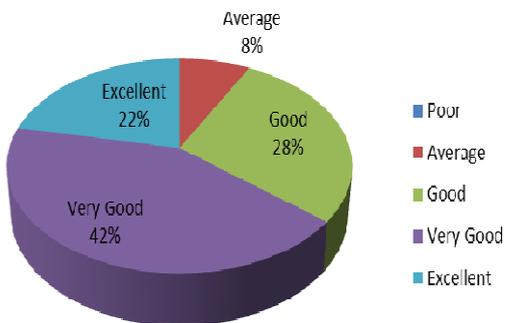
1. The overall rating of the event



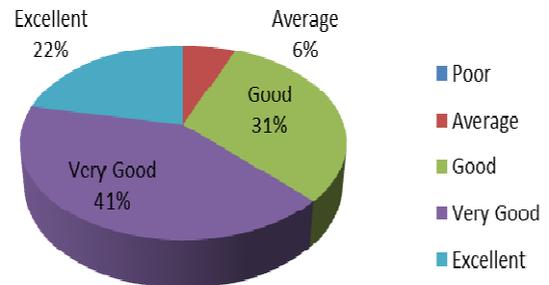
2. The venue



3. The organisation of the event



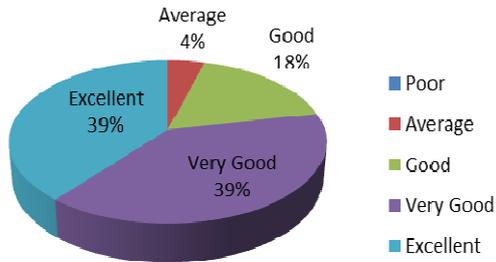
4. The debate topics



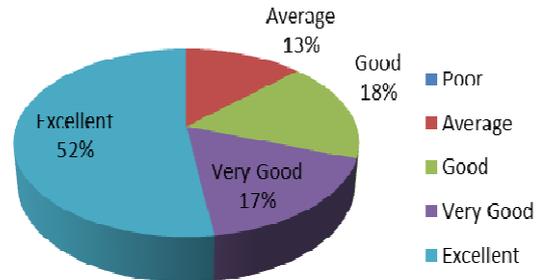
APPENDIX A – RESULTS OF FEEDBACK

Lord Mayor's Youth Quiz Herbert Art Gallery and Museum Wednesday 15 October 2014 23 Responses

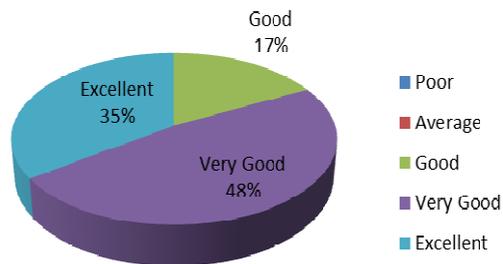
1. The overall event



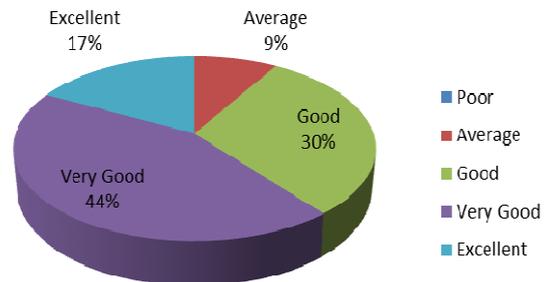
2. The venue



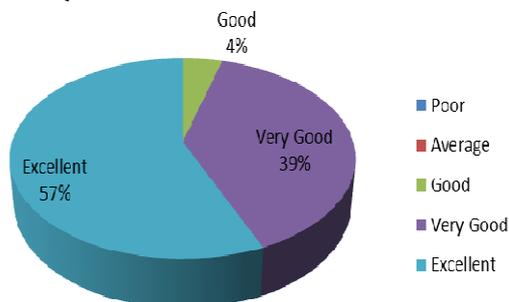
3. The organisation of the event



4. The standard of questions



5. The Quiz Master



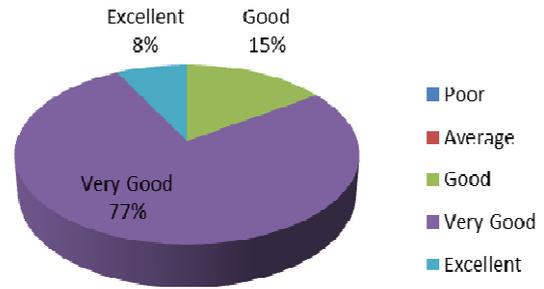
APPENDIX A – RESULTS OF FEEDBACK

Democracy Day Council House Thursday 16 October 2014 13 Responses

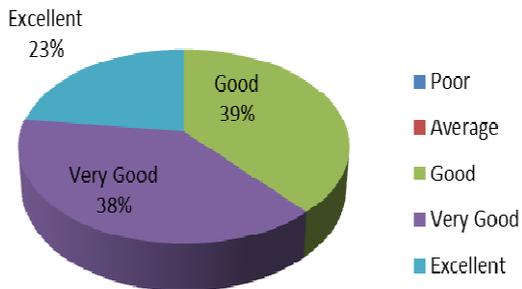
1. The overall event



2. The organisation of the event



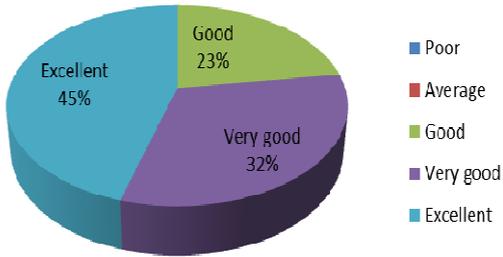
3. The pace of the session



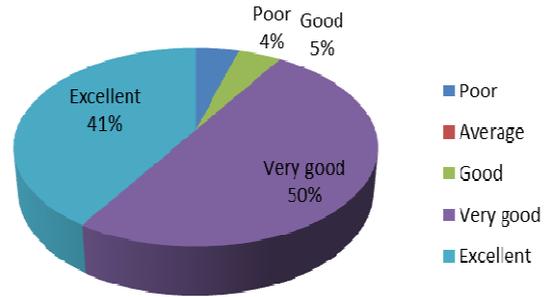
APPENDIX A – RESULTS OF FEEDBACK

Year 12 School Debate Council Chamber Friday 17 October 2014 22 Responses

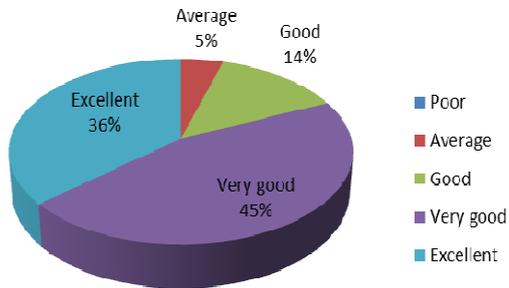
1. Your overall rating of the event



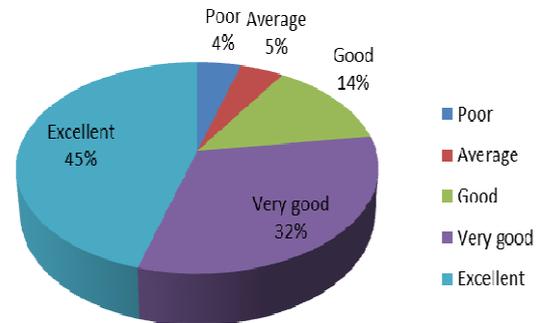
2. The venue



3. The organisation of the event



4. The quality of the debate topics



5. The judging of the debates

