



Haverling
LONDON BOROUGH

COUNCIL CHAMPION FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE

ANNUAL REPORT

COUNCILLOR FRANKIE WALKER
2023-2024

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COUNCILLOR INTRODUCTION

Councillor Introduction



I have had the privilege of being Member Champion for young people for two years. I have met with young people across the borough to hear their views on how to ensure they can learn, work, live and thrive in Havering.

During my meetings with young people they have raised several issues including mental health support, the stigma around free school meals, employment and training support and many other issues. For the first time, we saw a Children and Young person's budget which received over 300 responses. This clearly demonstrates that young people are also keen to share their views on how we deliver and provide services in the Council.

Whilst the consultation is a step in the right direction, there is still a lot more work to be done by us all to ensure that we do policy with young people and not to them. The 2021 Census highlighted that Havering 'now has a higher proportion of children aged 0-17 (22.3%) than 80% of local authorities in England'. We need to provide the right environment for all children and young people to reach their full potential and to do so we need to include them in policy and decision making. It is not just a role reserved for the Member Champion for young people but for all members.

We have incredible, talented and driven young people in Havering which needs to be celebrated more. It is often the case that the good work done by young people in the borough is overlooked and we need to change this. We must give our young people the recognition they deserve and ensure that they are celebrated in Havering.

Thank you to the young people and staff that have given me their time and helped me in my role as member champion.

Councillor Frankie Walker 2023-2024

CHAMPION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

Champion for Children and Young People Policy

My priorities as a Member Champion for Young People is to make sure young people are heart of decision making and to strengthen the relationship between young people and Councillors to achieve the best outcomes for them in the borough. This supports Havering's strategic priority of starting well and living well as by listening and taking action to make changes on recommendations put forward by young people, I am working to creating an environment that enables young people to have the best start and thrive in the borough.

I aim to facilitate open conversations with decision makers and young people through organised meetings, scrutiny committees and with group leaders. Alongside, representing the views and issues that matter to children and young people in the Council chamber.

During my term, I have spoken with Council staff, young people and parents about matters that are important to children and young people. In the people's overview and scrutiny sub-committee role I ensured that we included issues that impacted young people in our scrutiny work. One issue where I actively requested for timely scrutiny was on Home to School transport. It was vital we had enough time as committee to ask questions and put forward recommendations before a final decision was made. I also called for Ofsted's review of our children services to be added to our scrutiny as I believed it was important that the Council took steps to address the concerns raised during Ofsted's report so that wellbeing of children and young people in Havering to get the right support. I also sit on the corporate parenting panel and work cross party to prioritise safeguarding and wellbeing of children and young people across the borough. Overall, I integrate my role as a Member Champion for young people in all aspects of my Council work by identifying opportunities to involve young people in policy discussion and by advocating on their behalf in the chamber and beyond.

Community Engagement

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

One of my ambitions as a Member Champion was to regularly engage with young people in borough and provide a space for them to share their views and issues that matter to them. In the committee and Council meetings, I highlight the issues that are impact children and young people across the borough and try to ensure that they are considered in discussions.

Youth Council/ Members of Youth Parliament

During my terms, I have met regularly with Youth Council to find out about the issues that young people are facing in the borough. The following concerns were raised during our meetings:

- Stigma around free school meals
- Quality of school meals
- Poor lighting in parks
- Lack of spaces for young people
- Discrimination

I will be taking up these issues to see how we can address these issues as a council. I believe that my role is not just about championing the voices of young people in the chamber but ensure they are in rooms with decision makers. During my term for 2024-2025 young people will be meeting with group leaders across all parties and groups to put forward their questions and concerns. This was supposed to take place last term however due to the Mayoral and GLA elections this was put on hold. I will provide an update in my next report of outcomes and actions that come as a result of this meeting.

I also attended the Youth Parliament results night and met the five candidates alongside their family and friends. 6,800 votes were cast in the borough and 50% of secondary schools took part alongside youth centres and groups. Every young person put forward important pledges such as tackling crime and preparation for adult life. A

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

huge congratulations to Philia Lekaj and Elsie Orwell. I look forward to working with these new members and Youth Council on their pledges.

There are number of groups and organisations championing and supporting young people in the borough, this is not an exhaustive list but I hope to engage/ increase engagement with some of these groups and organisations during my next term.

- Revellers
- GRL Academy
- Say it Louder Forum
- Goodfellas
- Go Girls
- CIC youth club
- Sycamore Trust

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

I have promoted Equality and Diversity by championing the voices of young people in decision making and policy discussions. Age is a protected characteristic and as a Council we should consider the impact decisions on services can have on children and young people.

To further Equality and Diversity, I recommend the following:

1. Bi-annual full council meetings with a segment dedicated for children and young people to ask questions to cabinet members on areas of interest.
2. Commit to retaining the children and young people's budget consultation
3. To include children in care as a protected characteristic

Events

Cocoon Visit

Alongside the Director of Children Services, I attended the Cocoon which is a safe space for young adults who are care experienced. We discussed what they would like to see from Councillors and some of the issues they have faced which includes:

- Cost of transport
- Access to mental health services
- Employment support

As a corporate parent, I will be looking at ways we can support our children in care in relation to the issues they have raised above.

GRL Academy

I was invited to speak to young people at GRL academy where I shared my journey as a councillor. We also had a discussion about women that inspire us and our individual strengths. I also had the opportunity to ask about their concerns such as the cost of ULEZ and mental health support.

Drapers Infant School Music Festival

I attended Draper's infant schools first ever music school festival. This was a fantastic event that brought the children together to sing and dance in a fun and welcoming setting.

London Borough of Culture Bid

I attended the Havering London Borough of Culture's bid meeting representing young people and putting forward ideas on how we would engage with children and young people across the borough.

Romford Autism Hub

In my role as Member Champion for young people, I arranged for Romford's Autism Hub to attend the People's overview and scrutiny subcommittee meeting. Alongside this, the group were able to have a tour of the town hall.

CLOSING MESSAGE

Closing Message

It has been a pleasure meeting young people and staff across the borough exploring ways we can support children and young people as well as providing a space for me to learn about their experiences. I look forward to commencing my third term as Member Champion and continuing these important conversations to achieve the best outcomes.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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