

Welcome to "I'm a Councillor, Get me out of Here!"

Are you ready to be grilled by hundreds of future voters with strong views on.....well, everything?

This pack will help you get the most out of the event so that you can better engage with young people in your area.

In this pack you have:-

- Your briefing notes (this set of pages) :-
 - What the event is about
 - How to use the site
 - Rules of the event
 - Key Dates
 - Advice on talking to young people online
 - Background
- Your username and access code card (in the envelope)
- A copy of a Teacher Pack (the remaining pages)

If you have any questions which aren't answered by this pack, then please email support@bigvote.org.uk or call 01225 869413 during office hours.

For general information about the event please read the *Information for Councillors* leaflet available at <http://www.bigvote.org.uk/?lid=982>.

What is the event about?

"It involved students who would otherwise not have given politics a second glance"

Tony Lake, Head of Citizenship, Poltair College

In this event, ordinary young people get the chance to talk about the things in your area that affect them, or that they care about. And because someone (you!) listens and talks to them, they start to learn how they can, constructively, get involved.

It breaks down barriers between you (as an elected politician) and young people in your area, making it easier for you to talk to each other and understand each other. You'll often be surprised how informed and committed they are, and how much they appreciate you engaging with them. And you'll learn a lot about communicating with young people, and what their issues are.

"Now the youngsters know that they have a voice and are beginning to know how to use it BUT More importantly I have started listening in a different way."

Cllr Dave Harris, Colchester

Using the Site

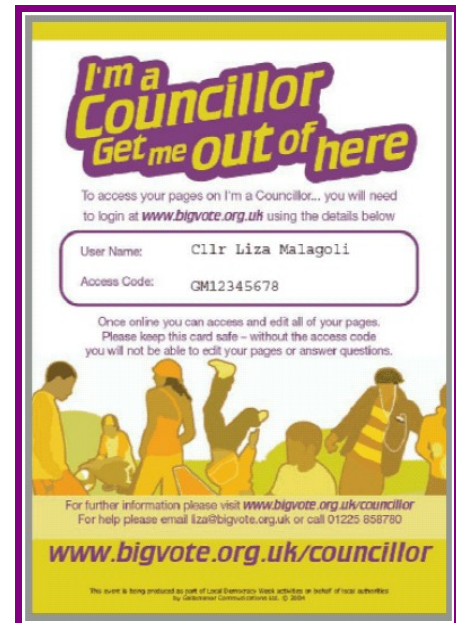
The first thing you have to do is **LOGIN**

How to log in

1. Just go to www.bigvote.org.uk and enter your **username** and **access code** EXACTLY as it appears on the card in the envelope in this pack.
2. THERE IS NO NEED TO REGISTER – you have already been pre-registered.

There are three main bits of the site that you will use:-

- Profile – this is where you lay out your manifesto, and also tell young people something about yourself, so they can see your human side.
- Questions – young people ask you about what's important to them.
- Live Chat – you and young people chat instantly online.



You have your own page for your your profile. Your answers to questions are shown on one page, with all the other councillors' answers. You share the Live Chat page with other councillors and students.

How to add your profile

1. Go to www.bigvote.org.uk and LOGIN
2. You will see the council home page.
3. Click on 'My Profile', near the top.
4. You will see your profile page
5. Click on the 'Edit your profile' link at the bottom.
6. You'll see a series of questions, with boxes for the answers. Type your answers in the boxes. Or you can cut and paste text you've written elsewhere into the boxes, if you find that easier.
7. The first three sections are the main ones, the remainder are some lighthearted interview questions to help the students get to know you.

at you had 3 minutes for yourself what would they get to be honest!

What did you want to be after you left school?

Were you ever in trouble in at school?

What's the best thing you've done as a councillor?

Tell us a joke.

[Show less ▲](#)

My profile link:
<http://template.bigvote.org.uk/profile/cllrone/>

Short link: <http://i.ac.im/u.8>

[Edit your profile](#)

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8. In the first three sections you are asked for a **one sentence summary** first. This is what is automatically displayed on the page, and students click a 'read more' link to see the rest. This is because our testing and research has shown that this makes it much easier for low literacy students to take in the information. They can find a whole page with lots of text intimidating. So make sure this one sentence is fairly simple to understand.

9. In the bigger section for these first three, you can format text (e.g. use bold text or add bullets, use the icons at the top of the text entry box) and you can use photos. In the shorter sections, you can't use formatting or photos.

10. In the interview section there are eight lighthearted questions. They are here to humanise you to the young people, who often feel that politicians are all the same and not like people they can relate to. Our best advice is to be yourself in your answers. You don't need to pretend to like the latest band for young people to relate to you, being genuine is what's important.

The questions are:-

- How would you describe yourself in 3 words?
- Who is your favourite singer or band?
- What is the most fun thing you've done?
- If you had 3 wishes for yourself what would they be? - be honest!
- What did you want to be after you left school?
- Were you ever in trouble at school?
- What's the best thing you've done as a councillor?
- Tell us a joke

11. To save what you have done, click on the 'Update Profile' link at the bottom. This will update your page.

12. You can now carry on adding things, or click on 'View your profile' to see what it looks like.

13. You can come back at any time to edit your manifesto or add things, just repeat the steps above.

We suggest you write about 200 words in each of the first three sections.

You can change your profile whenever you like.

You can add photos if you want to, but don't feel you need to do anything fancy.

About Yourself

Extra Fields

Me and my council work A one sentence description of you and the work you do as a councillor

More about me and my council work My council work is very varied and no two days are the same.

Path: p

A full description of you and the work you do as a councillor

Council job: What position, on cabinet or in committees do you hold?

Profession: What do/did you do when you're not a Councillor? Write it down!

New Password If you would like to change the password type a new password. Type your new password again. Hint: The password should be at least seven characters and lower case letters, numbers and symbols like !

[Update Profile](#)

[View your profile](#)

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How to add photos

You are welcome to put photos into the three main sections.

To do this, upload as many images as you wish to use in the 'my images' section, just after the 'Me and my council work' section. The site will then call these images myimage1, myimage2, etc.

To insert these images into your text, type the name in square brackets where you wish it to appear. For example:-

Here's a picture of my cat [myimage1]

You can even embed videos in these sections by pasting in the embed code from YouTube or similar. However, do be aware that some school systems will block YouTube and many other video sites. This isn't necessarily a reason not to use video, as it can be very effective, but don't make understanding your profile **dependant** on viewing the video as it will leave out some students.

How to answer questions

You will be notified by email of all new questions. You can answer them in your own time, but ideally that day if you can.

1. Log in as before.
2. Go to your profile page and you'll see a box on the right with 'My unanswered questions'. All unanswered questions will appear in this box as a clickable link.
3. To answer a question, click the link and type your answer.

About Q & A

Young people can ask you questions on absolutely anything, but to help provide some order they will be put into the following seven categories:

- About you and being a councillor
- Crime and Anti-social behaviour
- Education
- Transport and the Environment
- Youth issues
- General
- Local Facilities

"Kids today...":-

The moderators work very hard to strike a balance between making your lives easier as councillors, and giving the young people the chance to have their voices heard. Remember some of them will be as young as 10, some will be from special schools, most will never have had the chance to talk to a politician before.

"Only one or two students from the PRU took part this year, but please do not underestimate the impact of this. Student D. was delighted to have taken part in this democratic act and took it very seriously. He discussed issues that really meant something to him and his esteem was definitely boosted by receiving a reply."

Min Payne, Citizenship Teacher

It is up to you which questions to answer and how much detail to go into. Our advice is simple – be honest, straightforward and to the point in your answers. Young people seem to prefer short, specific answers. They are dismissive of 'politician's answers'.

Moderating Policy

DUPLICATES: We know you will get sent some very similar questions (believe me, the moderators wade through and weed out a lot more of them!). Moderators will take out duplicate questions, but allow through questions which may be similar, but make additional or slightly different points.

OFFENSIVE QUESTIONS: Moderators will remove rude or offensive questions (there are generally very few) and anything which breaks the house rules (please see later). They will allow challenging political questions. They will allow irreverent, but friendly, questions.

UNCLEAR QUESTIONS: Moderators will allow questions which may be unclear – it is up to you to start a dialogue with young people to clarify them.

How to take part in Live Chat

“Loved the way the students’ questions and ideas bounced off one another and back to me during the live chat!”

Cllr Jean Jones, Shropshire County Council

The Live Chat section has been created to allow for a more informal and direct interaction between councillors and students. What people say appears instantly, so it is not pre-moderated. However, moderators will block young people who are very disruptive or who break the house rules.

1. Log in as usual
2. Click on the large ‘CHAT’ button on the right hand side



3. You'll see two boxes side by side, one for the councillors and one for the young people.

4. Type into the text entry box above the right hand box, then click on ‘Send’.

5. Your words will now appear below.

Talk to the councillors!

When sessions have been booked by a teacher an instant messenger-style room will open on this page. Yep, itâ€™s magic. I donâ€™t know how it works either really. Fingers crossed it will though!â€

On the left is the room for the students. Teachers and moderators will also be in here. On the right will appear the councillors. Just shout if you need help.

Teachers: Please email admin@bigvote.org.uk if you want to book a session. Please give your name, school, class details, ideally a contact telephone number, and the date and time youâ€™d like.

You may only view this chat

Name: *cllrone*
Message:

Last Message
11 minutes ago

Last Message
11 minutes ago
cllrone : Test!

Tips for Live Chat

- **Don't worry** about typos and missed words: It will be busy, you won't have time to correct yourself and your meaning will come across
- **Address young people by name.** There will be lots of young people, asking lots of questions and it can get confusing. If you address young people by name it helps them to know which reply is which.
- **Get them talking:** Sometimes young people are intimidated at first or don't know what to say. Ask questions, start getting to know them and they will open up.
- **Don't be afraid to ask:** Young people won't mind that you don't understand internet slang, but they won't always realise at first. Asking what things mean can be a good way of starting a conversation. It's one of the strengths of the event that you are 'meeting young people half way' by entering their medium, instead of them standing intimidated in the council chamber. Let them teach you things!

Live Chat bookings

Teachers have been asked to book when they want a live chat. When a booking is made all councillors will be informed by email. Shortly before the Live Chat you will also receive a text message reminder on the mobile phone number you have given us.

PLEASE NOTE:

- There are moderators watching over Live Chat at all times. You can always ask them questions and pass on information.
- If you can't make a Live Chat **please let us know** (we will explain to students).
- If you can't join in at the start of a Live Chat, but are able to join in later, please let us know – again we will advise students.
- If you have to leave a Live Chat early – let the students know during the Live Chat.

Voting

Throughout the event young people will have the opportunity to vote for the councillor they want to stay on the site. During the first week of the event, they will be asked to vote once, and these votes will count towards the first eviction, in week two. From Monday of week two, in most councils, young people will be voting every day and there will be an eviction each day.

Evictions

The polls close at 2pm and councillors will be notified of the results by email by 3pm, when it will also be announced on the website. The councillor with the fewest votes is evicted in each round. In the event of a tie we include the votes from the previous round. Evicted councillors can still go online and post an exit message on their manifesto page. At the end of the second week, the winning councillor is elected I'm a Councillor **Youth Champion** for their authority. The closing times and number of evictions may vary from council to council depending on the number of councillors involved.

House Rules

These House Rules apply to **everyone** using the site, adults and young people alike.

Rule one

No content that is offensive, racist, sexist, sexual or simply nasty. Full-stop. Any participant who posts unsuitable material will have their access to this site blocked.

Rule two

If we remove a message from the site under rule one, we don't have to explain why in detail.

Rule three

We can't foresee everything so we may make up some rules as we go. We will be as fair as we can and we'll post all the rules on the site.

Rule four

In the event of any disputes the Big Vote Organisation will make the final decision. By participating you agree to abide by those decisions.

Special rules for councillors:

1. No asking other councillors questions. It is for the young people to do the interrogating.
2. No electioneering or breaking of your Local Authority rules. If clarification is needed it is best to contact your Elections Officer.
3. No posing as young people. (That's under 18 years for the purpose of this exercise)
4. No voting for yourself or anyone else.
5. We will try to remove anything we deem to be libellous or offensive on the site, but please remember that you are responsible for what you write.
6. If you have comments that you would like to bring to our attention, please email: support@gallomanor.com.

Dates (Scotland dates in brackets)

14th September

Site goes live for Councillors and Teachers

Please enter your manifesto as soon as you can, this gives teachers time to introduce the event and do background work. Also, use this time to play around with the site and see how it works. It's really pretty easy! We will send you a "test" question to make sure everything is working for you.

We will also notify you of any Live Chat Sessions booked by Teachers.

4th Oct (20th Sept)

Site goes live for Young People

From this time on the site is Live. It may be quite quiet for the first couple of days whilst students sign up but be ready for a rush of questions.

11th Oct (27th Sept)

3pm First Eviction

(until the 15th October (1st Oct) there will usually be daily evictions, depending on the number of competing councillors in your council)

When polls close the councillor with the FEWEST votes will be evicted. You will be notified by email of the result.

15th Oct (1st Oct)

3pm The Final Result

The polls close for a final time and we announce who has won 'I'm a Councillor, Get me out of Here!' for your area.

Privacy

None of the information stored (email or phone numbers) about pupils, teachers or councillors will be used for any purpose other than maintaining and developing the 'I'm a Councillor, Get Me Out of Here!' project. To read the full privacy policy please visit www.bigvote.org.uk/privacy.

Advice for talking to young people online

- Keep your comments concise and relevant.
- Remember that the young people you'll be writing to will be of varying age, background and experience. Keep your answers clear so that they will all understand. Write short, simple sentences as though speaking, perhaps, rather than writing.
- Take care not to patronise people. Young people vary in ability.
- Be patient. Some young people's turn of phrase and use of language may be different from the council chamber. It may take you a little while to understand what they are trying to ask. This is especially true when special schools are involved.
- Be tolerant. Sometimes young people can be over-exuberant online. Chat with them and they will calm down and engage with you.
- Don't take offence. Young people can be very direct. Sometimes you will receive questions criticising you or the council or quite personal in nature. The benefit of an online event is that young people feel empowered to ask any question.

But best of all – go talk to some young people in schools or youth clubs!

Young people give many reasons for not being interested in politics. The following points came out strongly in research:

"All the parties are the same" - avoid empty party rhetoric; differentiate yourselves, be specific, be local, be relevant to young people

"I don't know who the candidates are" – tell young people about yourself; be a person not just a politician.

"They just seem to argue amongst themselves and do nothing" – don't try to make yourself look clever by scoring points off your colleagues

About the Local Democracy Campaign

Local Democracy Week 2010

The objective of the Local Democracy Campaign is to make local democracy relevant and useful to young people. During Local Democracy Week councillors nationwide will be making efforts to engage with young people but it is important it doesn't stop there. Use this event to kickstart a programme of change with regards to the way young people are involved in decision-making at your council.