

18 November 2016

Local primary schools take over East Devon District Council for the day

Schoolchildren get a taste of local authority's inner workings

Children from four East Devon primary schools today (Friday 18 November) had the chance to experience first-hand how their local district council is run. The forty four pupils, aged 10 to 11 years, who visited East Devon District Council's offices at Knowle in Sidmouth, were taking part in national Takeover Challenge Day, which aims to get children and young people involved with how public service decisions are made. It also provides organisations, such as local authorities, with a fresh perspective on the services they run.

The four primary schools taking part were:

- Otterton Church of England Primary School
- Brixington Primary Academy, Exmouth
- Offwell Primary School
- Clyst St Mary Primary School

Throughout the day children participated in a number of activities, including mock food hygiene inspections and recycling workshops. The council's Chairman, Councillor Stuart Hughes and deputy Chairman Councillor Helen Parr joined staff and children in a special mock council meeting, where pupils debated the issue of planning permission for an inflatable water park and accompanying retail kiosks.

Meanwhile staff from the council's Housing team worked with the children to find out what they felt was most important to young people in their communities and how they would improve them.

Elsewhere 'Sam 'n' Ella's' mock-up 'grotty' café kitchen allowed pupils to play detective and to spot potential food hygiene and health and safety hazards. The café scene featured the owner's own 'interesting' interpretation of personal hygiene in a kitchen and helped demonstrate the work undertaken by the council when inspecting restaurants and food premises. It also encouraged the youngsters to be more aware of risks at home.

The Waste and Recycling team worked with pupils to teach them about how different countries trade resources and how everyone should recycle more and waste less.

Followers of the council's Twitter (@eastdevon) and Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/eastdevon/> accounts were also able to see events unfold throughout the day, with picture updates posted under the hashtag #TakeoverChallenge.

East Devon District Council Chairman, Councillor Stuart Hughes, who chaired the planning debate, which all the schools took turns to participate in, said:

“The children were absolutely delightful and picked up the art of debating very quickly. I was greatly impressed by the logic and common sense they applied to the topic being discussed. They brought fresh and original opinions to a sensitive topic. I would say that we have many councillors in the making!”

“It is always a pleasure to open the council’s doors to local schools and to introduce them to the inner workings of their district authority.”

