



■ THE CONTENDERS: (Clockwise, from top left) Ahmed Siddiqui, 18; Fjolla Krasniqi, 17; Soila Apparicio, 17; Shoaib Shah, 18; Alfie Green, 16; and Mufaro Musaurwa, 16

Contributed

Six hopefuls seek UK Youth Parliament place

Six young people from across the borough are putting themselves forward as candidates for election to the UK Youth Parliament.

MORT SMITH spoke to each of them to find out what they hope to achieve if they succeed in getting elected by their peers

SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD Alfie Green from Eastcote admits he didn't really know what he was getting himself into when he first joined the Hillingdon Youth Council.

The Haydon School pupil was a member of his own school council when he attended a youth conference where he was struck by the passion and enthusiasm of some of the other youngsters taking part who were putting the case for more attention to be paid by decision makers to the views of the younger generation. One thing led to another and he ended up as a vocal member of the borough's youth council shortly afterwards.

From there, Alfie was elected as one of the two people representing Hillingdon on the UK Youth Parliament, something he describes as an amazing experience, and to which he is currently attempting to get re-elected.

Alfie said: "At the start I didn't know what it was all about but now I really do feel like I can make a difference for young people by representing them at the Youth Parliament."

Soila Apparicio, 17, goes to Ruslip High School and is hoping to read politics, economics and philosophy at Oxford University when she finishes her A-levels, so it is not surprising that one of the key issues she would raise if elected to the UK Youth Parliament is the level of tuition fees and the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

Soila is an active member of the borough's Youth Council and has learned a lot from talking to the various senior managers within Hillingdon Council – particularly those involved with education and health. Ahmed Siddiqui, 18, served

YOUTH PARLIAMENT INFO

- The UK Youth Parliament was formed in 2000 and consists of elected members aged between 11 and 18
- The Parliament now accommodates about 600 youngsters including members and their deputies
- Members serve for a term of one year, to ensure that as many young people as possible have a chance to take part
- More than 500,000 young people vote in the elections each year through local schools
- The Parliament stages a three-day annual sitting, normally held at a university campus
- Once a year, Youth Parliament members take over the House of Commons for a day, where they debate topical issues under the guidance of the Speaker

as a member of the UK Youth Parliament in 2009 and is now seeking a second term.

The St Bernard's School student has always been interested in youth politics and already has an impressive track record of making changes for his contemporaries.

He said: "At my previous school, I introduced the idea of a 'bully box' aimed at helping to stamp out bullying. It started as an idea but now it's fully in operation. I also successfully lobbied for the right to have halal meat on the school menu. You really can make a difference if you're prepared to speak out."

Mufaro Musaurwa, 16, is a pupil at Hewens College and is one of the newest members of the Hillingdon Youth Council having only joined in December 2011. But already the Hayes resident says he is enjoying the chance to talk about issues that affect young people.

He said: "This is a good opportunity to say what is in your heart on a whole range of subjects – it's great to think older people are actually listening to our views."

Fjolla Krasniqi, 17, is another new recruit to the

borough Youth Council having joined in November after attending a youth conference as a representative of Uxbridge High School. She is hoping to go to the University of Manchester to study politics, international relations and philosophy after her A-levels.

Fjolla said: "I think it's important that young people have a voice – a say in decisions – particularly over the cuts that are being made by the government. I'd love the chance to become a member of the UK Youth Parliament."

Shoaib Shah, 18, from Hayes, is a student at Hewens College and has already been a member of the European Youth Parliament. He says one of his key objectives is to raise the need for more facilities for young people.

He said: "There was Hillingdon Festival last year but it wasn't as good as it could have been from a youth viewpoint. Also, there isn't enough publicity of things for youngsters to do – that really needs to be improved."

● Extracts from the manifesto statements of all six of the borough's Youth Parliament candidates can be found on our website at www.uxbridgegazette.co.uk.

