

Meeting	Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date	3 September 2024
Present	Councillors Nicholls (Chair), Clarke (Vice-Chair), Crawshaw [from 5:34pm to 6:12pm, and from 7:11pm), Cuthbertson, K Taylor, Waller, Melly (Substitute for Cllr Nelson), Runciman (Substitute for Cllr Cullwick), Healey (Substitute for Cllr Knight), and Whitcroft (Substitute for Cllr Wilson)
Apologies	Councillors Knight, Cullwick, Nelson, and Wilson
In attendance	Councillor Webb – Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education Councillor Pavlovic – Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities
Officers in attendance	Richard Hartle – Head of Children and Education Finance Martin Kelly – Corporate Director of Children and Education Maxine Squire – Assistant Director, Education and Skills Pauline Stuchfield – Director of Housing and Communities Niall McVicar – Head of Service – Innovation and Children’s Champion Joe Micheli – Head of Communities

The Chair reported that Councillor Moroney was not a member of the Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee and that his inclusion on the agenda was an administrative error.

8. Declarations of Interest (5:34pm)

Members were asked to declare at this point in the meeting any disclosable pecuniary interest or other registerable interest they might have in respect of business on the agenda if they had not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests. Councillor Crawshaw declared a private interest in relation to item 5, SEND Update, and noted that he would not participate in debate during its' discussion.

9. Minutes (5:34pm)

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings of the committee held on 2 July 2024 and 7 May 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

10. Public Participation (5:34pm)

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

11. Finance and Performance Q4 (for information) (5:35pm)

The Head of Children and Education Finance presented the report and in response to questions from members, the Head of Children and Education Finance, Corporate Director of Children and Education, and Assistant Director, Education and Skills, confirmed that:

- The saving acquired in relation to the Virtual School did not impact provision, this took advantage of available Government grants.
- Direct Payment savings resulted from a review into spending that was not required, and therefore savings would not have effected provision.
- The Outturn for the safety valve agreement 2023/24 was on track financially, but would become more challenging through future years.
- The School Transport team had had success in reducing the deficit through sourcing different transport types for individuals, for example ongoing savings had been achieved via the obtaining of fleet vehicles rather than individual taxis.

- The budget reduction of £4.5 million over two years for transport had resulted in a necessity to change behaviours, as external provision had become costly through inflation.
- In relation to paragraph 44 of the report, focus was also being applied to the wellbeing of children and families as well as academic outcomes following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Safeguarding Interventions and Assessment Teams budget underspend resulted from over-recruitment in the past, and the lack of a need to fill vacancies immediately. Vacancies would be filled depending on demand.
- Due to changes in the way teacher assessments were completed during the year 2021-22, the percentage-point gap between Free School Meal (FSM) and non-FSM pupils at 15, who attain a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19, was not directly comparable with years before or after.
- York had an embedded gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils, and as York had a high performing non-SEN cohort this gap was wider than national averages.

Resolved:

- i. That Councillor Pavlovic, the Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities, would share with members information relating to children in temporary accommodation who were presented as homeless or in overcrowded accommodation.
- ii. That the committee noted the finance and performance information.

Reasons: To ensure expenditure was kept within the approved budget.

12. SEND Update (6:12pm)

The Assistant Director, Education and Skills, presented the report and noted that following the last SEND update received by the committee on 5 March 2024, a SEND Area Health Needs Assessment had now been completed (Annex A to the report).

The Assistant Director, Education and Skills, reported that there was a growing national narrative that the current framework was not working, and a recent independent report by ISOS Partnership investigated evidence demonstrating this and found four key points which resonate with CYC's experiences.

The Assistant Director, Education and Skills, noted that a decision to create a dedicated SEND Family Hub was scheduled to be taken by the Executive on 12 September 2024.

The Assistant Director, Education and Skills, reported that the former Head of Service for CYC's SEND team had left the authority through retirement and the SEND team had a backlog of statutory assessments due to difficulty with employing child psychologists. It was noted that the employment of a new SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) manager had started and experienced staff were taking on higher leadership roles to support the team – it was expected that a new Head of the SEND Service would be in position by January 2025.

The Corporate Director of Children and Education reported that the SEND system was pressured nationally, and that it was predicted that within two years demand for EHCPs (Education, Health, and Care Plans) would lead to an increase in expenditure.

In response to questions from members, the Corporate Director of Children and Education, and Assistant Director, Education and Skills confirmed that:

- According to ISOS Partnership's data, there was no correlation between affluency and SEND.
- EHCP investigations were ongoing to consider how schools vary in similar areas to understand localities and stop variations.
- It was important to change the narrative that a diagnosis was needed in order to receive support, and as such providing support at the earliest point was a priority.
- Changes from September 2024 would help to equalise workloads for SEND teams, and investments were being made into professional development for staff.
- Emphasising the voice of families and children was a priority, and working alongside families increases trust in the system.

Resolved: That the committee noted both the progress made but also the continuing financial and reputational challenges that SEND posed for the local authority, partners, and stakeholders.

Reason: To ensure that the members had an understanding and oversight of the on-going opportunities and challenges to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

13. Youth Strategy Update (7:11pm)

The Head of Service - Innovation and Children's Champion, and Head of Communities presented the report, and it was reported that they would be meeting with the Youth Network following this meeting to discuss switching to more practical ways of working together.

In response to questions from members, the Head of Service - Innovation and Children's Champion, and Head of Communities confirmed that:

- The Youth Strategy was required to attract additional funding to sustain local provision for young people.
- It was a priority for young people to feel a sense of belonging in York, and as a result discussions were ongoing in involving the Youth Council with the Local Youth Partnership.
- The Youth Strategy would change behaviours of partners as they would now work to receive funding together, rather than compete individually for funding. More tangible outcomes of this would be better demonstrated later on in the process.

Members discussed the report, and the following feedback to Officers was provided:

- More efforts were needed to demonstrate the involvement of those aged 12-17 within the strategy.
- It was important for young people to be consulted on when naming the Local Youth Partnership.

Resolved:

- i. That Councillor Webb, the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education would share with members information of the decision of the York Youth Strategy scheduled to be taken by Executive on 14 November 2024.
- ii. That the committee noted and commented on the development of the York Youth Strategy and associated Local Youth Partnership.

Reason:

To support the successful development and implementation of the York Youth Strategy.

14. Work Plan (7:45pm)

Members discussed the committee's workplan and were advised that the School Attendance report originally due for this meeting had been deferred to the meeting scheduled for 1 October 2024.

Councillor Crawshaw proposed that the committee receive a report on the Locality Model during the meeting scheduled for 5 November 2024, this was seconded by Councillor Clarke, and it was;

Resolved:

- i. That the committee would receive a report on the Locality Model during the meeting scheduled for 5 November 2024.
- ii. That Members considered the committee's work plan for the 2024/25 municipal year.

Reason: To have kept the committee's work plan for the 2024/25 municipal year updated.

Cllr Nicholls, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.34 pm and finished at 7.54 pm].