
Meeting	Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date	1 April 2025
Present	Councillors Nicholls (Chair), Clarke (Vice-Chair), Crawshaw, Cullwick, Cuthbertson, Knight, Nelson [from 5:40pm], K Taylor, Waller [from 5:34pm], and Wilson
Officers in attendance	Pauline Stuchfield – Director of Housing and Communities Andrew Laslett – Strategic Services Manager Maxine Squire – Assistant Director, Education and Skills
External Attendees	Kathryn Blacker – CEO, York Museums Trust David Bryan – CFO, York Museums Trust Chris Edwards – Chair, REACH Paul Crewes – CEO, York Theatre Royal Julain Ollive – Head of Creative Engagement, York Theatre Royal

55. Apologies for Absence (5:32pm)

No apologies for absence were received.

56. Declarations of Interest (5:33pm)

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 Cuthbertson declared an interest in relation to item 5 of the agenda, York Museums Trust Report, in that he was a former trustee of York Museums Trust (YMT). Councillors Crawshaw and Knight declared that in relation to item 5, York Museums Trust Report, they were trustees of YMT, and that they had taken advice from the Monitoring Officer and would not participate within the consideration of this item. In relation to item 6 of the agenda, REACH Report, Councillor Crawshaw declared an interest in that he was a member of the steering group working with the REACH partnership.

57. Minutes (5:35pm)

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 4 March 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

- That within Minute No.51, *“The Head of Children and Education received feedback from members in that language surrounding the term “exacerbated by tribunal decisions” should be avoided as these decisions were needed and effort should be made to not put people off them”* would be amended to read: *“The Head of Children and Education Finance received feedback from members in that language surrounding the term “exacerbated by tribunal decisions” should be avoided as these decisions were needed and effort should be made to not put people off them. This feedback would be taken back to Children and Education Services”*.

58. Public Participation (5:38pm)

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

59. York Museums Trust Update (5:38pm)

The Director of Housing and Communities, City of York Council (CYC), Strategic Services Manager, CYC, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and Chief Finance Officer (CFO) of YMT presented the report and in response to questions from members confirmed that:

- There was a desire for the letter of credit from CYC to not be needed from summer 2025 onwards but that this would only be possible once a new financial plan was in place.
- 75% of YMT’s income was self-generated.
- During the COVID-19 Pandemic 60 employees were lost due to cost cutting exercises but there was a new understanding that cost-cutting could also affect revenue and therefore there was a focus on efficiency of how budgets were spent and how contracts were procured.
- Accessibility was a big factor in which schools visited YMT’s sites as most schools which did visit were those which were within walking distances. Transport costs were an issue, but considerations were ongoing into how digital engagement could improve accessibility.

- Exhibition preparations take time and money and so it was necessary to allow plenty of time for efficient exhibitions to be planned.

The CEO of YMT then informed members of the Melsonby Hoard artefacts which had been uncovered in 2021 and of which there was a campaign led by YMT to Save the Melsonby Hoard and keep it on show at the Yorkshire Museum, protected from private sale. The campaign had raised upwards of £28k at the time of the meeting.

Resolved: That the work undertaken by YMT be noted.

Reason: So that members are aware of YMT's progress.

60. REACH Progress Update (6:07pm)

The Assistant Director, Education and Skills, and the Chair of REACH (the York Cultural Education Partnership Reconnecting Education, the Arts, Culture and Heritage) presented the report.

The Chair of REACH discussed how essential the arts were to education in the United Kingdom (UK) and how enrichment and needed to be improved.

The Chair of Reach then informed the committee that REACH had not received any recent government or local authority funding as it was viewed as being successful, however funding would help to improve access to the arts and reduce the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children in York. Also, REACH was working with various organisations in York to spread its influence more widely across the city.

Members discussed the work of the REACH partnership and in response to questions from members, the Assistant Director, Education and Skills, and the Chair of REACH confirmed that:

- Since funding for the partnership ended in July 2024, the partnership had not been able to retain employment of their manager.
- The REACH partnership believed that schools' curriculum needed to have a balance of maths and English as well as the promotion of the arts.

- It was essential to work with parents and carers in improving accessibility of the arts for children and young people, as an example a recent event at York Barbican received great engagement from parents and carers.

Resolved: That the work undertaken by the REACH partnership be noted.

Reason: So that members were aware of REACH's progress.

61. York Theatre Trust Update (6:50pm)

The CEO, York Theatre Royal, and the Head of Creative Engagement, York Theatre Royal presented the item and reported that following the COVID-19 pandemic the theatre was mainly a presenting theatre, but it was recently becoming more of a producing theatre again, as before the pandemic.

The CEO, and the Head of Creative Engagement of York Theatre Royal reported that most of York Theatre Trust's work was done in communities bring theatre out to people who wouldn't otherwise experience it and to increase engagement and inclusion – it was more cost effective for schools to receive productions in school rather than the theatre. It was noted that the funding the Trust received allowed activities to be free of charge and for translations and training to be available.

In response to questions from members, the CEO, and the Head of Creative Engagement of York Theatre Royal confirmed that:

- The Trust was connecting with York Museums Trust, and York Explore to investigate and improve working together. It was essential for the Trust to have efficiency in staffing as its marketing team only had five members of staff compared to other theatre companies such as Theatre Royal Plymouth which had 13 members of staff.
- The Trust had moved away from a way of working in which only those who could afford to volunteer would in order to improve engagement.
- There was a desire to offer free transport to the theatre for schools through relevant funding.
- The Trust was working with York College in their introduction of T-Level courses as there was a big skills gap in the arts sector regarding technical work.

- Creative Engagement work was expanding, and investment had been made in community projects, however available funding was limited as York Theatre Trust received just 50% of the funding received by other similar sized theatre trusts.

Resolved: That the work undertaken by York Theatre Trust be noted.

Reason: So that members were aware of York Theatre Trust's progress.

62. Work Plan (7:38pm)

Members discussed the committee's work plan, and it was resolved that:

- i. The Children Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report scheduled for 5 June 2025 would be postponed to a future meeting.

Reason: To keep the committee's work plan for the upcoming municipal year updated.

Cllr Nicholls, Chair

[The meeting started at 5:32pm and finished at 7:43pm].