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Meeting	Children, Education & Communities Policy & Scrutiny Committee
Date	13 March 2019
Present	Councillors D Taylor (Chair), Fenton (Vice-Chair), Crawshaw, Rawlings and Wells
Apologies	Councillors Douglas and Jackson

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#### **44. Declarations of Interest**

Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

#### **45. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 8 January 2019 be approved as a correct record and then signed by the chair.

#### **46. Public Participation**

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

#### **47. The work of York@Large**

The Chair of York@Large attended the meeting to present an update on how the organisation had been working with the Council and other partners to deliver joint services during the past 12 months. He explained that this would be the final report to the committee from York@Large due to the partnership being wound up. The report explained that the Cultural Strategy had proposed that the Cultural Leaders Group be reformed as a smaller executive body and, at the same time, that an inclusive cultural forum be set up. The major projects of York@Large: cultural education; culture and wellbeing; and culture and place would fall within the remit of the Cultural Leaders Group and task and finish project groups would report to it.

The Chair of York@Large confirmed that satisfactory work was going on in all areas under its own steam and York@Large members were no longer essential for its continuation. He advised that objectives were being set for the next four years of designation of York as a UNESCO city and discussion on how these were set and how they would be evaluated was taking place.

He expressed his thanks to those who had served on York@Large and to scrutiny members for their contributions and support to the work of the partnership.

Acknowledging that York@Large had been a voice for grass roots organisations, one Member expressed concerns that this voice may be lost when York@Large was wound up. The Chair of York@Large advised Members that the governance of the Forum was to be agreed but that proposals included setting up a network and methods of engagement with partners.

Officers advised that that a representative of the Cultural Leaders Group would be able to provide updates to the committee in the future.

Resolved: That the report and update from the Chair of York@Large be noted.

Reason: To ensure that Members are kept updated on the work of York@Large

#### **48. 2018/19 Finance and Performance Third Quarter Report**

Members considered a report that analysed the latest performance for 2018/19 and forecast the financial outturn position by reference to the service plans and budgets for all of the services falling under the responsibility of the Corporate Director of Children, Education & Communities.

The Finance Manager gave an update and highlighted the finance and performance headlines. He confirmed that the projected overspend for the directorate at quarter 3 was £943,000 which represented a deterioration of £75,000 compared to the position at quarter 2 which was due mainly to an increase in the projected costs of supporting looked after children. He drew Members attention to further detail contained in the report of the major outturn variations and mitigating

actions but advised that these were very similar to those reported at quarter 2.

The Director of Children, Education and Communities, Assistant Director of Education and Skills and the Finance Manager responded to Members questions in relation to:

- Changes in legislation to educational health and care plans (EHCP) to ages 19-25 - this had led to more students accessing options and therefore increased transport spend – savings targets for SEN element of home to school transport had not been achieved but officers had looked at other savings options in SEN transport.
- Staff vacancies in the healthy child service – officers advised that they now had a full compliment of staff in the area.
- Reducing attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers continued to be a priority – officers advised they were working with schools to promote personalised learning to meet needs of the individual disadvantaged child. They were looking at skills which underpinned learning and undertaking evidence based research in schools. By focusing on speech and language development in early years (through partnership approach with education and health colleagues) the aim was to achieve a more sustainable longer term closing of the gap by ensuring that children entered the school system without a gap.
- Projected overspend in placement costs for looked after children – officers explained the factors behind increase in costs.
- Projected overspend in Children’s Social Care (CSC) staffing budgets - officers advised this was mainly due to the costs of having to employ agency staff to cover hard to fill social worker posts in child protection – officers advised that more work could be done and was already being done in York around the recruitment of social workers.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To update the Committee on the latest financial and performance position for 2018/19.

## **49. An Overview of Resident Involvement**

Further to consideration of a feasibility report on resident involvement at their meeting on 7 November 2018 which provided information in relation to a topic request submitted by Cllr Ann Reid to look at tenant involvement, Members considered a further report to enable the committee to make a decision as to whether to recommend this area, or a subset of the area, to be a topic for a review for a future committee in the new municipal year. The report provided a summary of activities taking place across the council in relation to both resident and tenant engagement and what actions were being taken to promote involvement,

The Head of Communities and Equalities and the Head of Housing were in attendance at the meeting and explained that the way in which engagement took place was constantly being revised and improved taking advantage of new opportunities and new technologies. They provided further detail on the types of engagement detailed in the report and responded to Members queries on specific issues.

One member queried what support was available for areas where residents associations had stopped operating for them to re-establish them or to establish new residents associations in areas where they didn't already exist and voiced the need to be more proactive with support in order to engage communities.

Officers explained that it was necessary to understand what residents wanted and how they wanted to engage with the council as this varied from one area to another. In some estates, a notice board worked well, whereas for others Facebook was a more popular method of communication. Community groups worked well in some areas whereas, in other areas, less formal methods of engagement were preferred. They advised that it was important to offer a range of options and the framework to support them, to be innovative in providing support and to help groups become more self sufficient with the right resources, support and guidance.

Members thanked officers for a useful and informative report. Some Members felt that there appeared to be an inconsistency in levels of engagement taking place across York and that the report highlighted some issues which would be suitable for future scrutiny work. They agreed that resident and tenant engagement was a suitable topic area for future scrutiny work,

but that specific areas for consideration should be decided in the new municipal year.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That it be agreed that resident and tenant involvement be recommended as a suitable topic for a future scrutiny review, but that the decision on the remit of the review be left for the new committee to agree in the new municipal year.

Reason: To comply with Scrutiny protocols and procedures

## **50. SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) Annual Report**

Members considered a report which provided them with details of the work of the City of York Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) from January to December 2018.

The Council's School Effectiveness and Achievement Advisor was in attendance at the meeting to present the report. He advised Members that Olivia Seymour had been appointed as Interim Chair of SACRE in September 2018 after the former, long standing, Chair, Shabana Jabbar, had stepped down. He conveyed the Interim Chair's apologies for not being able to attend this meeting due to another commitment and expressed his thanks to Shabana Jabbar for her hard work while serving as Chair. He advised that they were looking to appoint to the position of chair in September 2019.

He advised that there were currently vacancies on three of the four committees which each comprised representatives of specified groups and these vacancies were being addressed. He advised that there was often difficulty in appointing teachers to SACRE due to difficulties in the timings of meetings and finding times that suited both teachers and councillors.

During presentation of the report and discussion it was noted that:

- The number of students taking GCSE Religious Education (RE) was dropping each year.
- Two conferences, funded by SACRE, one for primary schools and one for secondary schools, had taken place during the year– the secondary conference had a focus on

the teaching of Islam, the second religion studied in GCSE RE.

- Every local authority had to have its own agreed syllabus – there was no nationally agreed syllabus for RE teaching.
- There had been a move from 4 to 3 meetings of SACRE each year.
- SACRE recognised that there was a need to strengthen their role around going into schools to check provision of RE – Discussion would take place at the next SACRE meeting in relation to what questions should be asked at schools on these visits.
- Concern had been raised by some parents about some groups which had been invited into schools in respect of RE lessons – primary schools were very conscious about vetting groups coming into school.
- A-level results were strong but GCSE results were slightly down on 2017.
- No complaints had been received in relation to the teaching of RE or collective worship during the year.
- SACRE representatives had visited schools to promote RE A-level.
- It had been suggested that church schools felt that RE could be included as an EBacc subject in the humanities count.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To update the committee on the work of SACRE and the outcomes in religious education in York's schools, in line with the statutory requirement to report annually to elected members.

## **51. York Learning - Strategic Plan Progress Report 2017/18**

Members considered a report which presented the mid-year performance data for York Learning and provided an update on any significant service issues.

The Head of York Learning and York Learning Manager were in attendance at the meeting to present the report and they provided the following information in response to queries from Members.

- The management information system allowed high levels of effectiveness and efficiency savings – this would be expanded although learners would continue to be able to

enrol on courses face to face or by telephone if they preferred.

- The Work and Health Pilot was coming to an end – without additional funding it was unlikely that this programme could be sustained – officers advised they were exploring a number of avenues and if the programme couldn't be sustained they hoped to be able to retain the expertise of those involved. Officers advised they would speak to the Joint Commissioning Programme Director about taking this to the Joint Commissioning Board with regard to the possibility of accessing health funding.
- Availability and affordability of suitable city centre learning space had proved a challenge in being able to offer further progression ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses.

Resolved: That the report be noted and Members comments be taken into consideration.

Reason: To help monitor the service and guide manager and ensure robust and accountable governance arrangements.

## **52. Local Area Teams - Update**

Members considered a report which provided an update on early help and Local Area Team (LAT) arrangements which were launched in January 2017.

The report presented the background to the creation of Local Area Teams and how they operated, and went on to provide detail on and examples of how the LATs were operating well and delivering good performance. The report also acknowledged that there were a number of fundamental challenges in securing a sustainable and meaningful early help offer and set out, at paragraph 23 of the report, a number of key priorities for 2019

The Head of Early Help and Local Area Teams was in attendance at the meeting to respond to Members questions and provided the following information.

With regard to paragraph 10 around determining the long term impact of LATs, Members noted the large disparity between the York and national figure for “step down” (successful

intervention) contained in the table which showed a simplistic measure of the outcome as measured at the point of Family Early Help Assessment closure. Officers advised that, as recording of early help work was widely variable from one area to another, only limited insight could be drawn from this comparison and that further work was taking place around this statistic.

With regard to paragraph 14 in relation to referral and assessment contacts, officers confirmed that the number of contacts which had come into the team had increased significantly whereas the number of referrals had not increased so significantly. They advised that this was an area of focus for wider external scrutiny around front door arrangements.

Officers advised that national recording of contacts and referrals differed between areas, but the figure suggested that too much was looked at by the front door then to go out again, building in an unnecessary time lag in accessing services. Officers advised that front door arrangements were being looked at and that there was an opportunity to re-visit who was doing what, and at what level, in relation to new safeguarding arrangements.

Members noted that a multi agency audit of early help in York was due to be completed around May time and the committee would be updated with the results of this.

- Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That a further report be received later in the year to review progress in respect of the multi-agency audit of early help in York and the feedback from the multi-agency early help offer in York.

Reason: To keep the committee updated with progress in relation to Local Area Teams.

Councillor D Taylor, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.30 pm].