
Meeting	Children, Education & Communities Policy & Scrutiny Committee
Date	28 January 2020
Present	Councillors D Taylor (Chair), Webb (Vice-Chair), Daubeney, Fenton, Fitzpatrick, Heaton and Hollyer

43. 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.

Cllr Webb declared a personal non prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 5, (York CVS Bi Annual Report) in that he was involved in securing Growing Green Spaces funding for Heworth Ward.

Cllr Daubeney declared a personal non prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 4, (York Theatre Royal Bi Annual Report) in that he was an observer on the York Theatre Royal Trust.

44. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 November 2019 be approved as a correct record and then signed by the Chair.

45. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been two registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Paul Healey a local resident spoke on Agenda Item 5, York CVS Bi Annual Report. He raised his concerns regarding the possible closure of Priory Street Nursery, which was run by York CVS. He highlighted the background to the consultation process and confirmed that another provider had shown interest in

running the nursery but should that not progress parents had, in principal, decided to form a staff/parent community interest company to take on the responsibility of the nursery. He questioned if there was a wider relevance to other nurseries in the city and suggested the Committee should consider this as a scrutiny topic.

Cllr Crawshaw also raised his concerns regarding the current early years provision across the city. He informed Members that childminders within the Micklegate Ward had reduced from 10 to 1 and that nursery places had also reduced leaving some nurseries with large waiting lists across all age groups. He felt there was a crisis in the early years provision, especially since the 30 hours of free places had been introduced, which had caused significant financial difficulties to a lot of providers. He suggested the Committee may want to consider a thorough assessment of the current early years provision across the city.

Cllr Crawshaw and Mr Healey answered Members questions and the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities confirmed an annual sufficiency report was produced to map the early years need and provision across the city and that this could be considered at a future Committee meeting.

Two written representations were also received regarding Agenda Item 4, York Theatre Royal Bi Annual Report which addressed concerns regarding the recent announcements to change the creative direction of the pantomime.

46. York Theatre Royal Bi Annual Report

Members considered a report that informed them of the progress and performance of York Theatre Royal (YTR).

The Executive Director of York Theatre Royal was in attendance to provide the update and he confirmed:

- They were including the Youth Theatre waiting list in more large projects so it felt more like a participation scheme than a waiting list.
- They had received 512 Arts Awards since April 2019, the highest number recorded in a year.

- The hugely successful community drive initiative would continue and be used for the production of Quality Street later in 2020.
- In order for it to survive and thrive a decision had been made to change the creative direction of the pantomime, and further details would be announced early February.

The Executive Director highlighted the background to their decision to introduce and build a brand new pantomime after 41 years. He confirmed the decision was made with a heavy heart and that ticket sales had been in decline since 2008. Members noted that the decline in numbers was taking place before the remodelling of the main house and that the 2019 pricing structure did not have a negative impact on filling the house.

In answer to Members questions the Executive Director confirmed:

- There were currently 300 names on the Youth Theatre waiting list and ways to reduce this were being considered.
- There were no full houses for any pantomime performance in 2019, apart from the last night and lower priced tickets were introduced, including children concession tickets for off peak pantomime performances.
- A family ticket would be introduced for the 2020 pantomime.
- All actors and creatives received new contracts year by year and the new creative team could, if they wished, engage with any of the actors that had been involved in past pantomimes.
- York Theatre Royal was committed to ensuring they were a diverse organisation.
- To expand the Access All Areas initiative, YTR would be engaging with property owners, community venues and libraries regarding availability of space.
- Consultation with communities who had a tendency to not engage with the theatre would take place and officers would respond to their reactions accordingly.
- The community drive initiative would continue and be funded by YTR.

Members thanked the Executive Director for his update and welcomed the community focused initiatives, they noted just how important the pantomime tradition was to some residents and congratulated the Theatre on receiving 512 awards.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To fulfil the Council's role as a funding body.

47. York CVS Bi Annual Report

Members considered a report from York CVS that provided an update on their activity from April 2019 to September 2019.

The Chief Executive of York CVS was in attendance to present the report and she gave an overview of their practical support, fixed and flexible services and bespoke support that built strength and resilience across the sector particularly within local charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises. Members were made aware of their main core work and it was noted that:

- Since May 2019 a Funding and Development Officer had been in post and she had provided support and advice to 70 voluntary and community sector organisations.
- Voluntary and community sector forums continued to be well attended and they focussed on specific subject areas identified in York.
- Voluntary sector assemblies were held twice a year to allow York's voluntary sector to start conversations and instigate social action towards some of the challenges faced in York.
- The Chief Executive continued to represent the voluntary and community sector on various key Partnership Boards, which allowed her to identify any issues that needed to be raised within the sector.

The Chief Executive highlighted the various issue based forums, focus groups and social action projects that had encouraged a more collaborative way of working across the whole sector. It was noted that the Ways to Wellbeing initiative linked the voluntary sector with primary care and that social prescribing had now been embedded across the whole of York. This model would now be tested across other services including the ambulance and Police service.

Members were also made aware of the organisation's future areas of work and that funding for a voluntary centre was still ongoing.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees was in attendance to provide an update regarding the closure of Priory Street Nursery. He explained the background and highlighted the risks including the continuing deficit. Members were informed of the options the Board of Trustees considered, which included, to:

- transfer the nursery to a third party.
- change the way York CVS operated the nursery.
- close the nursery.

The Chair of the Board confirmed the Trustees, in November 2019, consulted with staff and parents/carers regarding the closure. Since then further meetings had taken place and an expression of interest had been received by a third party. Parents had also considered ways in which the nursery could operate, including the option for them to form a community interest company to manage the nursery. Members noted that the Board considered all the options and took the difficult decision that York CVS would no longer manage the nursery, leaving two options for the Board to consider at its next meeting on 12 February 2020.

Members raised concerns regarding the closure of the nursery and the Chair of the Board answered Members questions. It was also noted that:

- The Chief Executive would confirm if the Growing Green Spaces Advisory Group would welcome new members
- The Safe Places scheme had 19 venues registered so far across York and had also expanded away from the city centre to Vangarde. York CVS were keen to develop the scheme and would welcome any suitable location suggestions from Members. The Chair agreed that this should be disseminated to all Councillors.
- The themes of the forums were influenced by issues raised from discussions at the various Partnership Boards.

Members thanked the Chief Executive and the Chair of the Board for their update and hoped a suitable resolution regarding the nursery would be agreed. Members also agreed that the early years provision across the city did require further scrutiny.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To update the Committee on the activity of York CVS.

48. Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Overview: Improvement Journey Progress

Members considered a report that presented an overview of the development and progress in the improvement journey for York Children's Social Care (CSC) over the past 12 months.

The Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities gave an update and informed Members of the activities taken place to drive forward improvement practices across CSC.

In answer to Members questions the Corporate Director confirmed:

- Phase two of the improvement journey would focus on strengthening practice, consolidating progress and bringing clarity to the approach to permanence for children.
- The Council were committed to growing their own social work workforce and move away from using agency staff.
- A close working relationship with the Universities continued and newly qualified Social Workers were offered lower caseloads to give them the opportunity to develop and grow and be fully supported throughout their first year.
- Team Manager roles were stabilising and embedding to support a more confident workforce with a clear focus on reflection, learning and development.
- Feedback from Social Workers confirmed they felt their caseloads were reasonable and caseloads were monitored weekly.
- Advanced Practitioner drop in sessions were well attended.
- Fundamental changes were disseminated through various Boards and forums including the Partnership Improvement Board, Show Me That I Matter and the School Improvement Board.

Members thanked the Corporate Director for her update and noted the commitment to the journey to drive forward continuous improvements.

Resolved: That the progress in improvement over the past 12 months be noted and that CSC be supported to continue this improving trajectory.

Reason: In order to be updated on the development and progress in the improvement journey for York Children's Social Care (CSC) over the past 12 months.

49. 2019/20 Finance and Performance Second Quarter Report

Members considered a report that analysed the latest performance for 2019/20 and forecasted the final 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 and Communities.

The Corporate Director provided an update and responded to Members questions, where it was noted that:

- Further clarity regarding the home to school transport provision could be provided at a future meeting.
- The Glen overspend was linked to temporary staffing whilst a restructure was taking place.
- The majority of children placed outside of York were living with extended families.

Following a discussion regarding external provision the Corporate Director confirmed they were looking at a range of provisions including the option to purchase a property in York that would be Ofsted registered.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To update the Committee on the latest financial and performance position for 2019/20.

50. Work Plan

To consider the Committee's draft work plan for the 2019-20 municipal year.

Following discussion, Members agreed to update the work plan with the following:

Tuesday 24 March 2020

- A report highlighting the home to school transport provision

Wednesday 22 April 2020

- A report highlighting the current early years provision across the city, including information from the annual sufficiency review. It was also suggested that a selection of nursery providers be invited to either attend the meeting or provide feedback.

The Scrutiny Officer agreed to arrange an informal meeting with Committee Members to consider the remit for the child poverty review.

Cllr Fitzpatrick confirmed she attended the service held to commemorate Holocaust Memorial day at York St John University and she thanked the Assistant Director of Communities and Culture for chairing the excellent event.

Resolved: That the work plan be approved subject to the above amendments/additions.

Reason: To keep the Committee's work plan updated.

Cllr D Taylor, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.25 pm].