

Meeting	Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee (Calling In)
Date	22 July 2013
Present	Councillors Galvin (Chair), Horton, King, McIlveen, Potter, Steward, Burton (Sub For Cllr Fraser) and Cuthbertson (Sub For Cllr Runciman)
In Attendance	Councillors Looker and Runciman
Apologies	Councillors Fraser and Jeffries

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited 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. No further interests were declared.

6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

7. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 3 June 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8. CALLED IN ITEM: ALTERNATIVE SERVICES TO THOSE CURRENTLY PROVIDED BY THE TOY BUS

Members received a report which asked them to consider the decisions made by the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Young People on 10 July 2013 in relation to the future of the Toy Bus and the alternative options available. The Toy Bus

service had originally been offered as a saving for the 2014/15 budget savings round however, with the need to find in-year savings, Officers had explored the possibility of stopping the service within the current financial year.

Details of the Cabinet Members decision were attached as Annex A to the report, with the original report to the Decision Session attached at Annex B. The decision had been called in by Cllrs Runciman, Aspden and Ayre on the following grounds:

1. “A lack of proper public consultation. The decision to cut the Toy Bus was taken at February’s Budget Council, but the public consultation did not take place until May. The consultation indicated that the most popular idea was to keep the Toy Bus. Therefore, it is misleading to claim that the option chosen “is supported by the consultation process”.
2. The Toy Bus is still a popular service used by 513 families in York (as of December 2012).
3. There is no detailed plan provided as to how the Mobile Library will incorporate a toy-lending service e.g. no layout plans and an admission from officers that “there is no detail at this stage”. There is no commitment that there will not be a break in service before the end of the Toy Bus and the start of the Mobile Library service.
4. The Toy Bus provides a specialised and distinct space for children and parents to access toys. The trained staff on-hand are able to provide guidance to children, but also to provide advice to parents. The importance of helping parents to acquire the skills to play with their children and teach their children through play should not be underestimated. It is unclear if the new proposed arrangements would allow for this kind of interaction.
5. The detail on the need to replace the Toy Bus “in the foreseeable future” remains vague.
6. The yearly saving (excluding staff who will be redeployed) is just £14,589 - a relatively small price to

deliver a popular service to some of the most vulnerable families in York and help to give our young children a good start in life. It is also clear that money invested in this age group brings long-term sustainable rewards for communities across the city.

7. The decision to cut this service is not consistent with the poverty strategy recently tabled by Cabinet.

In light of the above, the Liberal Democrat Group continue to oppose the decision to end the Toy Bus provision and the decision to cease this provision in the current financial year.”

Members were asked to decide whether to confirm the decision (Option a) or to refer it back to the Cabinet Member for re-consideration (Option b) as set out in the report.

Councillor Runciman addressed the meeting, on behalf of the Calling-In members, referring to concerns raised by users at the proposed cut to the Toy Bus service. It was pointed out that there was cross party support for investment in early years and that 513 families used this popular facility. Concerns were expressed at the loss of the service, particularly in the rural and outlying areas of the city. Reference was made to the training and expertise required for library staff to enable them to perform these new duties. The Cabinet Member was asked to examine alternative methods of delivering the service, including the use of a minibus, with staff experienced in early years. A request was also made not to cut the service with immediate effect.

Members questioned details of the reduction in hours of the service, following the 2010 restructure and noted the high unit cost per head for delivery.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Young People’s Services confirmed her support for providing young people with opportunities for quality play. She pointed out that by providing the service via the mobile library it would be more efficient and allow the service to function more effectively. It was confirmed that full training would be provided for library staff and that use of the mobile library would extend the library service to potential new users.

Members went on to question the Cabinet Member as to how these proposals would fit in with the new social enterprise model for libraries, particularly regarding the use of volunteers.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that full details of the provision were still to be agreed however, following the summer break, the service would be re-launched to attract new customers.

In answer to questions, Officers confirmed that there was one mobile library bus with a new larger replacement vehicle being procured. Member's attention was drawn to the fact that there was little evidence that the present service was reaching vulnerable families, particularly as the percentage of families using the service had reduced significantly since 2010.

Members referred to the small group of regular users of the present service highlighting that this only offered 7 hour face to face delivery to families. It was felt that the budget could be better utilised in order to provide an improved service for future users.

Following further lengthy discussion it was

RESOLVED: That Option (a) identified in the report be approved and that the decision of the Cabinet Member be confirmed. ¹.

REASON: In accordance with the requirements of the Council's constitution.

Action Required

1. Implement the decision to lend toys as part of the Mobile Library service.

KH, PR

Cllr J Galvin, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 5.45 pm].