
Meeting	Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date	20 November 2013
Present	Councillors Reid (Chair), Fitzpatrick (Vice-Chair), Barnes, Brooks, Potter, Taylor and Scott
Apologies	Mrs R Barber and Mr A Pennington

25. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included in the register of interests, any prejudicial interests or disclosable interests which they might have in respect of the business on the agenda or any other general interests they might have within the remit of the committee other than those listed within the agenda.

Councillor Barnes declared a personal non prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 (York Museums Trust (YMT) Partnership Delivery Plan: Bi-annual Performance Update 2013-14) as a City of York Council representative on the YMT.

Councillor Scott declared a personal non prejudicial interest in agenda item 6 (Improving Evening Cultural Offer Review – Scoping Report) as his wife owned a property in the city centre which could potentially benefit, along with other city centre businesses, from an increase in tourism.

Councillor Taylor declared a personal non prejudicial interest in agenda item 6 (Improving Evening Cultural Offer Review – Scoping Report) as he works for an organisation which is involved in the provision of entertainment in the city centre.

26. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny held on 18

September 2013 be approved and signed by the chair as a correct record.

27. Public Participation

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

28. York Museums Trust Partnership Delivery Plan: Bi-annual Performance Update 2013/14

Members considered a report which updated them on the current progress of the York Museums Trust (YMT) towards meeting the targets agreed in the partnership delivery plan for the period 2013 to 2018.

The report informed Members that YMT had successfully addressed its initial targets which were concerned principally with stabilising visitor figures, delivering new income streams, creating new exhibitions and interpretative services, creating an education strategy, increasing use and involvement by residents, achieving high visitor satisfaction and cataloguing of the collection. The report also outlined the key targets and objectives which the Council required YMT to work towards over the next five years to 2018 and detailed the specific activities and outcomes under the five main headings.

- Income improvement- to further develop YMT financial sustainability
- Capital Project – to ensure the delivery of key capital improvements to the YMT estate
- Public programmes – to promote the collections, buildings and gardens ensuring visitors and residents have leisure and learning opportunities
- Working in Partnership – to delineate the specific areas where YMT support out corporate priorities
- Governance – to ensure the continued security of the collections and the appropriate governance of the business.

Details of how YMT had addressed those issues in the period to September 2013 were set out in annex 1 along with an outline of what would be developed moving forward.

YMTs Chief Executive and Commercial Director were in attendance at the meeting in order to present the report and answer any questions from Members. They updated Members on progress on the two major developments namely the York Art Gallery development and the development at York Castle Museum which would create a refurbished Debtors Prison creating new exhibition spaces, better learning spaces and a visitor lift. They advised Members that the first exhibition to be held in these new spaces would be 1914: When the World Changed Forever which would open to the public at the end of June 2014. They also advised that the Richard III exhibition at the Yorkshire Museum had been a success.

YMTs Chief Executive addressed concerns raised by Members regarding the drop in visitor numbers to York St Marys and explained that this was in part due to the change in programming and the reasons behind this.

Members expressed pleasure in the general increase in the number of schools visiting York museums and noted that this was in part due to the extra attendance at the reworked and refreshed Yorkshire Museum workshops. Members were advised that a proportion of the YMTs budget was allocated to marketing to schools.

Resolved: That the update on the performance of the York Museum's Trust be noted.

Reason: To fulfil the Council's role under the partnership delivery plan.

29. 2013/14 Second Quarter Financial Monitoring Report

Members received a report analysing the latest performance for 2013-14 and forecasting the outturn position by reference to the service plan and budgets for all of the relevant services falling under the responsibility of the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills and the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods.

The Head of Finance reported that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Directorate was reporting a forecasted overspend of £177 which related mainly to one off redundancy costs which were partly offset by savings, mainly in relation to

Yearsley Pool operating costs. Members raised concerns that these redundancy costs were being classed as “unforeseen”. The Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods explained that the service area in question had had a significant number of planned redundancies as part of a transformation programme but the seniority and length of service of those staff in question had resulted in higher than expected costs as the costs used in the budget proposals were based on average levels of redundancy costs. Members were assured that these costs were being managed in year.

The Head of Finance advised that the Children’s Services, Education and Skills directorate was reporting net financial pressures of £958k, mainly due to unachieved savings, however this was an improvement compared to the figures reported at quarter 1.

With regard to the continuing overspend in relation to looked after children, the Head of Finance explained that while numbers of looked after children had decreased significantly, the council had yet to see a corresponding reduction in costs due in part to legacy costs and the fact that children with the most complex needs continued to need highly specialised care which accounted for a significant portion of ongoing care costs. Therefore despite a significant reduction in expenditure in 2013-14 compared to the previous year, this budget remained under considerable pressure. Members noted that the Council was reviewing the most expensive out of city placements and further reductions in cost were expected as the overall looked after population continued to reduce.

With regard to performance, the Head of Finance advised Members that the number of schools classed as good or outstanding was expected to increase due to recent Ofsted inspections, the results of which had not yet been made public. Members commended the work of the school improvement team.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To update the committee on the latest financial and performance position for 2013-14.

30. Improving Evening Cultural Offer Review - Scoping Report

Members considered a report which presented information in support of a proposed night time economy related scrutiny review and asked them to agree a suitable review remit.

The report explained the background to the review and provided information on tourism in York, the membership of York Consortium and York's new Tourism Strategy as well as the proposed timetable and remit for the review. The scrutiny officer advised members that paragraph 29 should refer to **York's** new Tourism Strategy and not Visit York's new Tourism Strategy and apologised for this typing error.

Members discussed the proposed remit as set out in paragraph 34 of the report. They made the following comments:

- Majority of families visiting York for the day are from Yorkshire. In current economic climate, they are unlikely to stay in the city overnight if they live within an hour's journey of home.
- Accommodation in York is not cheap. Unless accommodation is affordable, many families will not consider staying overnight.
- Need to ensure there are sufficient things for people to do in the evening to encourage them to stay overnight.
- Reluctant to focus solely on families exclusively. There are other groups of people and single people are also looking for things to do at this time of the day.
- There is no real cafe culture in York where woman can meet and feel safe in the early evening.
- Need to investigate opportunities for increasing signposting of cultural events in the city.
- Information needs to be made available by cultural providers to hoteliers etc.
- Concern about extending remit to include other groups of people other than families, due to tight time frame of review.

It was agreed that the remit of the review be amended as follows:

Aim:

To identify an improved cultural offer up to 8pm in order to extend the tourist day and encourage more to stay for longer or overnight, with a particular emphasis on families.

Objectives:

- (i) Identify best practice internationally and nationally.
- (ii) Investigate barriers to increasing the availability of York's existing family based cultural and entertainment offer.
- (iii) Identify other new cultural and entertainment activities suitable for York and investigate the possibility of their introduction.
- (iv) Investigate how best to signpost tourist activities, and encourage those providers to work with accommodation providers to jointly promote their offer.

It was agreed that a task group be set up to undertake the review and this would comprise Councillors Barnes, Reid and Taylor. The Head of Culture, Tourism and City Centre asked that the task group be involved in progressing the strategic strands set out in York's Tourism Strategy, alongside the Culture, Tourism and City Centre team, Economic Development Unit and Visit York in order to avoid duplication of work.

Resolved: (i) That a task group, comprising Councillors Barnes, Reid and Taylor be set up to undertake the review on behalf of the Committee.

(ii) That the remit for the review set out above be agreed.

Reason: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures and protocols and support the Committee's work plan.

31. School Meals Scrutiny Review - Interim Report

Members considered a report which presented an interim update on the work on the agreed scrutiny review of school meals which was being undertaken by a task group of the committee.

The Chair of the task group advised the committee that members of the task group were in the process of carrying out visits to schools. She reported that they had recently visited All Saints RC School which operated a cashless system and it had been interesting to see this in action.

Members discussed the daily allowance for each pupil receiving a free school meal which was between £2.30 and £2.40. They acknowledged that pupils in receipt of free school meals were able to top up this amount and noted that there may be pressure on pupils and parents to spend more than the allowance. Members suggested it may be useful to speak to some parents at a future meeting of the task group to obtain their views on this issue.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures, protocols and work plans.

32. Workplan

Members considered the Committee's work plan for the 2013-14 municipal year.

Resolved: That the work plan be noted.

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

Councillor Reid, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.15 pm].