

---

MEETING	LEARNING & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	25 JANUARY 2012
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS REID (CHAIR), BROOKS, JEFFRIES, LEVENE, TAYLOR, WATSON, BURTON (SUBSTITUTE FOR CLLR FITZPATRICK) AND HODGSON (SUBSTITUTE FOR CLLR CUNNINGHAM-CROSS)
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS CUNNINGHAM-CROSS AND FITZPATRICK

---

### **30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in relation to the business on the agenda or any other general interests they might have within the remit of the Committee.

Councillor Brooks declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 (Review of Demographics for York Primary Schools) as she is a regular communicant of the Church of England and a member of St Nicholas Church, Dunnington, Parochial Church Council and her son is a novice with a Roman Catholic order.

Councillor Hodgson declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in any business in relation to CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks due to his employment, as the defence business services provide national security vetting for other government departments such as the police and education.

### **31. INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed Mrs Rachel Barber and Mrs Paula Widdowson, two new statutory co-opted Members (Parent Governor Representatives) to their first meeting of the Committee.

### **32. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

### **33. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7 December 2011 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to:

- i) The finish time for the meeting being changed from 5.40pm to 6.40pm.
- ii) The fifth paragraph of Minute 26 (Presentation on Corporate Parenting) being amended as follows:  
".....Concerns were expressed that arrangements such as pre-natal classes may not be fully accessible and Members emphasised the need for the council to work closely *with the health services and the CVS (Council for Voluntary Services) and the Voluntary and Community Sector Forum for Learning Difficulties to ensure that adequate pre- and post-natal support is available to parents.....*"

### **34. YORK THEATRE ROYAL SERVICE AGREEMENT: 2011/12 PART YEAR PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

Members considered a report which informed them of the progress and performance of the York Theatre Royal under the current Service Level Agreement (SLA) which runs to March 2012.

The Chief Executive of York Theatre Royal gave details of the theatre's performance during the first half of 2011/2012, as outlined in Annex A to the report.

She explained that as part of work on its new business plan, a survey had been carried out which provided information on

attendance at the theatre by Ward and proved that levels of attendance at the theatre is high across all wards in York. She agreed to provide Members with a breakdown of attendance figures by ward. <sup>1</sup>

Members commended the work of the Theatre Royal and acknowledged the profile it had achieved nationally.

RESOLVED: (i) That the update be noted.  
(ii) That members comments be noted by the Theatre's Chief Executive.

REASON: To fulfil the Council's role under the SLA.

Action Required

1. Head of Arts and Culture to forward attendance GC statistics broken down by ward to Members.

**35. REVIEW OF DEMOGRAPHICS FOR YORK PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

The Committee considered the draft final report of the Demographics Review which presented them with the information gathered in support of the review and the Committee's findings and recommendations. Members were asked to agree any revisions required to it and identify any appropriate recommendations arising from the review in relation to the second objective (to identify whether the current school travel policies are fair and appropriate given the changing demographics)

Members agreed that in relation to Objective A (whether the oversubscription criteria in use in York's community and voluntary controlled schools is made up of the right priorities, and in the right order), the oversubscription criteria was correct and should therefore remain unchanged.

Members then looked at objective B and considered additional information which had been requested at the last meeting, namely some feedback from East Riding of Yorkshire Council on their previous withdrawal of denominational transport (annex F) and a breakdown (into primary and secondary school and by transport type, on a year by year basis) of potential savings that

could be made if a decision was taken to carry out a phased withdrawal of free denominational transport,(annex G)

In relation to the potential savings, Members asked for clarification on the date given in the tables when the change would come into force. Officers explained that it was not possible to withdraw travel before this date due to the need to consult on the change. Officers explained that North Yorkshire County Council had begun a phased withdrawal of free denominational transport this academic year, and were offering affected pupils the opportunity to purchase seats on existing transport where available.

Members agreed to recommend option 3 i.e.to carry out a phased withdrawal of free denominational transport but charge concessionary fares to those currently receiving free transport on that basis. The Committee agreed to recommend that the Local Authority support affected schools with the implementation of the change in policy.

RESOLVED: (i) That Members comments in relation to the review's second objective be noted and:

(a) option 3 (to carry out a phased withdrawal of free denominational transport but charge concessionary fares to those currently receiving free transport on that basis) be recommended

(b) it be recommended that the Local Authority works with affected schools to support them during the implementation of the change in policy.

(ii) That paragraphs 45 and 47 of the draft final report be updated and delegation be given to the Chair to sign off the final report.

REASON: In order to conclude the review in line with scrutiny procedure and protocols.

### **36. CORPORATE PARENTING REVIEW**

Members considered a report which provided further information in support of the Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Review, including

information on the responsibilities of Councillors as corporate parents and details of the Council's plans to improve the academic achievement of Looked After Children.

Members viewed a DVD which explained the Council's "Pledge" - the City of York Council's commitment to children and young people in care, which was written by young people and endorsed by the Council. Officers explained that the Pledge was a clear statement to children and young people about what life should be like if the local authority is looking after them.

Members discussed the attainment figures contained in Annex 2. The Virtual Head teacher explained the role of the multi-agency senior leadership team (made up of very experienced practitioners), i.e. to raise the profile of Looked After Children, to liaise with head teachers to make sure tracking mechanisms were in place in schools to ensure Looked After Children were achieving well, and to take action when required.

Members were advised that the School Improvement Partners were currently looking at how the Virtual School could reward Looked After Children for their achievements( including attainment in school and in out of school activities), and would be discussing ways of tracking their attainment when they meet again with Heads in March.

Members noted officers written response to the questions in section 10 of the Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) document '10 Questions to Ask if you're Scrutinising services for Looked After Children'. Members were advised that every year elected Members receive a briefing on corporate parenting to increase their awareness of their role. Also, the Show Me that I Matter Panel (SMTIMP) meets monthly to discuss the views, concerns and ideas of children in care, and meets regularly with elected Members and senior officers to make their views known (including the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Young Peoples Services).

The Committee learnt that the first meeting of the proposed Corporate Parenting Board would take place in February/early March. The Board would look at issues including a review of the adoption process, fostering processes, children's homes and would be responsible for holding officers to account. Members endorsed its establishment and agreed it was a good way to

move forward, but asked that the Board look at ways to engage with other elected Members who were not on the Board.

Members agreed that, in view of the proposed establishment of the Corporate Parenting Board, it was no longer necessary to progress the Corporate Parenting scrutiny review. However they agreed it was important that they be kept informed of developments in that area and asked that the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Young People's Services keep them updated.

One member reiterated her concerns expressed at the last meeting, regarding the level of pre and post natal support available to parents with learning difficulties. Officers advised that they were working with Children's Centres to provide information/support for all new parents, including those who have a disability. Officers stressed that any decision to remove a child from the parent was part of a very rigorous process and that process would take into account whether the LA had provided the appropriate support and information to a parent to enable their child to remain in their care. And, therefore the number of children in York entering into the care system for this reason, was tiny.

- RESOLVED:
- (i) That due to the establishment of the Corporate Parenting Board, it was unnecessary to continue with the Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Review.
  - (ii) That the Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Young People's Services be asked to keep the Committee routinely informed on progress in this area.

REASON: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

### **37. YORK MUSEUMS TRUST - ADDITIONAL BRIEFING REPORT**

Members received an additional briefing on the formation of York Museums Trust (YMT), as requested at the last meeting of the Committee. Based on this additional information and all the information previously provided, Members were asked to decide whether or not they wished to proceed with a scrutiny review of the topic proposed by Councillor Watson.

The Assistant Director, Lifelong Learning and Culture, advised that York Museums Trust had been successful in a bid for increased direct government funding and as a consequence, in future, a larger proportion of the Trust's funding would come from central government rather than City of York Council. He explained it was therefore important to see YMT as an independent organisation rather than an offshoot of the council. He advised that scrutinising the Trust's processes would therefore not be appropriate but scrutinising what the Council got from the Trust for their money was an option.

Councillor Watson drew Members attention to paragraph 24 (Risk Management) of the report which set out the risk to the council if the cataloguing of the collections was not completed in line with the partnership delivery plan.

Members considered whether to focus their review on a statement contained within Appendix A, Annex 4 (The Management of the Collections) which read 'The Trust will endeavour to meet all appropriate collections management standards within 10 years and will aim to surpass them' .

Officers agreed it would be worthwhile looking at how much of the museums' collections have been catalogued. They also advised that both the Collections Management and the Acquisitions and Disposals Policy were due for review and suggested Members also look at those as part of their review.

**RESOLVED:** That a scrutiny review be undertaken to determine whether York Museums Trust had achieved appropriate collections management standards, in line with the Collections Loan Agreement and Collections Management Protocol agreed in 2002.

**REASON:** To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

### **38. LEARNING AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2011-12**

Members considered the Committee's workplan for the remainder of the 2011-12 municipal year.

The Assistant Director, Lifelong Learning and Culture, advised that subject to the agreement of the Assistant Director, Communities and Neighbourhoods and availability of officers, they would be able to bring a briefing paper/presentation on the York Museums Trust collection to the next meeting on 29 February. Members agreed that following this presentation, it would be worthwhile considering setting up a sub-group who would be able to meet on a more regular basis to take this review forward.

The scrutiny officer highlighted the limited time available before the end of the municipal year in which to undertake both the YMY review and the possible review on Managing Public Parks, which Members were due to receive a presentation on at the next meeting on 29 February. She advised that it was preferable for reviews to be completed within the current municipal year rather than continue into the next municipal year, due to possible changes in committee membership. Members expressed the view that having to complete all reviews before the end of the municipal year was very constraining and agreed that they were happy for reviews to continue into the new municipal year.

**RESOLVED:** That the workplan be updated to reflect the decisions detailed above.

**REASON:** To progress the work of the committee.

Councillor Reid, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 7.15 pm].