
Meeting	Children, Culture & Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date	17 October 2023
Present	Councillors Nicholls (Chair), Nelson (Vice-Chair), Clarke, Crawshaw, Cuthbertson, Knight, Waller, Wells, Wilson, and Healey (Substitute for Councillor Pearson)
In attendance	Councillor Webb, Executive Member for Children, Young People, and Education [Until 6:17pm] Richard Hartle, Head of Children and Education Finance Angela Padfield, Head of York Learning Andrew Laslett, Strategic Services Manager, Jenny Layfield, Chief Executive of Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Ltd. Paul Cliff, Joint Executive Head of Service, Adult Learning & Skills, York and North Yorkshire
Apologies	Councillor Pearson

7. Declarations of Interest (5:32pm)

Members were asked to declare at this point in the meeting any disclosable pecuniary interest or other registerable interest they might have in respect of business on the agenda if they had not already done so in advance on the Register of Interests. Councillor Wilson declared she was Chair of York Learning Improvement Board, and Councillor Cuthbertson declared he was Chair of City of York Trading Company.

8. Minutes (5:34pm)

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 5 September 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

9. Public Participation (5:36pm)

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

10. Finance & Performance Monitor 1 (5:36pm)

The Head of Children and Education Finance presented the report.

In response to questions from members, it was noted that:

- Specialist Education Provision was being funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), but Home to School Transport provision was funded from the Council's general fund budgets and not from the DSG.
- The provisional 2024/25 school funding allocations from the Department for Education (DfE) had been revised, which meant schools in York will receive less in funds than was previously anticipated from the DfE's original allocations.
- Children who joined school after census day were not included in the statistics of persistence absence rates.
- The efficiency of Home to School Transport had been improved by some administration and monitoring being brought in-house by the Council.
- The overspend of legal fees was double the budget that was set out, but this was a reduction in the overspend of previous years.

The Head of Children and Education Finance provided a background to the Safety Valve Agreement which had been put in place to manage the deficit of the high needs block within the DSG. Work on this was ongoing, and City of York Council were continuing to work towards targets set out in its' plan.

It was noted that regarding annual persistence absence rates for secondary school, the Committee could benefit from seeing this data more frequently than annually. And in relation to paragraph 36, on the number of children who were subject of a child protection plan, the Executive Member for Children and Young People mentioned that the Committee could benefit from seeing this data in a graph format, showing longer-term trends.

Resolved: That the Committee noted the finance and performance information.

Reason: To ensure that expenditure was kept within the approved budget.

11. Performance of York Learning Strategic Plan 2022-2023 (6:17pm)

The Head of York Learning and The Executive Head of Service, Adult Learning & Skills presented the report.

In response to questions from members, it was noted that:

- If learners were able to learn English and Maths then they should, and funding could be retracted if this didn't happen.
- There were some providers whose results were not where they should be when compared to other providers. Such providers were on action plans.
- Education plans were worked to try and include things that would engage the learner. Work was done to give them skills for employment.
- Two of York Learning's assessors had been trained on mental health as some adult learners needed additional support and there was financial support, childcare support for learners who needed it.
- As part of 100% Digital, there were online options for education on life skills as well as employment skills. York Learning worked with charities such as Kyra, Changing Lives, and York CVS, and they worked with Travellers Trust to deliver IT courses and helped people improve IT employment skills.
- York Learning's strategy was to develop learners' transferable skills to improve people's life chances.
- Learning courses were delivered in various venues, such as Clifton Explore, Acomb Explore, York High school, and were to be delivered from the Westfield centre to improve access for learners. York Learning also worked with organisations such as foodbanks, and community centres to improve engagement with the public.

Resolved: That the Committee discussed, challenged, and commented on the service's performance over the last year.

Reason: To have helped monitor the service and provided sound governance arrangement for York Learning Services.

12. Annual Update - Libraries and Archives (6:53pm)

The Chief Executive of Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Ltd and the City of York Council Operations Manager presented the report.

In response to questions from members, it was noted that:

- Explore York was trying to find a balance with environmental sustainability and inclusive accessibility, and they were digitising some of their archives as a priority to improve accessibility. Partnerships were in place with technology organisations such as Bright White Ltd and Find My Past to assist with this.
- York Explore Newspapers were not being brought back into circulation due to budgetary pressures.
- A reduction in in-house PC usage could be seen, as detailed on page 57 of the report, as many people were using their own smart devices instead.
- There was work developing on increasing audience engagement and York Explore were working with local organisations and Family Hubs to reach more people.
- York Explore were not considering closing their libraries.
- Explore York were trying to promote the joy of reading by visiting schools and engaging with students.

Resolved: That members noted and commented upon the activities of the Explore update report.

Reason: To have supported the Council's role in performance management of the library and archives service contract.

13. Work Plan (7:40pm)

Members considered the Committee's work plan for the 2023/24 municipal year.

It was noted that the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) update would be received by the Committee in the meeting scheduled for 5 March 2024.

Resolved: That Members considered the Committee's work plan for the 2023/24 municipal year.

Reason: To have kept the Committee's work plan for the 2023/24 municipal year updated.

Cllr Nicholls, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.42 pm].