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MEETING	DECISION SESSION - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE CULTURE & SOCIAL INCLUSION
DATE	27 JANUARY 2010
PRESENT	COUNCILLOR AYRE (EXECUTIVE MEMBER)
IN ATTENDANCE	COUNCILLORS CRISP, D'AGORNE AND B WATSON

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#### 15. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Executive Member was invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests he might have in the business on the agenda. He confirmed he had none.

#### 16. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION/OTHER SPEAKERS**

It was reported that there had been 7 registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme in respect of agenda item 4 (Revenue Budget Estimates 2010-11 – Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion).

6 of the registered speakers those spoke in relation to the savings proposals, listed in Annex 3, with regard to reductions in the Arts Service Level Agreements and the proposal to cease funding in the Community Arts Service.

The **Artistic Director of the Pilot Theatre**, a national touring theatre based at the Theatre Royal, spoke against the proposed savings. He explained that the Pilot Theatre provides jobs for 47 paid staff and training placements for others. They had given 260 public performances in the past year, with their main target audience being young people. They had developed relationships and forged partnerships across the world through a range of international projects and were hosting the 3<sup>rd</sup> International "Shift Happens" conference in July this year. At home, the theatre had set up links with schools, currently Manor and Joseph Rowntrees, and was involved in cultural exchanges. He advised Members that he was grateful for the support the Council gave the theatre and that they were a RFO (Regularly Funded Organisation), funded by the Arts Council with support from the local authority and stressed that loss of this support would be catastrophic to the organisation.

An **Early Years Educator, Community Inclusion Facilitator and Singer** stressed the benefits on the Community Arts Service in many of her projects. She suggested that if the money was not available to continue funding the service, it was important to seek creative alternative solutions, perhaps by establishing an independent not for profit agency which would allow them to retain skills and maintain part of current activity and draw

down the funding they currently attract. She stressed the importance on not losing the existing team and associated infrastructure.

A **former secondary school teacher** explained that the Community Arts Service works with diverse groups, including families, and children at risk, as well as older people including those living alone and in care homes who have been stimulated to participate in activities by the Community Arts Service. She advised that the limited period of consultation was meaningless to these groups of people who often fear speaking out. She stressed that the Community Arts Service was made up of a small team of dedicated professionals and they offered paid work to freelance artists and encouraged volunteers and all the expertise would be wasted if the service was disbanded.

The **General Manager of Accessible Arts and Media** stated that she had been involved with Community Arts for over 25 years and had seen many changes though none as catastrophic as this would be. She explained that they had benefited through their relationship with the Council. She noted that the intention was to retain officer support within the service for the purpose of fundraising activities, but stressed that when fundraising it is important to be able to prove that you are touching the groups you are working with and explained that this is better done by a small community organisation, such the Arts Action Team, rather than as the Council itself. She asked the Executive Member to think creatively and explore other options and added that the Arts Action Team was needed to deliver festivals in the city, without which York would not be a vibrant and inclusive city.

The **Chief Executive of York Theatre Royal** stressed that it was important to remember that York was not just a historic city but also a living city. She stated that Service Level Agreements should not be underestimated as they make a difference to obtaining support from other sources and explained that the Arts Council would find it difficult to offer support to arts organisations which were not supported by the Local Authority. She noted that their most important artistic partner was the Pilot Theatre which delivers over 40 performances each year to York audiences and is reputed for innovation, technology and arts participation and which has brought significant projects to the city. She concluded by saying that the aspirations and values of people of city of York form the basis of the city's claim to be a city of culture and give York its international reputation.

A **Unison Representative** spoke on behalf of Unison and those members whose jobs were at risk of being cut. He informed the Executive Member of his following four main areas of concern:-

- Procedural - the timetable was not sufficient in order to allow consultation, however they had received a large amount of written responses to the proposals (these were published with the agenda). He asked for more time for to allow discussions to take place.
- Legal – there appears to be full time redundancies but officer capacity remaining to seek funding. He questioned whether this could be done legally and advised he would be seeking advice on this issue.

- Substantive – Although Community Arts Service is a non statutory service, it helps to deliver on statutory objectives. The proposed cuts would also impact on availability of funding from the Arts Council and other external funding.
- More work is required before proposals are put forward. He urged that cuts are referred back on that basis to ensure the rights of staff and to determine the effect of the proposed cuts on the City of York.

The final speaker, a representative of **Scarcroft Green Association** spoke in response to the proposal to remove maintenance support from self-managed bowling greens and croquet facilities at Scarcroft Green and the Retreat, in order to make a saving in staff time. He advised the Executive Member that the Scarcroft Green Association comprised 5 bowling clubs who used the greens at Scarcroft Road, with nearly 100 members in total, from 23 to 83 years of age although the majority were retired. He stated that the association had invested time and effort into the grounds and clubhouse to maintain them at a high standard, whereas other greens which it has been suggested they could use were not of the same standard. He pointed out that Hull Road Park had been neglected and had no parking facilities or pavilion, and Rowntrees Park (which was closed due to flooding 2 years running ) only had restricted parking, no pavilion and suffered from the problem of goose droppings. He also pointed out that the proposed cuts would impact on the Croquet Club which used the croquet lawn at Scarcroft Road, and these were the only croquet facilities in York. He stated that if the clubs vacated the greens, the Council would still have to pay to maintain the area and there would be a cost associated with this.

#### **17. INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY FACILITIES £200K FUND: A REVISED SCHEME FOR THE MELBOURNE CENTRE**

The Executive Member considered a report which asked him to agree to allocate the remaining £175 of the £200k Community Facilities fund to take forward a revised scheme to refurbish the Melbourne Centre for community use.

Officers reminded the Executive Member that a decision on this item had been deferred at the last meeting in order to allow further discussions to take place with Blueberry Academy in order to seek clarification regarding the core activities that they proposed and their business plan.

They advised the Executive Member that they had met again with Blue Academy, accompanied by officers from Property Services, and had been happy that the business plan was realistic and prudent and that there was a demand for facilities in the area and across the city.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That £175 be allocated to fund works on the Melbourne Centre subject to fulfilment of the conditions set out in paragraph 3 of the report.

- (ii) That the Executive be recommended to agree the required prudential borrowing.<sup>1</sup>

REASON:

To provide excellent community facilities in the vicinity of the Barbican in line with the Council's approved Leisure Facilities Strategy.

Action Required

1. To refer to the Executive for approval.

CC

**18. REVENUE BUDGET ESTIMATES 2010/11 - LEISURE AND CULTURE**

The Executive Member considered a report which presented the 2010-11 budget proposals for Leisure and Culture including:

- The revenue budget for 2009-10 to show the original budgets;
- The base budget for 2010-11 including the 2009-10 budget rolled forward and adjusted;
- The cost of pay and price increases, increments and settlement of pay and grading appeals for the portfolio;
- Budget service pressure costs and savings proposals for the portfolio area; and
- Fees and Charges proposals.

The Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services thanked everybody for their verbal and written representations and advised that these would be taken into consideration. He explained that, due to the current economic situation, levels of funding to the authority had reduced and, due to huge statutory pressures within the directorate, it was necessary to make a distinction between statutory and non statutory services. In response to comments made by the Unison representative about a lack of consultation, he advised that they were still at the consultation stage.

In respect of the savings proposals listed in annex 3 to the report, the Assistant Director (Lifelong Learning and Culture) stated that, wherever possible, cuts had been avoided and significant targets for generating additional income had been included, however they had to look at solutions that did not impact on service delivery and frontline staffing. He confirmed that now they had the opportunity to talk to users and staff affected. In respect of bowling green maintenance he advised that he would talk to the groups affected about taking on the maintenance themselves including looking at what the cost would be to them for the Council to provide the services.

The Finance Manager advised that this was a challenging year in which to produce a balanced budget and confirmed that pay increases and general inflation had been kept to a bare minimum. He advised that, other than the teachers pay award which had been set by Central Government and a few

budgets with known contractual agreements, most budgets have been frozen or would reduce by 5%.

The Executive Member reiterated that officers were faced with the consequences of a worldwide recession with both national and local government facing tough decisions in prioritising funding and explained that it was essential that the Council concentrated its available resources on its core functions, statutory services and front line delivery. He explained that, even with an extra investment of a further £1.5m into the Children's Social Care Budget which was required to manage the significant challenges around safety of children and the increase in numbers of children coming into care, in order to maintain core standards, savings must be made across the department.

The Executive Member drew attention to the positive aspects within the budget proposals including the continued funding of the Park Ranger services, funding for the archive manager post from within the core revenue budget and additional funding to continue the community sports coach programme. He added that the proposed budget would see almost £800,000 invested in arts and culture within the city, a £765,000 capital investment in the Yorkshire Museum as well as around £300,000 of investment in the York Explore Project.

He stressed his commitment to the arts but also expressed the need to balance this with the Council's responsibilities across the whole directorate. He thanked those people who had spoken at the meeting and those who had submitted written representations and advised them that these comments would be taken into consideration by the Executive. Furthermore he asked that officers consider alternative ways to support community arts provision in the city, in consultation with staff and other interested parties, in the event that this saving proposal needed to be taken.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That it be confirmed that the budget proposals are in line with the Council's priorities.
- (ii) That the report be referred to the Executive for consideration. <sup>1</sup>
- (iii) That the written and verbal representations made to the Executive Member be taken into consideration when the Executive considers the final budget proposals.
- (iv) That officers consider alternate ways to support community arts provision in the city, in consultation with staff and other interested parties, in the event that this saving proposal needs to be taken. <sup>2</sup>

**REASON:**

As part of the consultation on the Leisure and Culture budget for 2010-11.

Action Required

1. To refer to Executive for consideration RH
- 2 Finance Manager to look into alternate ways of supporting support community arts provision in the city in the event that this saving proposal needs to be taken RH

Councillor Ayre, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 4.30 pm and finished at 5.15 pm].