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MEETING	DECISION SESSION - CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES
DATE	10 JULY 2013
PRESENT	COUNCILLOR LOOKER (CABINET MEMBER)

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#### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Cabinet Member was asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests she may have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

#### **2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 27 February 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

#### **3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE SERVICES TO THOSE CURRENTLY PROVIDED BY THE TOY BUS**

The Cabinet Member gave consideration to a report detailing alternative services to those currently provided by the Toy Bus.

It was noted that the Toy Bus Service had originally been offered as a saving for the 2014/15 round of budget savings. With the need to also find in-year savings consideration had been given to the possibility of ceasing provision of this service within this financial year.

The Cabinet Member noted the changes that had taken place since the Toy Bus had been established. There were now a greater number of children's centres, satellite provision was in

place and there were different ways of engaging with families eg family centres.

The Cabinet Member sought assurances that opportunities for play would not be lost and that a high quality service would continue to be provided. Officers explained the provision and activities that the mobile library would be able to offer. It was also hoped that, as the lending of books would also be available to families, there would be opportunities to look at ways of increasing literacy skills and family learning. The arrangements may also provide a pathway into volunteering and work.

The Library Service was committed to ensuring that a toy loan service and activities would be provided. This would be a universal service offering a high quality experience. Staff and volunteers would be trained to ensure that there would be good interaction with children and parents.

At the request of the Cabinet Member, officers detailed the geographical areas covered by the toy bus and those communities in which it was most utilised.

Referring to the written representation that had been received from the Liberal Democrat Group, and which had been published with the on-line agenda papers, the Cabinet Member gave consideration to information that was tabled detailing the overall toy bus usage figures for the last three years. This illustrated a decrease in the number of families using the service.

The Cabinet Member sought confirmation that the consultation process that had been carried out had been comprehensive. Officers stated that 356 questionnaires had been completed and they drew attention to an analysis of the responses that had been tabled. The consultation had included sending a copy of the questionnaire to the original 51 e-petitioners as well as all users of Children's Centres.

Consideration was given to the information provided on revenue and potential revenue savings. It was also noted that, as the vehicle was now seven years old, the retention of the toy bus would necessitate future budgeting for a replacement bus at a cost of approximately £70,000 to £80,000.

The Cabinet Member sought clarification as to whether there would be a break in the service offered pending the mobile library including the toys in their lending library. Officers stated that the Toy Bus was not in use in the summer holidays anyway and that robust planning would be in place to ensure that disruption in provision was minimised.

The Cabinet Member considered the following options:

Option 1: Explore option that toys be added to the Mobile Library which visits all areas of the city and is open to all families. Other services provided by the mobile library would also be available of course.

Option 2: Explore option that toys to be used to support parenting and play with the more vulnerable children in York by services who work in York, including Children's Centres.

The Cabinet Member stated that she was satisfied that the arrangements included in Option 1 would provide a robust plan to take the service forward. By delivering this provision through the Library Service there would be increased opportunities to enhance and develop the experience offered to children and families and ensure that the toy library service could flourish.

RESOLVED: That Option 1 be approved i.e. explore option that toys be added to the Mobile Library which visits all areas of the city and is open to all families.

REASONS:

- (i) All families will be able to access the service through the mobile library which will also offer the services of an experienced colleague (eg in story-telling) as well as opening up opportunities for families to access other services from the mobile library.
- (ii) Children's Centres will gift the remaining Toy Bus toys to the Library Service.
- (iii) No further expenditure would be required on a new vehicle.

- (iv) Toy Bus staff could be redeployed to existing vacancies in the Children's Centres to improve capacity there and support the process of reaching vulnerable families.
- (v) This option is supported by the consultation process and allows the service to make the necessary budget savings in this financial year.

Councillor Looker, Cabinet Member

[The meeting started at 3.30 pm and finished at 4.00 pm].