
Education Scrutiny Committee

24 February 2009

Extended Schools Agenda – Interim Report

Background

1. In September 2008 the committee considered a feasibility report for this topic as registered by Cllr Merrett, and agreed to carry out a review based on the following remit:

Aim

To contribute to the development of processes aimed at ensuring accessibility and a high quality of extended school provision

Objectives:

- i. Examine the proposed role and composition of the Multi-Agency Steering Group to confirm its functions are fit for purpose and that the appropriate partners and Directorates are involved
 - ii. Assess the affordability, quality and take-up of childcare and activities for children aged 5-11, and identify ways of ensuring their affordability
2. At their meeting on 28 October 2008, the committee subsequently agreed the following methodology and timetable for carrying out the review:

4 November 2008	Members of this Committee to attend first meeting of Multi Agency Steering Group, set up to drive forward the Extended Schools Agenda
24 November 2008	Visit to After School Club at Yearsley Grove Primary School
3 December 2008	Formal Meeting to receive interim report, providing feedback from first meeting of Steering Group and containing draft survey for sending to every family in the city with a six year old child
5 December 2008	Visit to After School Clubs at Wheldrake Primary School and Fishergate Primary School
7 January 2009	Formal meeting to receive interim report detailing the findings from the site visits

- 24 February 2009 Formal meeting to receive interim report detailing the findings from the survey of families with a six year old, and to discuss Extended Schools Agenda with Executive Member for Children's Services (an invitation to attend has been sent)
- Followed by an informal consultation session with representative from schools and external service providers (with guest speaker)
- March 2009 Formal meeting to consider draft final report (exact date of meeting to be arranged)

Consultation

3. The methods for consultation are outlined above. Any changes to the methodology should be carefully considered as this may affect Members ability to complete the review prior to Annual Council in May 2009.

First Key Objective - Examine the proposed role and composition of the Multi-Agency Steering Group to confirm its functions are fit for purpose and that the appropriate partners and Directorates are involved

Information Gathered

4. The meeting of the multi-agency Steering Group was held on 4 November 2008. Three members of the Education Scrutiny Committee were in attendance (Cllr Merrett, Cllr Brooks & Cllr Funnell).
5. The Members who attended, reported:
- a wide representation from Children's Services and the PCT but no private sector partners and only one school present at the meeting
 - the meeting comprised a series of speakers on different subjects together with round table group discussions and agreed the content of the meeting and presentations had been good
 - the group was too large to generate a good debate and that too many meetings had been scheduled for the forthcoming year
 - a decision was announced at the meeting to set up a much smaller, tightly focused, strategic steering group, in which schools in particular, would be encouraged to participate - it was made apparent that secondary schools may previously have been given the wrong signal due to the alignment of the group with Early Years
 - the first meeting of the strategic steering group was scheduled to take place in March/April 2009
 - a decision was taken to circulate the minutes of the meetings to a larger network group who will meet once or twice a year (or per term) on a workshop / conference basis, to gather valuable advice and ideas.

6. Those Members who attended the meeting found the presentations useful and informative but were disappointed that no private sector partners and only one school attended the meeting. The Committee discussed the timings of the meetings and whether this affected attendance from private partners and schools. They agreed that that the Multi Agency Steering Group had worked well as an internal briefing session but not in terms of fulfilling an external partnership function, and that the separate Strategic Steering Group would provide the opportunity to include more private providers. In order to maximise attendance, it was suggested that the Assistant Director of Partnerships & Early Intervention write to all private sector providers and secondary schools, to seek their suggestions on partnership working and to invite them to attend.

Conclusion

7. The Committee concluded that the changes agreed would benefit the usefulness of the strategic steering group but agreed to assess the attendance at the meeting scheduled for March/April 2009, in order to confirm whether it was now fit for purpose and that all of the appropriate partners and Directorates were participating in the process.

Second Key Objective - Assess the affordability, quality and take-up of childcare and activities for children aged 5-11, and identify ways of ensuring their affordability

8. In order to assess affordability, quality and take-up, Members agreed to:
 - carry out site visits to a number of after school clubs - in November 2008, Members visited the after school club at Yearsley Grove Primary School, and in early December 2008, Members visited the after school clubs at Wheldrake Primary School and Fishergate Primary School. In January 2009, a further visit was arranged to Westfield School, as it has both voluntary and private provision on site.
 - hold an informal consultation session and invite Eddie Needham from ContinYou (Government Advisors on Extended Services) to give a presentation on the national picture regarding extended school services and to compare the provision in York against other Education Authorities.
 - issue a survey to all families in the city with a six year old child - it was agreed that the survey should be designed to enable families to include their views in regard to any other children in their immediate family.
 - write to every school and private provider to request any information they may hold which identifies the needs of families within their local community, and inviting them to the above mentioned consultation session.

Information Gathered

9. At the visit to Yearsley Grove Primary School, Members recognised that:

- the After School Club is run by a voluntary management committee and is based on site, in the former caretakers bungalow. It is registered for 24 places, but take up is low - only 7-16 children currently use the provision (300 pupils on the school roll)
- parents are charged £5 per session (3:15pm to 6pm) and that is relatively cheap for childcare in York, compared to some other after school provision.
- the After School Club is looking for ways to develop, such as offering places to nearby Huntington Primary School and applying for grants towards the cost of the transport which is not currently being covered by the charge, from their local Ward Committee and Awards for All
- the Breakfast Club folded as there was a lack of numbers, even with constant advertising through newsletters and flyers
- in regard to out of school activities, most were free for children, but a number of expensive providers had to be paid for. For example, some parents have expressed concern about even a £1 cost for pupils. The headteacher was keen for any extended services funding through school to go for the benefit of all pupils not just a few

10. It was also reported to Members that:

- the quality of the resource is good, and the unit receives good support from council officers
- maintaining parents' confidence is an issue i.e. will the After School Club remain, the high cost for the area, and partnership working with the school e.g. need for reduced rent and working together
- although the After School Club has enjoyed a period of reduced rent from the school, there is concern that if the reduced rent and partnership working does not continue, the viability of the club may be in jeopardy
- as a consequence to the visit there is now a better working relationship between the school and After School Club

11. At the visit to Wheldrake Primary School Members recognised that:

- the After School club is run by a voluntary management committee, which maintains a good relationship with the school, especially on child protection issues. They have regular partnership meetings and there are other extra curricular clubs at the school
- the club is registered for 24 children, but as there is no space in the school they use the local village hall. The annual rent for the village hall is £2,300. Parents are charged £7.20 per session, which runs from 3:30pm to 6pm and includes a snack.

12. It was also reported to Members that:

- cost is not a major issue for parents
- there is concern that the Council is looking at developing a pre-school playgroup on the site in the future, as this may affect their numbers
- the management committee does not appear interested in developing a breakfast club provision from the After School Club

13. At the visit to Fishergate Primary School, Members recognised that:
 - the After School Club is run by a voluntary management committee
 - they have their own building on the Fishergate Primary site and are able to offer a breakfast club, playgroup, lunch, after school club and limited holiday provision - this is a good model in relation to the variety of provision
 - the club is registered for 40 children, and therefore is one of the larger provisions in the City. Attendance does fluctuate and it currently has a waiting list
 - the club takes children from Fishergate Primary, St. George's Primary and the York Steiner School, and responds to needs in a number of communities, including Polish children.
 - It has a good partnership from both headteachers.
 - the rent is currently low at £752 half yearly, but it is being reviewed.
 - charges for parents are £3.00 for the breakfast club and £6.00 for the after school club. There is a 50p discount for siblings and both costs include a snack
14. It was also reported to Members that cost was not a major issue for parents as they promoted benefit take up.
15. Officers confirmed that all primary schools are aware that they need to provide childcare on site or to signpost parents to nearby provision. For secondary schools this is replaced by a requirement to provide safe activities where children are accessing supervised high quality activities. Members received information on the costs for After School Clubs across the city, and were informed that:
 - there is a minimum recovery rate of services which schools must charge for the use of premises. To recover additional expenditure, for example heating, lighting, cleaning and caretaking overheads there is a formula basis incorporating the number of square metres occupied and the length of time used.
 - there is also a table of hire rates that gives more favourable rates to non-profit making organisations or charities and a commercial rate for companies who are for profit. This formal arrangement is supported through Assets and Property Management who also provide information around letting agreements for third parties.
 - Schools can seek financial advice from The Schools Business Support Service and the Extended Schools service team work closely in partnership with them should a dispute or concern over rental charges arise and when new groups are setting up on school sites.
 - Schools are using their extended school money in a variety of ways for example some schools may employ co-ordinators that will work across a locality to ensure there are a variety of activities available for families and their children. Other schools provide out of school activities as well as out of school childcare. Some have provided support for parents.
 - advice was given to schools on the variety of ways in which the money should be spent, consistent with the DCSF guidelines.

- all schools were recommended to consult with their communities (not just school communities) to ensure what was being delivered was what communities wanted, and had to produce evidence of that consultation.
16. The planned survey was sent out to all parents of a six year old in the city, with a 'return by' date of 16 January 2009. Information from the 246 surveys returned, has been collated and the findings together with an analysis of the information is shown in Annex A.
 17. The letter to schools and private providers of childcare was sent out in early January 2009, with a 'return by' date of 6 February 2009. Only three responses were received, each from a school:
 - New Earswick Primary School
 - Elvington Church of England Primary School
 - Scarcroft School
 18. The response from New Earswick Primary School shown at Annex B, included a note commenting on the excellent support they received from the Early Years Team when setting up their After School Club. The responses from the other two schools are shown in Annex C.

Issues Arising

19. Following the success of the site visits, Members decided to visit one more site and agreed to visit Westfield School where there are two clubs being ran on the site (one by the school and one through a private provider). Members are asked to give feedback from their visit at this meeting.
16. In order to encourage attendance at the informal consultation session to be held after this meeting, a flyer advertising the event was sent to all schools and private providers and copies of the flyer have been displayed at local libraries since early February.

Options

20. Having considered the information contained within this report and associated annexes, Members may choose to revise the interim report and agree any further information required to support this review.

Implications

21. **Financial** - Scrutiny Management Committee has recently increased the budget for scrutiny reviews from £250 to £500. The cost of producing the survey has been met by using £200 of the scrutiny budget allocated to this review. The Extended Schools Service from within their existing resources is meeting any other costs incurred as part of carrying out the survey.
22. In regard to the consultation event on 24 February 2009, the cost of producing the flyer, room hire at the Mansion House and the provision of refreshments has been met from the balance of the budget allocated to this review.

23. There are no known Legal, Equalities, or HR, implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

Corporate Priorities

24. The remit for this review supports Corporate Priority No.7 – 'Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city'.

Risk Management

25. Without the thorough engagement of current users and extended schools service providers the findings from this review could be limited and insufficient to support and evidence the recommendations arising from the review.

Recommendation

26. In light of the above options, Members are asked to note and provide comments on the interim report, and agree:
- i. what further information is required to progress this review

Reason: To ensure work can proceed as planned for this review whilst complying with scrutiny procedures, protocols and workplans.

Contact Details

Author:

Melanie Carr
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Services
Tel No.01904 552063

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Dawn Steel
Democratic Services Manager

Interim Report Approved **Date** 12 February 2009

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Scoping report dated 28 October 2008 and interim reports dated 3 December 2008 and 7 January 2009

Annexes:

Annex A - Information from the returned surveys and responses received from schools and private providers

Annex B – Information received from New Earswick Primary School

Annex C – Information received from Elvington Church of England School and Scarcroft School