
Meeting	Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date	22 July 2014
Present	Councillors Reid (Chair), Fitzpatrick (Vice-Chair), Scott, Potter, Gunnell, Brooks and Taylor
Apologies	Mr Thomas and Mr Pennington

8. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the register of interests, any prejudicial interests or disclosable interests which they might have in respect of the business on the agenda or any other general interests they might have within the remit of the committee. None were declared.

9. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 18 June 2014 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10. Public Participation

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

11. York Theatre Royal: 2013/14 End of Year Performance Update

As the Chief Executive of York Theatre Royal was unable to attend the meeting Members agreed to defer this item and receive an end of year progress and performance update at the next meeting.

Resolved: That this item be deferred until the next Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting due to take place on Wednesday 17 September 2014.

Reason: To fulfil the Council's role under the Service Agreement.

12. 2013/14 Finance and Performance Year End Report

Members received a report that analysed the latest performance for 2013-14 and forecasted the outturn position by reference to the service plan and budgets for all of the relevant services falling under the responsibility of the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills and the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods.

The Finance Manager gave an update and informed Members that although reducing expenditure in non essential services had resulted in Children Services, Education & Skills Directorate decreasing their amount of overspend there was still significant financial pressures in Looked After Children (LAC). The Director of Children's Services & Education added that the performance in LAC had provided an impressive reduction in the numbers of children placed inside and outside the City.

Members discussed the financial pressures related to LAC and raised concerns regarding the overspend reported, the financial pressures on the service and why the reduction in LAC had not achieved any savings.

In answer to Members questions officers confirmed that:

- the number of cases outside the City was around the late teens/low twenties.
- the Virtual Head monitored the academic side of all LAC placed outside the City.
- the reason for the projected 5% overspend in Children's Specialist Services was mainly due to LAC, including the out of City placements.
- they would contact Members to confirm why the Libraries and Archives projected overspend was over 10%.

The Director confirmed he was working to reduce the budget pressures in LAC to ensure they were not repeated in future years. He stated that although significant progress in reducing the number of LAC had happened, the associated reduction in expenditure had not been as significant as predicted. To allow the Directorate to achieve a balanced budget at the end of 2014-15 officers would be looking at other budget areas within Children Services. He confirmed that a proportion of children were now in joint care between the Local Authority and parents which reduced figures but not costs.

Members thanked officers and suggested that future reports contain the performance strength and weaknesses to enable them to scrutinise the service.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.
(ii) That Members be informed on the Libraries and Archives projected overspend.¹

Reason: To update the committee on the latest financial position for 2013-14.

Action Required

Confirm to Members why the Libraries and Archives projected overspend was over 10%

RH

13. Bi-Annual Safeguarding Update

Members considered a report which provided them with a six monthly update on key children's safeguarding issues, in particular key local and national safeguarding developments since January 2014.

The Director of Children's Services & Education stated that the Ofsted thematic inspection, which took place on 21 and 22 January 2014, had been published in July 2014. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors who reviewed the quality and effectiveness of the early help offer, in particular, the arrangements that were in place across City of York Council (CYC) and its partnerships to prevent any issues escalating to the point where statutory intervention was needed.

The Director confirmed it was a relatively short inspection and he highlighted the strengths, weaknesses and conclusions listed in the report. He confirmed that officers were actively working to improve services, including:

- strengthening the referral and assessment arrangements.
- improving how children specialist social care services can be accessed.
- changing the structure of how the front door service works.
- strengthening the performance management of case loads.
- improving quality of social care practice and
- developing a new referral form.

He also stated that officers were preparing for an Ofsted inspection which was due to take place before May 2015. The first inspection would cover safeguarding arrangements and Looked After Children (LAC). It was anticipated that eight inspectors would visit over a 4 week period and would analyse around 100 case files with a large proportion being LAC records.

Some Members queried how the challenges of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) were managed. It was confirmed that CAF was an intensive process that required continuous contact with the yor-ok Board and partner organisations. Officers would continue to encourage users to be more consistent when completing a CAF.

Discussions took place regarding areas for development and some Members were disappointed that inspectors had stated that some plans and assessments did not reflect the child's voice, experience or journey. Officers confirmed that this was an area of development and they were working to improve this section.

Some Members felt Annex 1, External Scrutiny of Services for the Review Period table, was left open ended and should contain a more detailed conclusion. It was agreed that future reports would include an update on actions taken to provide a clear reassurance that officers were responding to each area.

In answer to some questions officers confirmed that:

- an update on the Sheffield Peer Challenge could be distributed to Committee Members.
- that staff structure arrangements had changed over the last 18 months but the Peer Challenge Team had confirmed that the directorate now needed a period of stability.

Resolved:

- (i) That the outcome and recommendations of the Ofsted thematic inspection of Early Help be noted.
- (ii) That a further update on the plans for a Peer Challenge of the referral and assessment arrangements including feedback from this process be received in December.
- (iii) That the work underway to prepare for the forthcoming Ofsted inspection be noted.
- (iv) That the outcome of the most recent DBS audit be noted and future updates on this position as part of the six monthly reporting cycle be received.
- (v) That the continued progress of the Keeping Families Together strategy be noted and further updates on the progress towards developing a refreshed strategy for 2015/18 be received.
- (vi) That an update on the Sheffield Peer Challenge be circulated around Committee Members.¹

Reason: To allow Members to be fully informed on the key issues affecting children's safeguarding in York.

Action Required

(i) That an update on the Sheffield Peer Challenge be circulated around Committee Members.

JS

14. Narrowing the Gap in York - Scoping Report for Possible Scrutiny Review

Members considered a scoping report asking them to agree whether or not to proceed with a review based on the actions taken to narrow gaps in attainment and progress in York.

The Assistant Director of Education & Skills gave an update and informed Members that by the age of 19 the gap in attainment between disadvantaged young people (as defined by them being in receipt of Free School Meals at age 15) and their peers in York were amongst the widest anywhere in the country. She felt a review would help to own this as a collective issue to help improve national performance indicators and narrow the gaps in attainment.

She also confirmed that officers had been working to establish an accurate profile of the York 300 cohort and had chosen to do a pilot scheme using 350 pupils in 2013/14 Year 5 group. These Children would move into Year 6 in September 2014 and sit their Key Stage 2 (KS2) tests in summer 2015. This would enable officers to retrieve a faster return on the work undertaken with these pupils and help identify any barriers by analysing their attainment at KS2.

Members noted that York schools were also divided into geographical and attainment cluster groups which had been analysed by officers to provide schools with information on how to improve their intervention work. Officers found that the results varied from each school, and schools who had a small number of disadvantaged pupils were struggling to close the gaps, possibly due to funding issues.

To improve partnership working officers were launching a narrowing the gap conference in October for schools and partners to attend to allow them to work together, share information and examples of best practice.

Members thanked the Assistant Director for the honesty and clarity in her report and after a lengthy discussion agreed this topic should be reviewed. Members approved the focus of the review and decided that the following should be identified:

- i) Good practice from other Local Authorities with narrow gaps including early years.
- ii) Why do some clusters and schools in York have narrower gaps and what can be learnt from their practice?
- iii) How schools with small numbers of pupils eligible for the pupil premium can use the premium more effectively to narrow the gap.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Committee in principle agreed to a review.
- (ii) That further information be presented.
- (iii) That the Task Group Members be agreed at the next meeting.
- (iv) That this review starts in November 2014 and the final report be presented in January 2015.
- (v) That the Committee Members be invited to the Narrowing the Gap Conference on 3 October 2014.¹

Reason: To progress the work of the Committee in line with Scrutiny procedures and protocols

Action Required

That the Committee Members be invited to the MS
Narrowing the Gap Conference on 3 October
2014

15. Update on Implementation of Recommendations from Previously Completed Scrutiny Review on Careers, Education, Information, Advice & Guidance

Members considered a report that provided them with an update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the previously completed scrutiny review of Careers, Education, Information, Advice & Guidance (CEIAG).

Officers gave an update and confirmed that a new statutory guidance had been issued in April 2014 and would be implemented in September 2014. This would allow the Charter Mark framework to be more accessible to schools allowing them to monitor their own progress against the statutory guidance.

Members were informed that the Connexions Service Team were going through a transformation due to budget challenges and ways to improve the efficiency of the service were being identified.

Officers confirmed they had provided different options to schools, pupils, parents and employers on CEIAG and had arranged various activities and events for them to feed into including apprenticeship events.

Members considered the 10 recommendations listed in Annex A and agreed:

- To sign off recommendations i, ii and iii as these had been fully implemented.
- That recommendation iv should not be signed off because officers were still further developing this framework. Officers agreed to inform the Committee which two schools had not engaged in the CYC Charter Mark and why.¹
- That recommendation v should not be signed off because adjustments in statutory duties needed to be assessed and brought back to the Committee.
- That recommendation vi should not be signed off whilst the Local Authority was continuing to actively work on stronger links between schools and employers.
- That the Committee would continue to receive further updates regarding recommendations vii.
- That recommendation viii was ongoing because officers were continuing to look at ways to improve this provision.
- That recommendation ix was pending whilst officers explored ways to work with schools and colleges.
- That recommendation x was pending until a copy of the letter had been seen by the committee and results had been accessed.

Some Members questioned if contact with the two Universities had been made as they had funding available to provide a range of information to schools, including taster days.

Members noted that this service area was due further savings so the ability to stimulate some activities could be reduced. Members thanked officers for the work they had done and continued to do and were pleased to hear that this review had encouraged two large companies to join the apprenticeship scheme.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.
(ii) That recommendations i, ii, iii from Annex A be signed off.
(iii) That an update report be received in 6 months time.

Reason: To raise awareness of those recommendations which were still to be fully implemented.

Action Required

Inform the Committee which two schools had not engaged in the CYC Charter Mark and why

SF

16. Entrepreneurship for Young People - Scoping Report

Members considered a report that proposed a scope for the suggested review of Entrepreneurship for Young People.

The Scrutiny Officer circulated the following draft remit:

Aim: To create a culture in York schools where entrepreneurial learning is pervasive, through improving entrepreneurship education and opportunities for employability and enterprise-related activities for York pupils

Objectives:

- i) To identify best practice in other Local Authority areas which perform strongly on relevant performance indicators
- ii) Review current practices in York to identify:
 - a) The commitment of local schools and colleges to developing the skills and enterprising behaviours identified by the Leeds City Region LEP.
 - b) Local good practice
- iii. To identify appropriate sources of employability and enterprise-related activities for York schools

Members discussed the remit and agreed to change the word 'pervasive' to 'embedded' in the Aim and in point ii a) replace the words 'developing the' with 'develop the relevant' and delete 'identified by the Leeds City Region LEP'.

Resolved:

- (i) That the above remit be agreed with the noted changes.
- (ii) That the review be completed by January 2015.

Reason: To carry out the review in line with agreed scrutiny procedures and protocols.

17. Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee Workplan 2014/15

Members considered the Committee's work plan for the 2014-15 municipal year.

Resolved: That the following be agreed:

- York Theatre Royal – SLA Performance Bi-annual Update Report be moved to 17 September 2014.
- Parks Development Update be reported on 17 September 2014
- Feedback on Peer Challenge, referral and assessment arrangements be reported on 17 September 2014 if available.
- Draft Final reports for Task Groups be reported on Wednesday 21 January 2015.
- Officers seek confirmation that the Chair of York@Large was available to attend the next meeting.

Reason: To keep the Committees workplan updated.

18. Members Comments

Members thanked officers for their reports in particular the honesty and refreshing approach found in the Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills reports.

Cllr Reid, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 8.00 pm].

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