

Meeting	Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	13 April 2022
Present	Councillors Daubeney (Chair), Fenton, Fitzpatrick, Heaton and Webb (Vice-Chair)
Apologies	Councillors Baker and Barker

28. Declarations Of Interest

Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in respect of business on the agenda.

Cllr Webb declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 7, Scrutiny Review Update – School Holiday Food, as he was a teacher at Archbishop Holgate’s School in York.

29. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 04 January 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

30. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council’s Public Participation Scheme.

Flick Williams spoke in relation to item 4, Cultural Strategy Update, where she raised her concerns regarding the exclusion of Blue Badge holders from cultural events held within the Footstreets.

31. Cultural Strategy Update

Members received an update on the culture sector in York and on the implementation and delivery of the city's Culture Strategy, York's Creative Future, 2020 – 25.

Sarah Loftus, Managing Director at Make it York (MIY) attended alongside MIY's Creative and Cultural Development Manager and the Head of Culture and Wellbeing to present the update and answer questions from Members. It was noted that:

- City of York Council (CYC) had given responsibility for Culture to MIY and this was one of their key priorities.
- Funding was unavailable to implement the entire strategy but work in partnership with other organisations would take place to develop and implement the strategy.

They responded to a number of questions from Members and it was noted that:

- All events were open to residents and a market strategy was under development to connect with more residents. They welcomed suggestions to increase engagement levels with residents. Some events were being held outside the city centre assist with this.
- Events were just one aspect of culture and they were looking to develop a long term connection with culture to improve the well-being of residents.
- They recognised that it was necessary to improve disability access. It was hoped that improvements in digital access and relocating events to venues outside the city centre would assist.
- To date there were 144 members of the cultural forum. Engagement had taken place with residents and local members to make events successful and inclusive. Nominations for the cultural executive, part of the cultural forum, would take place in July with elections in September for two year terms.
- An application to Trailblazers was pending on a basis of celebrating 'surprising things in surprising ways'.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

Reason: To keep the Committee updated.

32. Finance Third Quarter Monitoring Report, Children's Services

The Committee considered a report that analysed the latest performance for 2021/22 and forecasted the financial outturn position by reference to the services plans and budgets falling under this committee's responsibilities.

The Head of Finance, Children, Education and Schools presented the report and referred Members to Table 1 of the report. It was reported that similar pressures such as a significant overspend in children's social care, from quarter 2 remained. This was mainly due to the increased numbers of children in care (273 in Q3) over those budgeted for (190-210). Other pressures included the Home to School Transport budget and the higher needs element of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Since publication of the agenda, discussions had concluded with the Department for Education (DfE) and they had provisionally agreed to release an additional £17.1m over the next four years, subject to the council managing the other half of the projected overspend of £35m through their financial recovery plan.

The Interim Director of Children's Services, the Assistant Director of Education and the Head of Finance then responded to a number of questions from Members covering the Safety Valve Plan (SVP), access to school for children with special educational needs, out of city placements, the number of children and young people (CYP) in care and social worker recruitment and retention. It was reported that:

- The provision of home to school transport was one of the areas in which a reduction in spending could be made without compromising outcomes. This would be achieved through appropriate assessment of need, confirmation of eligibility and putting in place the right solution including independent travel. This area formed part of the financial recovery / Safety Valve Plan, the agreement with the DfE to manage the deficit.
- The number of children in care was demand-led. 14/15 young people were due to move to the pathways programme and another 25 children were being worked with to go home. The current budgeted number of 200 children was overly ambitious, in the short term, a number of 250-270 children would allow for some flexibility.

- The recruitment campaign for social workers and managers had recruited 5 practitioners, 3 operational managers and 2 independent review officers. There has been a net increase in social worker levels over the last two years with 40.5 starters and 18.5 leavers, turnover was 18%.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To update the Committee on the latest financial position for 2021/22.

[The meeting adjourned between 18:49 and 18:55]

33. Children And Young People In Care Update

The Head of Innovation and Children's Champion presented an update relating to children and young people in care, key performance information and areas of priority. He highlighted the data regarding the number of children in care within the authority, compared with regional and national data. He also noted the qualitative information within the report which came from the U Matter Consultation and the Corporate Parenting Board, which gave a voice to children and young people in care.

The Officer together with the Interim Director of Children's Services and the Interim Head of Corporate Parenting, responded to questions from Members covering the numbers of care leavers and transitions, changes to the Corporate Parenting Board, the results of the U Matter Consultation, Placements with Parents (PWP), staffing, foster care placements and recognising important dates. It was noted that:

- A high number of children remained with their foster family after their time in care ended.
- There is a need to upskill carers in communication and observation. Action learning was taking place during April 2022.
- Placement With Parent (PWP) information is not nationally available as it is not a DFE return. Work was underway to improve the practice regarding final care plans with the courts, there were currently 28 children in PWP's.

- The care leaver's team had been coping with long term staff absence, However, the previous performance level was expected to return as the member of staff was now back at work.
- There was a recruitment campaign to get more placements for teenagers and sibling groups. Support from Members was welcomed for the fostering fortnight in May 2022.
- Social workers, personal advisors, foster carers aim to celebrate children's milestones with cards or outings etc.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To keep the committee updated.

34. Scrutiny Review Update - School Holiday Food

The Chair provided an update to the Committee on the progress of the School Holiday Food Task Group. The scrutiny review had been undertaken at the request of Executive as funding for school holiday food came to an end in February 2022. CYC had funded the Easter holiday provision and the review was to examine how this should progress going forward.

The final report was due to come back to the Committee on 03 May 2022 and would go to Executive for their meeting on 19 May 2022.

The Task Group noted the time constraints and difficulty in receiving responses from schools due to school holidays. A general discussion took place amongst Committee Members covering the success to date of the HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) scheme.

The Director of Customer and Communities outlined some points for the Committee to consider, including:

- That the Challenge Poverty, Talk Money information had been reissued to parents through schools. The campaign would take place again at the end of Easter.
- Fuel vouchers were available through Local Area Co-ordinators (LACs) and partners such as charities. It was also possible to provide food vouchers through the same system. The Executive had approved funding of £100,000

with two thirds of this going to the provision of FSM vouchers for one week in the Easter holidays the remainder could go into the voucher scheme to enable debt advisors, Citizens Advice and LACs to directly assist families in need.

- The York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS) was also available to residents.
- The Financial Inclusion Steering Group (FISG) were examining a strategy considering the cost of living, fuel and food costs and digital inclusion.

Resolved: That the interim report be noted.

Reason: To ensure that the committee were kept up to date with the progress of the School Holiday Food Task Group.

35. Work Plan

Members considered the committee's work plan for the current municipal year.

Resolved: That the work plan be noted.

Reason: To keep the work plan updated.

Cllr S Daubeney, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.34 pm and finished at 7.41 pm].