
Meeting	Children, Education and Communities Policy And Scrutiny Committee
Date	1 December 2020
Present	Councillors Baker (Chair), Webb (Vice-Chair), Daubeney, Fenton, Fitzpatrick, Heaton and Barker [from 17:41]

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair welcomed all to the Commissioned Scrutiny meeting. Introductions were made.

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. None were declared.

59. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 26 February 2020 be approved as a correct record and then signed by the Chair at a later date.

The Vice Chair noted that the last meeting was pre the COVID-19 pandemic and noted that the workplan would have changed since then. This was acknowledged by the Chair who added that it would be discussed under that agenda item.

[Cllr Barker joined the meeting at 17:41]

60. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

61. VOLUNTARY SECTOR WORK/ACTIVITY

Members welcome the Chief Executive of York Centre for Voluntary Services (CVS), the Chief Officer (Age UK) and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (JRHT) Partnerships Manager (Communities) and the Centre Manager of Door 84. Also in attendance at the meeting from City of York Council was the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities, Corporate Director People, Assistant Director Communities and Culture, Head of Commissioning and Commissioning Manager.

The JRHT Partnerships Manager (Communities) explained his role and gave a presentation from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and JRHT on the 'Impacts of the pandemic in the voluntary sector – learning from national briefings and local networking November 2020.' He noted that the presentation was originally written to inform the work of the JRHT York Committee as a local funder of the York voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. During his presentation the monthly briefings from April which identified pressures on the VCSE sector and 'asks' from their grantees. He then outlined the questions for funders, commissioners and local infrastructure organisations (LIOs). The Chair thanked the JRHT Partnerships Manager (Communities) for his presentation.

The Chief Executive of York CVS then explained the impact of the pandemic on York CVS. She explained that they had been hit hard because of the loss of the use of the conference rooms in their building, resulting in estimated losses of £100k at the end of the financial year. She outlined the work undertaken during the pandemic which included social prescribing, making welfare calls, monitoring the COVID-19 monitoring hub (at the request of the CCG), offering free HR support to members, and supporting other charities through a fundraising campaign. Presently, the COVID-19 helpline was open, volunteer calls had been reinstated, and the volunteer centre was up and running. She explained that for the voluntary sector, funding was the biggest issue, and there were problems around capacity, with a number of charities having less staff and volunteers and increased demand for services, resulting in a number not being sustainable in six months. She advised that the council help by underwriting reserves, reading their fortnightly newsletter, keep listening for ensuring support for the voluntary sector. She also asked that the allocation of Ward funding be changed to operate across York by pooling its resource.

The Chief Officer (Age UK) reported that she had been in post since the beginning of lockdown in March. She narrated both positive and negative stories from the pandemic and explained the fragility of the Age UK network which was beyond financial, affecting their infrastructure and workforce. She noted the hard work of the work force, especially as it was a low wage one. She thanked York CVS for its support. She noted what funding had been received and explained that 2021 planning was a focus and which Age UK would like to work with the council and other statutory bodies, noting that 2021 was their 50th anniversary. She added that after the COVID-19 vaccination it was expected that the demand from Age UK would increase, in supporting people to reclaim their lives. The Chair thanked her for her update.

The Centre Manager of Door 84 explained her role and the history of the organisation, which had been on site in their premises for 50 years. She explained how Door 84 had responded to the need to support young people through the development of different groups, some of which had and had not continued to run during the pandemic. She noted the support received from York CVS and the work undertaken to support groups during the pandemic which included welfare calls to young people once a week, sending out activity packs to members. They also worked with foodbanks to deliver packages to families and this had evolved to a community stall which included fresh fruit and vegetables being included in the bespoke food boxes delivered to families. With regard to funding there had been a decrease in income, with one charity leaving their building. She added that there had been a hit to fundraising and they had put in funding bids for the COVID-19 response. They were now planning for the future and were concerned that without core funding they would be in trouble in 12 months' time. She noted they were beneficiaries of York CVS, working with a consultant on their business plan. With regard to help from the council she asked for rate relief, training for staff and trustees and recognition of the work put in.

In response to questions from Members, the JRHT Partnerships Manager (Communities) explained that his presentation reflected the national level in drawing together collective voices and did not specifically reflect the sector in York. He noted the need to have an inclusive approach in bringing different communities and sectors together.

The Chair noted that council officers were in attendance to outline the delivery of Community Hubs and the proposals for their use as set out in the report presented at the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities Decision Session on 14 October 2020. The Commissioning Manager presented his report on the management of emergency volunteering by the council in response to Covid-19. In response to Member questions, officers explained that discussions had taken place with the York and North Yorkshire 'Ready For Anything' group in order to establish their role in future emergencies. He also described the opportunities for council volunteers to be involved in longer-term volunteering in the community and voluntary sector when the COVID-19 volunteering is closed down.

Members asked how organisations could work together to avoid duplication of services. The Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities and Chief Executive of York CVS explained that they had met to discuss how this could be achieved and he thanked the voluntary sector for its work.

[The Centre Manager, Door 84 left at 19:00]

The Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities explained that he was looking forward to getting the volunteer centre running and the Chief Executive of York CVS added that there would be different targeted groups for this. Asked about access to York CVS at Priory Street, she added that there was a mixed approach to this with some being online and some at the CVS.

Resolved: That the committed be updated on the work undertaken by the voluntary sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reason: In order to be updated on the work of the voluntary sector.

62. FUTURE VOLUNTARY SUPPORT AND NEEDS

Members asked what the voluntary sector would like from the council in terms of the contracting approach.

The Chief Officer (Age UK) noted that she would like to see a move towards more outcomes based commissioning. The Head of Commissioning noted that this was a sensible move towards a relational commissioning model and added that this could be difficult. The JRHT Partnerships Manager (Communities) explained that out of the Institute for Voluntary Research (IVAR) work came an understanding of using social prescribing and the anchor model to produce a matrix of which organisations were under the anchor model.

Members welcomed the Wards working together and it was suggested that Wards could use their funding strategically. The Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities was asked and explained how the commissioning find could be used and he suggested that a written briefing on this could be produced for the Committee. The Assistant Director Communities and Culture explained how funding was allocated from the government. It was noted that information on the Volunteer Centre was available on the York CVS website. It was suggested that the council Community Involvement Officers (COIs) could find out what support was available from York CVS and cascade this information in their Wards. In terms of lost revenue for venue hire, it was suggested that a list of venues (available on the York CVS website) could be shared at Ward Committee meetings. It was suggested that the Committee could look at anchor organisations and officers explained the collaborative approach to this. The Chief Executive of York CVS invited Members to part in the York CVS strategy consultation which would contribute to their volunteering strategy.

Resolved: That commissioning arrangements be referred to CSMC

Reason: In order to be informed on how commissioning is undertaken at the council.

63. WORK PLAN

Members considered the Committee's draft work plan for the 2020/21 municipal year. Following discussions regarding the current work plan, Members agreed that the NEET Report be deferred to June as part of a wider skills report and that support for anchor organisations would be discussed at a future forum meeting. Members acknowledged the importance of the Safeguarding report. The Corporate Director of People was asked and reported that there had been no changes to the staffing structure in her directorate.

Resolved: That the work plan be approved subject to the above amendments/additions for consideration by CSMC.

Reason: To keep the Committee's work plan updated.

Cllr R Baker, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.56 pm].