

Meeting	Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date	5 November 2024
Present	Councillors Nicholls (Chair), Clarke (Vice-Chair), Cullwick, Cuthbertson, Knight, K Taylor, Waller, Wilson [until 7:30pm], Baxter (Substitute for Cllr Nelson), and Melly (Substitute for Cllr Crawshaw)
Apologies	Councillors Crawshaw, and Nelson
Officers in attendance	Martin Kelly – Director of Children and Education Maxine Squire – Assistant Director, Education and Skills Pauline Stuchfield – Director of Housing and Communities Laura Williams – Assistant Director, Customer, Communities and Inclusion
Executive Members in attendance	Councillor Webb – Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education Councillor Pavlovic – Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Safer Communities
External attendees in attendance	Eloise Tann – Representative from University of Leeds Louise Dye – Representative from University of Leeds Aniela Wenham – Representative from University of York Rebecca Kerr - Representative from University of York Katherine Smith - Representative from University of York John Hudson - Representative from University of York

23. Apologies for Absence (5:30pm)

The committee received apologies from Councillors Crawshaw and Nelson, who were substituted respectively by Councillors Melly and Baxter.

24. Declarations of Interest (5:32pm)

Councillor Waller declared an interest in relation to item 5 on the agenda, Free School Meal Pilot Year Review, in that he was a Governor at Westfield Primary School.

25. Minutes (5:32pm)

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

26. Public Participation (5:33pm)

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

27. Free School Meals Pilot Year Review (5:33pm)

The Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education, and the Assistant Director, Education and Skills, presented their report and introduced to the meeting the representatives from the universities of Leeds and York.

The Assistant Director, Education and Skills noted that the Hungry Minds Pilot Scheme started in January 2024 and that Westfield Primary School was the largest primary school in York, and Burton Green Primary School was one of the smallest, which demonstrated the capability of the scheme to work within different settings. Westfield Primary School was chosen to start the pilot scheme due to its recent kitchen upgrades and already high uptake of free school meals.

The representatives from the University of Leeds presented their presentation as seen in the agenda supplement 'Presentation Slides for York Free School Meals Pilot Year Review, University of Leeds', and it was reported that:

- Studies had concluded that hunger had an impact on children's attainment and wellbeing.
- Through tracking attendance, the pilot scheme saw a steady increase in attendance through two terms, and lateness had decreased.
- Uptake of free school meals (FSM) had increased from 40-60% following the scheme.
- A decrease in the experience of bad behaviour had been seen.

The representatives from the University of York presented their presentation as seen in the agenda supplement 'Presentation Slides for York Free School Meals Pilot Year Review, University of York', and it was reported that:

- The scheme had experienced challenges with its communication in regard to its expectations of what the scheme could achieve, as well as from increased politicisation of the scheme through the local press.
- The universality of the scheme had reduced the stigma seen relating to FSM, but a bigger cohort size through expansion of the scheme could see stigma reduced further.

In response to questions from members, the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education, Assistant Director, Education and Skills, and representatives from the universities of Leeds and York confirmed that:

- In the summer it was usually seen that attendance would drop, however this was not seen throughout the schools involved in the pilot.
- The pilot would undoubtedly have a positive financial impact on families who would not have been eligible for FSM prior to the scheme.
- Psychological tools could be used to support children in choosing healthier food options without reducing the amount of exciting food offered, reducing FSM uptake, or increasing food waste.
- Through ongoing reviews of the scheme, data will be gathered to understand seasonal changes in attendance and FSM uptake.

- The introduction of this scheme in early 2024 could be beneficial to the introduction of a Government national school breakfast scheme as City of York Council (CYC) would already have knowledge and experience on the rollout of universal FSM.
- A School Survey from Leeds showed that childcare provision was a big contributor to families taking-up FSM.
- Expansion of the scheme would be considered on the basis of sustainability, which schools were in best position to take the scheme on, and how the scheme could support those most in need.
- The Executive had committed to supporting Westfield Primary School through the scheme throughout their term in administration.
- Plans were not yet in place for the scheme to be expanded to secondary schools as it was essential to get the scheme right for primary schools first. However, it was also first important to consider how many eligible families for FSM in secondary schools were not receiving FSM, and investigating how take-up of this could be improved.
- Studies were done in consultation with families and an increase in male parent and child engagement would support further studies.

The Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education noted that donations to the York Hungry Minds project were accepted and could be done online.

Members thanked the representatives from the universities of Leeds and York for their time, and their work on the report and presentations seen in the agenda supplements.

Resolved: That members supported the work of the York Hungry Minds Project and asked that the Executive member for Children, Young People, and Education continues to work with the steering group to expand to project to deliver breakfast at two additional schools during 2025.

Reason: The expansion of the universal breakfast offer would provide valuable support to low income families and ensure that more children were able to gain the benefits achieved in the pilot schools.

28. Locality Model - York Neighbourhood Model (7:09pm)

The Director of Housing and Communities, and Assistant Director, Customer, Communities and Inclusion presented the report, and highlighted that the neighbourhood model was designed to increase collaboration between partners and bring services closer to communities.

Members discussed the report and provided the following feedback to Officers:

- More clarity was needed to demonstrate the support residents could receive in their local area.
- Having a central grouping within the four areas of the model was not practical, as many areas grouped together did not share similar characteristics, and many residents from the other areas would need to travel through the central area to receive other services.

The Chair moved that the committee supported the devolution of services within the Neighbourhood Model and welcomed further scrutiny on detailed proposals, this was seconded by Councillor Baxter, and it was;

Resolved:

- That further data which would be included within the report to be received by Executive on 12 December 2024 also be shared with members.
- That the committee supported the devolution of services within the Neighbourhood Model and welcomed further scrutiny on detailed proposals.

29. Work Plan (8:00pm)

Members discussed the committee's workplan and it was;

Resolved: That the York Explore Annual Update originally scheduled to be received by members during this meeting, be deferred to the meeting scheduled for 3 December 2024.

Reason: To keep the committee's work plan for the 2024/25 municipal year updated.

Cllr Nicholls, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 8.02 pm].