
MEETING	LEARNING & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	30 NOVEMBER 2009
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS LOOKER (CHAIR), BROOKS (VICE-CHAIR), ASPDEN, CRISP, DOUGLAS, HOGG, TAYLOR AND WAUDBY

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting Members were asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on this agenda or any general interests they might have within the remit of the Committee, other than those listed below none were declared.

Councillor Aspden (NUT)	Member of the National Union of Teachers Employee of North Yorkshire County Council Governor at Danesgate Centre, Fulford Cross
Councillor Brooks	Employee of The Manchester College Member of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATC)
Councillor D'Agorne	LEA Governor at Fishergate Primary School Employee of York College, Guidance Service
Councillor Douglas	Member of York Opera
Councillor Looker	Governor of Park Grove Primary School Governor of Canon Lee Secondary School Company Secretary, York Theatre Royal Member of York Museum Trust
Councillor Hogg	Council's Lib Dem Representative on Visit York Member of York Museums Trust Employee of the National Railway Museum
Councillor Waudby	Governor at Lakeside Primary School

18. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting of the Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 October 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

20. PRESENTATION ON "LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN"

Members received a presentation on the national picture in regard to "Looked After Children" and an analysis of the City of York Council's current overspend.

Officers introduced Professor Henry Gillar who was in attendance to give an explanation on the continuing increase in the 'Looked After Children' (LAC) population, which was up from 120 in 2001 to currently 219 and had particularly risen in ages 0-5 and adolescent. Officers added that there was pressure on the budget as the rise had not been supported by an increase in the finances.

Professor Gillar informed Members of the changes within the care system and discussed the following areas:

- Early intervention
- Safeguarding Agenda
- Think Family Agenda

Officers stated that there were various reasons for the rise in LAC but in particular the Baby P aftermath had had a large affect on Ofsted, schools, families and it had also increased people's general awareness. Officers stated that the courts had also reacted by an increased issuing of Care Orders rather than Supervision Orders.

Officers stated that currently 164 children were cared for in York across 80-90 foster places and these places were continually managed and supported by the Children's Rights Officer who visit's each child and had also set up a forum for the older children. Members questioned the current list of foster parents and officers stated that York had a strong stable cohort but would benefit from having extra parents listed and there was an ongoing search to find suitable foster parents. Officers were reluctant to use carers from an independent foster care company as this could lead to the child having to leave York.

Officers informed Members that they also work closely with the YorOK Board and they discussed the initiatives the Board were currently working through and how working together they had offered early intervention care to over 200 families. Members discussed how early intervention was vital to some families and how important it was for them to have the support available and in answer to Members questions officers stated that they would always aim to reunite the child with their family or their extended families but this was not always practical and currently 4 children had been adopted and 9 were going through the process.

Members thanked officers for their presentation and the Chair agreed to discuss the remit for a possible scrutiny review and time frames, with the Scrutiny Officer.

RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny Officer and Chair will meet to agree a potential remit and timeframe for a possible scrutiny review.

REASON: To progress the work of the committee

21. PRESENTATION ON PLAYBUILDER DATA

Members received a presentation by the Head of Parks and Open Spaces on data gathered in support of the Government's Playbuilder initiative, in consideration of a suggested topic for review on Casual Play Opportunities.

Officers stated that City of York Council had been allocated over £1,100,000 from the Government Playbuilder Project for the development of 22 play areas across the city. Eleven sites must be refurbished or developed each year and the whole scheme completed by 31 March 2011. The grant will be used to develop public, open access and outdoor play spaces close to where children live that are safe, exciting, stimulating and accessible to all, and promote active, imaginative and adventurous play targeting predominately the 8-13 year age range.

Members were informed that each area would be developed in consultation with the local children and young people, families, communities and working groups such as the Local Development Framework (LDF). The grant does come with a stringent monitoring regime from the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) which is being undertaken, by the regional office of Play England.

Officers explained the definition and the importance of play and informed Members of some of the barriers to play such as:

- More cars on streets reducing play areas
- Lack of tolerance for children/young people to play
- Fears of safety.

Officers informed the Committee that they had been working with the LDF team regarding the Guildhall Ward but were finding it hard to locate available council land, and confirmed that the Playbuilder Project grant could not be used to develop small play areas directly in the City Centre as this did not fit within the guidelines set by Play England.

The Chair thanked officers for their presentation and the Committee agreed to take all of the information provided into consideration, when agreeing a remit for the review at their next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee use the information provided to inform their deliberations at their next meeting.

Reason: To progress the work of the committee

Cllr J Looker, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 7.55 pm].