

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism
Date	29 July 2015
Present	Councillor Ayre (Executive Member)
In Attendance	Councillors S Barnes, Boyce, Crisp & D'Agorne

1. **Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting, the Executive Member was asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests that he might have had in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

2. **Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 10 March 2015 be signed and approved by the Executive Member as a correct record.

3. **Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been seven registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Helen Graham made reference to an alternative recommendation to the report which had been presented at the Learning and Culture Policy and Scrutiny Committee to defer the decision. She felt that this could be a positive opportunity to give the chance for a public process to take place to be able to judge the current state of the Museums Trust.

Stuart Maule felt that the figures in the report were conflicting and commented that no business plan had been produced. He also informed the Executive Member that YMT had told him that an access ticket would cost £4, which was a different cost to that in the report. He felt that residents were being priced out of access to the art gallery by the cost of the tickets, particularly those on low incomes.

Don Phillips commented that the art gallery should not be seen as a one off attraction but should be seen as an ongoing relationship. He felt that the figures used in the report were wrong and that better customer research was needed.

Councillor Boyce stated that although she commended much of the work that York Museums Trust had carried out in the reinvigoration of York's attractions, the proposals for charges would harm the special 'drop in' relationship that York residents had with the gallery. She felt that York residents would not receive any benefits from the proposals as the £7.50 admission charge would be the same for York residents and non residents. She asked YMT to re-examine the proposals and if free access was not feasible offer half price entry.

Charlotte Dawson, who had organised an online petition, against the proposals, felt that the charges would exclude those on lower incomes. She felt that if the charges were introduced the community would not engage with art.

Brian Watson gave some background to the establishment of YMT as a charity and the funding of it from the Council, through annual grants. As a charity they could access other sources of funding, and he wanted to clarify that improvements that had been made to the art gallery had not been out of their own money but had been from grants. Therefore he felt the cuts referred to were not theirs and were misleading.

Jay Sillence felt that the proposals alienated the community and included speculative figures. He felt that the cost of a year's membership at £22 was off putting. He also questioned how other cities' art galleries were free but York's could not be. He urged the Executive Member to defer making the decision and suggest that the figures be re-examined.

4. York Museums Trust Funding

The Executive Member considered a report which asked him to note York Museum Trust's charging plans designed to ensure their long term sustainability and to agree to give permission to the trust, under the terms of their leases for the Art Gallery and Castle Museum, to introduce new arrangements for charging York residents.

The Executive Member made a number of responses to the public speakers.

In reference to two points raised under Public Participation, he clarified that the Art Gallery was not 'free', it was paid for through Council Tax payer money (£8.50 a year per person to maintain the grant). He also agreed that a conversation needed to happen on how to fund the city's arts and heritage. He also commented that there might be the opportunity to charge tourists and this that might allow for a possible upturn in income and no need to charge residents.

Resolved: That the Executive Member, in consultation with members of the Learning & Culture Policy and Scrutiny Committee, continue talks with the York Museums Trust. These should include the financial implications of free access for York Card holders or agreeing further concessions ahead of a financial decision being taken by Executive in September.

Reason: To give further time for consideration of the proposals.

Councillor Ayre, Executive Member
[The meeting started at 6.50 pm and finished at 7.20 pm].

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