

Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 24th July, 2013.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell (Chair); Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Gillian Corr, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Andrew Sherris and Cllr Mick Womphrey.

Officers: J Trainer, M Jones, P K Bell (LD); S Bowman (PH); K Fulton (R).

Also in attendance: S Crossley (Child Poverty Commission).

Apologies: Cllr Ray McCall.

1 **Committee Briefing**

Members prepared their approach to the meeting.

2 **Evacuation Procedure**

The evacuation procedure was noted.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no interests declared.

4 **Minutes from the meeting which was held on the 1st May 2013.**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st May 2013 were signed by the Chair as correct record.

5 **Draft Minutes from the meeting which was held on the 5th June 2013**

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 5th June 2013.

AGREED that the minutes be approved.

6 **Scrutiny Review of Child Poverty**

Sarah Bowman (Consultant in Public Health) was in attendance at the meeting and gave Members an introductory presentation on Child Poverty. The presentation covered the following key areas:-

- * Levels of Child Poverty in the North East
- * Marmot Review findings regarding the effects of inequality on School Readiness and obesity
- * Stockton Child Health Profile 2013, showing Stockton had higher levels of child poverty, childhood obesity, and hospital admissions than the national average
- * Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Delivery Plan
- * Early Intervention Strategy
- * Big Lottery Fund bid for an initiative, Fulfilling Lives: A Better Start, to improve cognitive development, speech and language, and nutrition over 8-10 years

- * Children and Young People Health and Wellbeing Group
- * Work being carried out to address inequalities across the Tees Valley

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments on the presentation as follows:-

- *It was questioned whether there had been any outcomes from the Early Intervention Strategy. It was noted that feedback showed this was an effective package of support, however work needed to be done to ensure a cohesive package of support was in place. Services needed to be better co-ordinated and Stockton needed to look at where families needed support most.
- *The number of differing partners working with families was raised, and members asked how it was ensured that professionals identified those suffering or at risk of poverty. It was advised that staff training was needed, as well as holistic assessment when working with families.
- * Tracking of the progress of children and families that had received help or intervention was discussed. Officers noted the package of support given to families needed to be flexible, giving more or less support depending upon need at different times. Once the support was no longer needed there was no procedure for tracking children any further. It was noted that this could be something that the voluntary & community sector could lead on, and a study of a group by Durham University was included as part of the Big Lottery Fund bid, and included in a cohort.

The Business Support and Improvement Manager reported that the Family Poverty Framework signposted to other relevant strategies and work that was on-going and further information on this subject would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Members then received a presentation from Stephen Crossley (Child Poverty Commission) on Child Poverty. The presentation covered the following key areas:-

- * Poverty and the Effect it had on Public Health
- * The Causes of Poverty
- * The Consequences of Child Poverty
- * Summary of North East Local Authorities Priorities and Approaches
- * Maximising Household Income
- * Giving Children the Best Start in Life-Healthier Wealthier Children Project in Glasgow

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments on the presentation as follows:-

- * The low benefit take up rate was discussed and it was noted that not only does the complexity of claiming benefits act as a barrier, but also that there was a stigma attached to claiming that may prevent people taking benefits they were entitled to;
- * There were several myths about the causes of poverty but the evidence has been consistent over the years - that the main cause was low income rather than behavioural causes;
- * The minimum wage and living wage was discussed. Stephen Crossley reported that while the Government hadn't implemented a national living wage

for its employees, it may be possible for Councils to achieve it within their budgets;

* It was suggested that school dinners and breakfast clubs should be free for everyone, but budget constraints did not allow for this. The pupil premium might make schools more pro-active in ensuring pupils receive free school meals (fsm). Poverty proofing the school day was discussed and it was noted how this could be difficult to implement as many schools were now academies, outside of Local Authority control;

* The Committee asked if there were any examples of best practice to be acquired from any other Councils? The Early Intervention in Neighbourhoods approach at Sunderland Council and an 'opt-out' of fsm, the Healthier Wealthier Children Project in Glasgow, Newcastle's Childrens Rights scheme, and Thrive in Thornaby, were all examples of good practice to be drawn upon.

AGREED that the presentations be received.

7 Work Programme

Consideration was given to the Scope and Project Plan for the Review of Child Poverty.

Agreed that the Scope and Project Plan for the Review of Child Poverty be approved.

8 Chair's Update

There was no Chairs update.