

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel was held on 16 July 2018.

PRESENT: Councillors A Hellaoui, J McGee, J A Walker, M Walters, J Young, D J Branson(As Substitute) and J Goodchild(As Substitute)

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillor J Sharrocks

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Heather Black - Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland

OFFICERS: J McNally, A Williams

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Councillor T Higgins, Councillor L McGloin, Councillor V Walkington, Councillor J Blyth.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest at this point of the meeting

1 MINUTES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL - 25 JUNE 2018

The minutes of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 25 June 2018 were taken as read and approved subject to the following amendments:

- Appointment of Vice Chair - 5th sentence, 3rd word replace 'Walters' with 'Higgins'
- Setting the Scrutiny Work Programme 2018/2019 - Paragraph 9, 4th sentence , 5th word replace 'Kath' with 'Cath'

2 OVERVIEW OF FEAST OF FUN PROJECT - HEATHER BLACK

The Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel Members watched a short video to introduce them to the Feast of Fun Project.

Heather Black, Development Officer at Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland and also Chair of Middlesbrough Foodbank was in attendance to provide the Scrutiny Panel with an overview of the Feast of Fun project.

The Scrutiny Panel were advised that there was typically a rise in families using the foodbank in the 6 week school holidays due to the additional pressure of feeding children who would normally be entitled to a free school meal.

The Scrutiny Panel heard that the Feast of Fun was a partnership of local churches, community groups and schools working together to provide holiday activities, with a healthy meal. It was a grass-roots response to offer support for local families who struggled during the summer holidays. Members were advised that for many families the summer holidays were a challenge with the children at home 24/7 and no free school meals. The weekly budget had to stretch further for food and there was little left for activities and treats. Parents and carers felt overwhelmed and isolated with six weeks to care and provide for their families, affecting the health and well-being of the whole family.

Members heard that the Feast of Fun project started in 2014, with 6 churches, the Feast of Fun project had grown each year, with 25 communities across Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland involved for summer 2018. Each community offered a safe space for children and families to have fun, with a range of activities to support their learning and development, including arts & crafts, sports, games, cooking, music and drama. A nutritious meal was

provided, with most venues providing a meal for the whole family to eat together. Families who were seeking asylum were offered a warm welcome, and Feast of Fun had been a safe space for them to build relationships and begin to integrate into the local community.

Members were advised that the Feast of Fun operated in communities, where levels of free school meals were high. In each area the groups had strong working relationships with local schools, where they worked with Parent Support staff to ensure the most vulnerable families were encouraged to attend Feast of Fun. It is anticipated that support would be provided to approximately 800 children and families in Middlesbrough in 2018.

Members were provided with a Feast of Fun timetable detailing the venues, times and dates for the summer holidays.

The Feast of Fun operated with a team of over 250 volunteers. Each community had a core team of volunteers from local churches, community groups and parents/grandparents who wanted to make a difference to the lives of children in their community. In addition, volunteers are recruited from a range of organisations e.g. Teesside University and Ageing Better Middlesbrough.

The Development Officer stated that funding for Feast of Fun was provided from a variety of sources, a small grant from Middlesbrough local authority, the Ballinger Trust, sponsorship through Meals and More, local fundraising by individuals and local churches in more affluent North Yorkshire. Each Feast of Fun project was provided with a small grant to cover the costs of their activities, and they were asked to secure match funding or in-kind support from their local community e.g. donations from local shops.

The Development Officer spoke of the challenges facing Feast of Fun, she acknowledged that Feast of Fun had grown significantly in capacity over the past 5 years, but was aware that the number of families needing support was much greater than those currently being worked with. For more support to be provided it was advised that a number of factors would need to be considered:

- Funding - currently funding was small amounts of short term funding
- Staffing - Feast of Fun was currently developed and managed by Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland with a part-time member of staff, dedicated staffing was required to develop the programme further
- Stronger partnerships with schools, need to explore the possibility of opening up school kitchens to provide meals, with local community groups providing the fun and enrichment activities.

Members were advised that the Feast of Fun had contributed to the APPG Report 'Hungry Holidays'. The bill going through parliament lead by Frank Field MP was seeking government backing for a percentage of the sugar tax to be allocated to local authorities to fund Holiday Provision. The bill proposed a partnership model between the VCS and faith sectors, schools and local businesses, £2 million was allocated for a pilot research phase for summer 2018 and £15 million would be allocated for 2019. It was envisaged that a multi-agency partnership be formed to enable Middlesbrough to bid for some of the £15 million, with the backing of the local authority. Members heard that the bill talks of giving a duty to local authorities to provide provision in school holidays. A copy of the Bill was circulated to Members for information. It was also advised that Northumbria University had carried out a piece of research into school holiday provision it was agreed that the link to the report would be circulated to Panel Members.

The Development Officer informed Members that there were successful holiday schemes operating in Wales, which received funding from the Welsh Assembly to enable them to operate. Members felt that it would be beneficial to receive further information on the schemes running in Wales. Members also heard that Hartlepool Borough Council had committed £80,000 to fund holiday schemes. A press release from the Hartlepool Mail was circulated to Members along with an article from the Evening Gazette.

The Chair of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel advised Members that

following the first meeting of the Scrutiny Panel, BBC Radio Tees had requested a radio interview with Councillor Hellaoui, Councillor Higgins and Heather Black to discuss the issue of school holiday provision. The radio interview was then played to Members of the Panel.

Discussions ensued following the information that was presented to the Panel and the following actions were recommended:-

- Northumbria University report to be circulate to Members
- Welsh Model to be researched
- Councillors to visit local Feast of Fun projects to raise the profile of the project
- Identify gaps in provision for secondary school children
- Map what food and activities are taking place across the town
- Map what facilities are available across the town to deliver holiday provision from
- Councillors to encourage Community Councils to provide funding to school holiday provision projects
- Speak to Councillor Lewis Young and Mick Thompson to broach conversations with Everyone Active providing enrichment activities for school holiday provision
- Speak to Procurement regarding Everyone Active contract to see if holiday provision can be included
- Approach Teesside University to carry out a robust evaluation of the Feast of Fun project
- Speak to Councillor Christopher Akers -Belcher from Hartlepool Borough Council regarding its Filling the Holiday Gap grants scheme
- Gather the views of children/young people and their families/carers to gain their views on what holiday provision they would like to see provided
- Councillors to influence housing providers to provide funding to local projects

3 SCRUTINY REVIEW INVESTIGATION OUTLINE

The Scrutiny Committee discussed the Scrutiny Panel Investigation Outcomes and agreed the Terms of Reference for the Group.

The Terms of Reference were **agreed** as follows:-

1. To identify the current provision available to children in Middlesbrough during the school holidays
2. To identify best practise of holiday provision across the country
3. To encourage partner organisations to work together to help to tackle holiday hunger
4. To gather the views of children/young people and their parents/carers on what holiday provision they need