

**CHILDREN'S AND CULTURE SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

MEETING, 5TH OCTOBER, 2016

Present – Councillors Dean (Chairman), Cox (as deputy for Councillor Kirk-Robinson), Darvesh, Gibbon, Harkin, Haworth, Hornby, Iqbal, Murray, Shaikh, Spencer, Mrs Swarbrick and Wilkinson.

Co-opted Members

Mr J. Clare – Representative of Secondary Parent Governors
Mrs A. Martin – Representative of Primary Parent Governors

Also in Attendance

Councillor Mrs Thomas	-	Executive Cabinet Member Deputy Leader
Councillor Cunliffe	-	Cabinet Member for Education, Schools, Safeguarding and Looked After Children
Councillor J. Byrne	-	Cabinet Member for Culture, Youth and Sport
Mr. J. Daly	-	Director of People
Ms J. Spencer	-	Head of Bolton Library and Museum Service
Mr T. Birch	-	Assistant Director, Education and Learning
Ms S. Cornwell	-	Head of SEN and Principal Educational Psychologist
Mr D. Goddard	-	University Technical College
Mr R. Gauld	-	The Octagon Theatre – Chief Executive
Ms E. Newman	-	The Octagon Theatre – Creative Director

Mrs S. Bailey - Principal Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Gillies, Kirk-Robinson (Vice-Chairman) and C. Wild

Councillor Dean in the Chair.

10. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Children's and Culture Scrutiny Committee held on 17th August, 2016 were submitted.

Resolved – That the minutes be received and signed as a correct record.

11. THE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Borough Solicitor submitted a report which put forward the proposed Work Programme for the Committee for the current Municipal Year, which had been formulated following the workshop session at the meeting in June.

Resolved – That the 2016/17 work programme, as now submitted, be approved.

12. THE OCTAGON – CURRENT ACTIVITIES AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Mr R. Gauld and Ms E. Newman gave a presentation on the current activities and developments at the Octagon Theatre together with plans for its future development.

By way of introduction, members were reminded of the history of the Theatre and that its development over the years and that it would be celebrating its 50th anniversary next year.

At present, the Theatre put on approximately 9 productions per year, many of which were regional and national collaborations and had received accolades and awards.

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In addition to productions, the Theatre aimed to reach out and engage with the local community to work with people of all ages and backgrounds by the use of:

- inclusive youth theatre;
- exclusive youth theatre provision – The Bridge;
- The Academy;
- Headspace;
- Act Out;
- ArtBeat and On the Go;
- schools and sixth form colleges; and
- University of Bolton.

During 2015/16, the Theatre had reached an audience of 74,000 people plus 6,000 participants. 40% of audiences lived in Bolton and approximately 60% lived in Greater Manchester with 97% of audiences rating their experiences as good or higher. Average ticket prices were £14.27 and affordable and free tickets were available.

With regard to funding, members were advised that Bolton Council had awarded a grant of £146k together with a sum of £614 from the Arts Council England and £108k from AGMA. Total turnover had increased by 18% since 2012/13 and the box office was £1m and rising.

The presentation went on to focus on the economic and social impact of the Theatre and various activities that interacted with the local community. The Theatre also worked in partnership with various organisations including Bolton Vision, Strategic Partners, schools and the Council.

With regard to future plans, members were informed of the £10m development of the Theatre which was due to start in 2018 and was being funded by the Council and Arts Council England. The main improvements would include:

- improved accessibility, environmental impact and digital capabilities;
- wider programming in a new studio;
- new learning, rehearsal and backstage facilities;

- improved customer experience; and
- new revenue opportunities.

Construction would commence in 2018 with a view to the Theatre re-opening in 2019, although it would continue to run productions during this time. The improvements would be part of the wider developments of the Cultural Quarter in Bolton.

Following the presentation, members made the following observations/comments:

- the Theatre had a long and established reputation within Bolton and surrounding areas and was seen as the jewel in the crown of Bolton's theatre entertainment;
- the need to examine further revenue opportunities going forward due to reducing public funding – the recent appointment of a Commercial Director would help to address this; and
- the re-opening of the Albert Halls next year would complement the work of the Octagon.

Resolved – That Mr Gauld and Ms Newman be thanked for their informative presentation.

13. SEND – UPDATE

Mr T. Birch gave a presentation on a recent review of the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) inspection arrangements in Bolton.

By way of background information, members were advised that in October, 2015, Ofsted and the Quality Care Commission had launched a consultation regarding the inspection arrangements for judging how effectively local areas fulfilled their responsibilities to children who had special educational needs and or disabilities.

Bolton had been the first in the country to be inspected and the visit took place between 23rd and 27th May, 2016.

The presentation outlined the purpose of the inspection and how it was conducted. The main aims were to:

- provide an external evaluation of how well a local area carried out its duties in relation to children and young people with SEND;
- how local areas supported children and young people with SEND to achieve the best possible educational or other outcomes; and
- to determine how well service providers worked together to deliver positive outcomes.

The presentation then outlined the main findings from the inspection and other strengths that had been noted. In summary, they were as follows:

- the views of parents were taken into account at all stages (identification, SEN Support and in the development of EHCPs);
- parents felt that their views were listened to and their children's needs were identified well;
- single pathway to education, health and care needs, and onward referral to agencies was streamlined and effective;
- agreements to pool budgets was a positive step towards improving joint commissioning arrangements;
- the vast majority of specialist provision in mainstream and special schools was of high quality;
- joint commissioning arrangements were not fully established - the pace and timescales for this needed to be brought forward; and
- a wide gap existed in the academic progress of children and young people at both primary and secondary level compared to those who did not have SEND.

Additional areas of strength and other areas for development were also noted.

A copy of the Inspection Report was attached to the report.

Following the presentation discussion focused upon:

- good practice shared with other local authorities;
- no other authority within the Greater Manchester area had been inspected as yet;
- how best to achieve progression into adulthood;
- the implications were considered including the extent to which targets appeared realistic and achievable; and,
- the performance of Bolton's SEND children against children who were non-SEND

Resolved – That Mr Birch and Ms Cornwell be thanked for their informative presentation.

14. UPDATE ON UNIVERSITY TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Mr Goddard gave a presentation on the work and progress of the Bolton University Technical College and outlined proposals for future developments.

Members were advised that the University Technical College was a new type of school that provided technical and academic education for 14-19 year olds. Specialist education was provided for Health Sciences and Engineering Technologies and it was the first of its kind in the Greater Manchester Region.

The main purpose of the College was to fill a skills sector gap and to ensure future skills for a growing industrial, commercial and public sector markets. In addition to achieving GCSE's and A-Levels, students would experience employer collaboration and industry inspired facilities.

The Committee was informed that a further £25m investment had been approved with a new £10m facility for Science and Engineering to be completed next year along with the formation of a new Health Sciences Faculty to teach biomedical sciences and subjects allied to health and dentistry which would also open in 2016.

Following the presentation, members made the following comments/observations:

- how the University included social development and a sense of community within the curriculum - Mr Goddard explained that the University provided enrichment which included many social activities such as beehive keeping, flamenco dancing, outings to drama performances and options to learn other languages;
- it was noted that maths and English were compulsory up to GCSE age; and
- Mr Goddard explained how relationships with the University enriched students' experience and how partners provided expertise which added directly to the curriculum.

Resolved – That Mr Goddard be thanked for his informative presentation.

15. MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The Committee received the extracts of minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:-

- the Executive Cabinet Deputy Leader's Portfolio held on 15th August and 12th September, 2016;

Resolved – That the minutes of the various meetings be noted.

(The meeting started at 5.00pm and finished at 6.45pm)

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NOTES