

Executive

15 December 2020

Report of the Chief Operating Officer
Portfolio of the Leader of the Council

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy – December Update

Summary

1. This report provides an update on activities both directly in response to Covid-19 and the work to support recovery and renewal. This follows previous Executive decisions to approve the Recovery and Renewal Plan, which frames the Council's recovery activity for this year.
2. In this month's report, the changed arrangements and implications in respect of the end of the second lockdown and the return to Tier 2 restrictions are discussed.

Recommendations

3. Executive is asked to:
 - a. Note the contents of the report

Background

4. On 25th June, Executive received a report to outline the council's 1-year Recovery and Renewal Strategy. This highlighted the need for a revised set of strategies to address the very significant and immediate impacts of coronavirus across all aspects of life in our city.
5. The strategy set the following principles upon which we will build our response:
 - a. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of our residents, against the immediate threat of coronavirus and the consequences of changes to the way we live. Public Health guidance will be paramount in all the decisions we make.

- b. Support the economic recovery of the City, helping to create a strong, sustainable and inclusive economy for the future. Learning lessons from the challenges of coronavirus, promote a system that utilises the strengths of our city and region to the benefit of all York’s residents and businesses.
- c. Protect and prioritise the City’s environment and reinforce our work to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- d. Pursue improvements in service delivery where they have been identified as part of the Response phase, creating a more efficient and resilient system.
- e. Reinforce and restore public confidence in the resilience of public agencies and resilience to future challenges and emergencies.

6. Included in June’s report was a One Year Transport and Place Strategy, as the first part of the economic recovery approach. A report in July supplemented this with a Business Support Plan, a Skills and Employment Plan and a Tourism Marketing Plan.

CYC Recovery and Renewal Plan (1 year)				
Economic Recovery Plan			Communities	Corporate
Business Support Plan	One Year Transport and Place Plan	Skills and Employment Plan	Recovery from coronavirus: A community-based approach	Organisational Development Plan
Tourism Marketing Plan				

Latest Outbreak Update

- 7. Given the rapidly changing context in respect of the second period of lockdown, an update on the latest situation will be given verbally to the Executive at the meeting.
- 8. Over the course of the lockdown period, York’s infection rate has continued to fall and is currently significantly below the rates of surrounding areas and the national average. The latest validated 7 day rate at 27.11.20 was 82.6 new Covid cases per 100,000 of population. The national and regional averages at this date were 157.6 and 196.3 respectively.
- 9. On 2 December, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care praised York for its local test and trace arrangements, highlighting the work with the national system. He said York’s approach would be promoted as an example of the national and local systems working together. To date,

York's local contact tracing team has managed to contact at least 80% of those that the national programme has been unable to contact.

10. On 23 November, the Prime Minister announced the Covid-19 Winter Plan, which outlines arrangement for a revised tier approach, the positioning of vaccinations and support for care homes. A summary of this plan can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-winter-plan/covid-19-winter-plan-summary>
11. On 26 November, The Health Secretary announced the arrangements which would follow the end of the second lockdown period on 2 December. This confirmed that York would return to Tier 2. From Wednesday 2 December, Tier 2 allows the following:
 - a. Meet people you do not live with outdoors, in groups of up to six and socially distanced
 - b. Visit York's great shops and Covid-safe hospitality businesses, with their household or support bubble
 - c. Continue to use early years and childcare settings, including childminders, after-school clubs and nannies
 - d. Visit the hairdressers, leisure centres and gyms and other entertainment and personal care services
 - e. Get married - with up to 15 guests
 - f. Attend their places of worship
12. A full list of restrictions can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know#high-alert>
13. The council is continuing to lobby the Government to be moved into Tier 1, reflecting the positive direction of infection rates as a result to the hard work and compliance of York's residents, communities and businesses.
14. The council is also continuing with its corporate lobbying efforts to secure additional funding for local businesses and residents facing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic and the national guidance.

Recovery Updates

Economic

15. Following the confirmation of the latest restrictions, the council reiterated its support for businesses across the city. Businesses are urged to visit <https://www.york.gov.uk/COVID19BusinessGrants> to see the latest information on available grants.

16. On 23 November, the council approved a new grant scheme using the discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant. Having worked with partners and business leaders to decide how to most fairly and effectively use the grant, the application process ran from 23 November to 7 December and covered:
 - a. Businesses effectively forced to close through lockdown but don't qualify for government grants, whether they are liable for business rates or not.
 - b. Businesses where trade is impacted by more than 75% due to lockdown, whether they are liable for business rates or not.
17. Since York's position in tier 2 makes some of the usual Christmas activities in the city impossible, the council has worked with Make It York, York BID and retail, hospitality and tourism businesses, to support a welcoming and safe Christmas experience to enjoy in the city for residents and people who can visit safely.
18. From 2 December, many of York's businesses are back open. Shambles Market also reopening – with a wide variety of independent traders offering local produce, festive gifts and delicious street food. The focus for the city's Christmas marketing this year is to support York's diverse and vibrant local business community by creating a welcoming festive ambience in the city centre. Activity aims to encourage a sense of community, promote shopping local, and support York's local traders – recognising the individual and unique offers of York's businesses who have worked so hard to continue keeping the city safe.
19. Until 10th January (excluding bank holidays), there will be a variety of local street food vendors spread out on Parliament Street serving seasonal food and drinks. A vintage carousel will be operating throughout the festive period. Festive roaming street performers are also in the city centre on the weekends of 12-13 and 19-20 December, moving around key areas of the city to create a fun, visually engaging experience for visitors into the city centre.
20. Whilst this has been a uniquely challenging year for York's economy, there should be some optimism that York has performed well in comparison to many other cities across the country. Centre for Cities rate York's city centre economy as Moderately Strong, performing better than the average for both footfall and spend. Crucially, they also note York's unemployment (measured by Claimant Count) as the lowest of any city they study.

21. There is no reason to be complacent, but through York's inherent strengths and the hard work of businesses and other organisations, York is in a position where it has the potential to recover more quickly and strongly than many other places. The continued efforts over the coming months to support York's economic activity in a safe way will be key to supporting this recovery. We recognise that for those who have been impacted directly, the challenges are significant. We also recognise that this is the beginning of the phases of economic impact and it will take a number of years (based on national economic forecasts) for the economy to return to pre-Covid strength.

Communities

22. The council is continuing to ensure that additional free school meals are supported during the school holidays and help with food and utility bills, for households struggling in the pandemic, is available. The Covid Winter Grant Fund was announced by the Government on 8 November 2020 and plans have been developed to use it to support residents and their families. York has received £416,729.

23. Around £200,000 of the fund will go towards providing free school meals over the Christmas, February half term and the Easter holidays. The funding will also provide extra support to families - with or without children until 31 March 2021. It can help with:

- a. Food and other household essentials, such as toiletries
- b. Energy bills – electricity, gas, oil
- c. Water bills (including sewerage)

24. There is also some limited additional funding for:

- a. Mobile phone and internet connection/data bills
- b. Other exceptional emergency costs.

25. The proposed scheme is open to applications from all York residents who are over 16 years of age and who need urgent financial assistance as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. They must be financially impacted by the pandemic and have savings of less than £2,000. The rules of the funding mean that 80% is allocated to families with children and 20% to those without children who may be vulnerable for a variety of reasons and suffering from severe hardship.

26. Recognising the impact that the pandemic has had on mental health, the council has worked with partners to launch a new campaign asking us all to talk more about how we are really feeling during the pandemic, and to share and use resources to support our wellbeing.
27. Recent data from Our Big Conversation consultation, which asked residents to share their thoughts about the pandemic, identified that nearly 50% of residents felt less emotionally healthy as a result of covid-19 with 57% less optimistic about the future.
28. To address this, partners across the city are encouraging more openness to help make talking honestly and openly about our mental health or difficult emotions more usual. The campaign, called #FeelRealYork, aims to signpost available support whether for ourselves or others to help benefit or maintain our mental fitness.
29. The campaign partners include mental health service providers Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), the Vale of York CCG, Time To Change York, LiveWellYork, higher education providers, North Yorkshire Police and York and North Yorkshire LEP.

Corporate

30. City of York Council is urging residents to get involved and share their views in the latest instalment of York's Our Big Conversation. Over the coming months, residents will be invited to share their views on a variety of challenges identified in the first part of the consultation. People can take the survey at www.york.gov.uk/OurBigConversation or fill in a survey within the next edition of Our City.
31. The first part of the consultation has already helped inform the council's approach to communications during the pandemic, for example:
 - a. Although 96% of people surveyed were confident they were sticking to public health rules, 68% lacked the confidence that other people would observe them correctly. This led to a new campaign called "We've got it covered", which showed people across York how to take steps to keep each other safe in different settings, including retail and transport.
 - b. Council guidance (84%) is more understood than government guidance (80%), with the council continuing its multi-channel approach, including Press Releases, Facebook live sessions and opt-in e-newsletters for residents, businesses and families.

- c. Of more concern, nearly 50% of the city feels less emotionally healthy with 57% less optimistic for the future. As a result, the council has worked with partners to develop a campaign that aims to support people with their emotional wellbeing during these difficult times - #FeelRealYork (noted above) launched this month and will continue throughout the year.
- d. Feedback helped to ensure the council was prioritising the right support during lockdown, with 80.5% supporting the creation of a £1m financial support scheme for residents, and 87.5% supporting the creation of a £3m grant fund for small, local and self-employed businesses which didn't receive Government support.

32. The Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered his one-year Spending Review to Parliament on 25 November 2020, in which there were new announcements related to Local Government finances. Whilst an increase in spending power of 4.5% was announced for Local Government, on analysis of the detail, it can be seen that this spending power comes predominantly from council tax increases and the social care precept.

33. The Council has also been formally recognised for its communication support to local residents, businesses and communities with a Bronze Award at the Public Sector Communication Excellence Awards. This year, in responding to the coronavirus pandemic, the award recognises that the Council's communications response to the pandemic has been in supporting York's communities, businesses and residents in reducing the spread of the infection and supporting a safe economy.

Council Plan

34. The Recovery and Renewal Strategy outlines activities for the next year to allow the continued achievement of Council Plan outcomes.

Implications

- **Financial** – No specific impacts identified in this report.
- **Human Resources** – No specific impacts identified.
- **One Planet Council / Equalities** – A principle of recovery is to ensure climate change is considered in decisions taken. The economic recovery plans recognise and respond to the unequal impact of coronavirus and the risk of increasing levels of inequality as a result.
- **Legal** – No specific impacts identified.
- **Crime and Disorder** – No specific impacts identified.

- **Information Technology** – No specific impacts identified.

Risk Management

35. There remain significant areas of risk in responding to this crisis across all areas of recovery. The highest priority continues to be the health and wellbeing of residents and all planning and decisions will be taken with this in mind.

Contact Details

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Chief Operating Officer

Report Date 07/12/20
Approved

Wards Affected: List wards or tick box to indicate all

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Reports

Update on Coronavirus Response – 7 May 2020

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s139955/Coronavirus%20Executive%20Report.pdf>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy - June

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=59688&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI55501>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy Update – July

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=59899>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy update - August

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=60167&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI55914>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy update – September

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s142400/Recovery%20and%20Renewal%20Update%20Report.pdf>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy update – October

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=60724&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI56530>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy - November Update

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s144127/Recovery%20and%20Renewal%20Update%20-%20November%202020%20v0.3.pdf>