

## Leader's Report to Full Council 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009

### Local Economy

Clearly support for the local economy and job prospects is the key priority for the council in these days of rising unemployment across the nation. Whilst jobless levels in the city are lower than at regional or national level, strenuous efforts are being made by the council to support local businesses to retain jobs, and to help people set up new businesses.

The council was involved with two events at the Racecourse organised in partnership with Yorkshire Forward, working with York businesses and residents to respond to the recession. On 10<sup>th</sup> March there was the second of the "Doing Business with the Council" sessions to assist local businesses to understand how they get onto the council's supplier list, and find out about the tendering processes. The event on the 11<sup>th</sup> was focussed at individuals in terms of benefits advice, accessing training and skills, and support for people to set up their own businesses.



York Racecourse 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> March

On the same day the specific report for York from the Centre for Cities was launched. This will give a timely update to parts of the Future York report given the national downturn in the economy, and suggestions on the future direction for the York economy. The full report is available from the web at <http://www.centreforcities.org/york>

The report recommends that:

- York - its Council, the University of York, Science City York and Yorkshire Forward should use the recent expansion of the University of York to attract further investment into York and foster existing and attract new businesses.
- York needs to make sure that progress on the York Northwest site in the city centre stays on track. This means establishing a clear consensus on the need for sustainable economic growth and development in the city, prioritising staff resources and capacity towards the site and investigating new infrastructure funding models to finance the project



I am pleased to report to council that in the case of the latter point the Leeds City Region has supported the progression of York North West (see photo above) as a joint ‘trailblazer’ in the area for the Urban Eco Settlement funds which replaced the eco-town allocation for Leeds City Region. The bid is for £19.5 million which will sent to central government for approval. This should provide the resources necessary for infrastructure to access the site, and for the additional costs associated with increasing the environmental standards of the housing built on that development. More details are available from <http://www.leedscityregion.gov.uk/research.aspx>

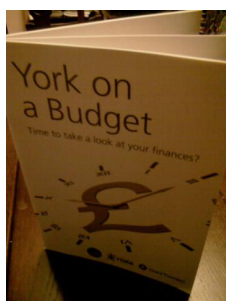
## One City



The council is drawing together help for individuals and businesses in one place on the council website, and I would encourage all members to utilise this to help connect their residents with the assistance that is available.

## Kingsway West Project

As part of the council's commitment to tackling social exclusion, the Kingsway West Project has been piloting intensive outreach work in the part of the Westfield Ward which had been identified as being in the highest deprivation in the city. There has been successful partnership working. There have been 170 contacts by Future Prospects since January resulting in , amongst other outcomes, 25 people accessing skills training, and 5 gaining employment. The area has also received copies of the booklet "York on a Budget" which was launched recently, and on a visit to Acomb Library at an exhibition of the work of the project, the Archbishop of York was also given a copy.



## Network Rail

I have met with Richard Lungmuss, the recently appointed Route Director for Network Rail, and Simon Leyshon, Route Enhancement Manager to discuss the potential job losses at Network Rail in York. Richard has been in post for 6 weeks and is in the process of moving down from Edinburgh. The suggestion from the Unions that the numbers could be as high as 220 were agreed as roughly correct, but the team that would be moving is the NDS (National Delivery Service) which has not been located in York for that many years. No other functions would be moving from York. There are around 2000 jobs in York (33,000 nationally with 3,500 planned to be at the Milton Keynes HQ). The comments that were made were that York would remain as a Railway City as far as they were concerned. Clearly the job losses come at a very bad time for those concerned and I made sure that Network Rail were aware of the services of Future Prospects in terms of helping those employees who did not want to move to Milton Keynes. There did appear to be significant hope that some people impacted by the job losses could be redeployed within Network Rail in York.

## Barbican

The Executive received a report on the Barbican on 3<sup>rd</sup> March as an update on the progress that had been made since the council took the Barbican Auditorium back from the conditional development agreement with Absolute Leisure in January. A specialist local partner LHL has been commissioned to undertake a full condition survey. This will assist with the short and long term uses of the building. Another

team of specialists working on the building's future plans are Drivers Jonas who have been commissioned to look at the future use of the building in the light of their experience of the entertainment and leisure industries.

The stone is being cut for the rotunda and the repairs should be completed over the next two weeks which should allow the scaffolding to be taken down.

Meetings have been held with a wide range of organisations in the city who have expressed an interest in being involved with future activities in the Auditorium. These extend from the Theatre Royal and Opera House, to "One Voice" and the organisers for the Community Carol Service.

Pete Dwyer, Director of Learning Culture and Children's Services, continues to take the lead on the officer team working on the project. There will be a further report to Executive on 28<sup>th</sup> April with further information on the proposed uses of the site which will cover the information and recommendations from the specialists being used currently.

## **Council Headquarters**

The Executive received an update report on the progress being made with the Headquarters project on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. The Executive agreed the criteria by which the bids would be evaluated for progressing to third stage of the process when the bidders will be invited to submit detailed proposals. At the same meeting the Executive approved a new initiative to set up an office of the future as a working model to pilot new workplace ideas in advance of the move to the new headquarters building.

In the week commencing 12<sup>th</sup> January 5 bidders were invited to participate in the competitive dialogue process and submit outline solutions by 16<sup>th</sup> February. Dialogue meetings were held with each of the developers (27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> January).

Following the evaluation process two bidders achieved more than a 50% score on the criteria, and were invited to continue in the process.

We await the results from the Hungate Scrutiny Committee with regards to the information on the operation of English Heritage in the process, and I hope that there will be much earlier indication from them with future plans of objections that they may have. The Hungate site owned by the council is a valuable employment site, and with the future pressure on public finances, following the debts being generated by the current government, there will be good reason for more Whitehall jobs to leave expensive central London offices, and Hungate will be there.

The two bidders for the stage 3 process were announced on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, being Norwich Union (Yorkshire House) and Tarras Park Properties Ltd (West Offices). The public consultation document will be prepared throughout April with illustrations and descriptions developed by the bidders so that the document can be delivered across the city from early May. We will produce a document explaining the reasons why we need to move to a new HQ, the benefits to residents, and financial savings.

The communications strategy will involve a three day exhibition, displays, and pages on the council website which will assist the public to appreciate the designs that are on offer. I am sure that there will be thorough examination of the two schemes.

The public consultation will feed into the detailed solutions plans from the two bidders which will be returned to the council in July this year.

The process is still on track for a completed headquarters by late 2012 as set in the timetable agreed in the Executive report on 21/10/08.

## **Private Sector Housing Strategy**

The Executive has approved the private sector housing strategy which will take the council up to 2013. It is a requirement that such a strategy is produced every 5 years.

The last survey done in 2003 contained 5 key objectives as follows:-

- Introduction of a new grants policy to include 3 categories of grants, disabled facilities grants, repair grants and landlord grants
- Preparation of an empty homes policy
- Setting up a Home Improvement Agency
- Assessment of the impact of the Housing Act 2004 and the introduction of mandatory licensing
- Establishment of a sub regional equity release scheme for owner occupiers who are not eligible for grant assistance

Successes are as follows:-

- A reduction in the overall proportion of unfit homes from 4.9% in 2002 to 2.1% - a reduction of 1793 dwellings. The 2008 national average was 3.9%.
- Less than 20% of private sector homes failing the Decent Homes standard compared with a national average of 37.5%.
- Less than 10% of homes containing hazards detrimental to health compared with a national average of 23.5%
- Almost 80% of vulnerable private sector households living in homes classed as Decent, well ahead of the government target of 70% by 2010.
- Very low rates of long term empty properties and overcrowding
- A significant increase in the overall energy efficiency of dwellings to levels well above the national average. (Energy efficiency is measured using the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) expressed on a scale of 1 – 100 – the higher the number the more energy efficient the home. Average SAP levels in the city have increased from 47 in 2002 to 65 in 2008 compared to a national average of 47).

The 2008 survey undertook a condition survey of private owner occupied and private rented housing. It has concluded that whilst overall conditions in the city are better



than the national average and have significantly improved since 2002, there are some underlying issues to be addressed eg Micklegate, Hull Road and Guildhall Wards have above average rates of poor condition.

The five aims for the next 5 years are as follows:-

- Encourage and support owner occupiers to maintain and repair their homes and introduce energy efficiency measures
- Encourage private landlords to provide good quality and well managed properties for their tenants
- Help people whose independence may be at risk to remain in or return to their homes
- Maximise use of existing housing stock to increase the supply of decent affordable homes
- Strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones to support the private housing sector

## **Carbon Management Programme**

The Executive considered the update to the Carbon Management programme on 3<sup>rd</sup> March . The carbon management programme is inextricably linked to the Council's energy savings initiatives. Additional investment will be made available for reducing energy consumption following the budget decisions taken for 2009/10.

Initiatives include



- street lighting modernisation,
- home energy insulation,
- a new one stop shop in Acomb which will be built to a sustainable design,
- new environmentally friendly school buildings

- initiatives aimed at encouraging the use of low emission methods of transportation.

A significant saving will come when the Council occupies its new HQ office building. As a result the Council is now better placed to control its energy consumption and costs over the next few years.

The officer paper explains the constraints that the Salix matched funding programme places on the Council. Essentially Salix are looking for short payback periods for any capital investment. The projects selected will do that. Some, however, are for schools and will not impact on the Council's revenue expenditure, while any revenue savings from the others will initially have to be used to repay the capital investment.

Outside the Salix and building based savings, it is important that other CO2 producing activities are addressed. Progress will be made with streetlight and bollard modernisation during the next 12 months but this will still leave Council housing and CYC transport use as major carbon generators. Therefore the proposals have been modified to require responsible Directors to provide visibility, in the next update, of the programmes that they intend to implement over the next 4 years aimed at tackling these important areas.

## **Access York Phase 1**

The Executive received a report on the Access York Phase 1 Park and Ride Development on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. Good progress is being made on designing the 3 new park and ride sites. Specification changes reflected the need to address local conditions such as the need to preserve wildlife corridors. In addition the specification now includes additional bus priority measures which will aid the long-term viability of the services to be provided from the sites.

Further consultation prior to the submission of a planning application will be required particularly at the Wigginton Road site but the opportunities there to provide a good service for those accessing the hospital together with the opportunity to link the route to the Clifton Moor development may, in reality, reduce the number of choices available.

The Executive noted that the Park and Ride fleet has now been upgraded, and the most recent usage figures show a 6% increase in passenger trips compared to the previous year.

## **Terry's Development – Proposed New Link Road**

Following the motion to the Full Council meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> September instructing officer to undertake a feasibility study to consider the potential implications of the

creation of a link road between Bishopthorpe Road and Sim Balk Lane the Executive received a report on 17<sup>th</sup> March.

The officer report detailed that the provision of a Bishopthorpe by pass on the route suggested by the motion would actually worsen traffic conditions on part of Bishopthorpe Road, whilst bring little relief to Tadcaster Road.

It would cost over £6 million which would make a very expensive scheme and beyond the resources of the Councils capital programme to fund. Critically it would impinge into the Green Belt setting an undesirable precedent. This could have a knock on effect across the whole City if we were to allow incremental fringe development solely as a way of funding transport infrastructure schemes.

The Executive requested that officers address local traffic issues by further developing options aimed at improving public transport, cycling, and pedestrian facilities in the vicinity of the former Terry's factory site.

### **CPA Result for 2007/08**

The Executive received on 17<sup>th</sup> March the report on the result of York's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and Direction of Travel (DoT) statement for 2007/08. It was unfortunate that even though there was an increased combined score across the services with improved scores in Housing (to 4 star) and Culture (from 2 to 3 star) maintenance of 4 star rating for Children's Services and 3 star rating for 'Use of Resources', Benefits, and Environment that the overall scoring of the council was reduced.

The statement did highlight the following;

- Strong managerial leadership and effective political leadership, which is enabling the council to work well with its partners; and
- Sustained focus on improving corporate capacity through the delivery of the Single Improvement Plan

The corporate assessment inspection took place in early 2008 and since then the council has developed a Single Improvement Plan to enhance organisational effectiveness, and address areas for improvement. The Executive received an update on the progress has been made on the Single Improvement plan.

Cllr Andrew Waller