

Report of the Executive Leader to Full Council Meeting 7th October 2010

Local Enterprise Partnerships

The development of bids for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) has kept many people busy this summer with a deadline of expressions of interest being 6th September. The driver for this has been the policy by the new coalition government to remove the Regional Development Agencies.

For York this has seen the enhancement of connections with the Leeds City Region, and due to our strong engagement with business in the city we were able to ensure that events like the launch of the Innovation Capital Programme at the Merchant Adventurers on 29th July promoted York's contribution to the LCR LEP bid. However, many businesses have supported a connection with the York and North Yorkshire LEP bid as they see the tourist, retail and food sectors as having considerable connection to North Yorkshire. We must also recognise the large travel to work populations for the city's economy from the parts of North Yorkshire outside of LCR and also from the East Riding.

Barbican Auditorium



The Executive received a report on 20th July 2010 relating to the progress on the Barbican auditorium which was updated in September. It has taken a great deal of time and effort to reach the point that we are now in to ensure that the building will again be open to the public next year.

By not being overly prescriptive in setting the criteria we were able to allow operators to develop plans for the building which now result in these proposals which will see the auditorium used for a wide range of activities, as well as operation as a conference venue.

I am pleased that this thorough procurement process has brought us to the point where we were able to agree a preferred bidder on 21st September. SMG (Europe) are an operator with considerable experience in the country and will be able to put the Barbican on the touring map for a wide range of acts.

Officers have done a great deal of hard work in the last few months and there has been extensive dialogue with a number of strong bidders, representing some of the largest names in the UK and international market.

Through this dialogue we were able to clearly state the ambitions of this Executive, not least among which were a major entertainments facility that did not rely on long term revenue subsidy and also brought significant investment to the city.

It is worth noting, that allowing for inflation the Barbican was costing the authority in the region of £730k per annum and had no provision set aside for the necessary major investment to the fabric of the building.

The proposal we see today combines all of those criteria the Executive set out. The indicative programme that SMG have demonstrated as part of their bid shows the extensive contacts they have within the live entertainment field. It is good to see they are also interested in bringing live sport back to the Barbican. In the past this proved popular with residents and players and hopefully SMGs link will see such events return to the city.

Also this bid will see community groups such as the Festival of Remembrance and the Carol Concert enjoy the same benefits as they had previously. The Executive has been unwavering in their support for these institutions in recent years and ensured this was integral to any dialogue with interested bidders. I believe SMG have gone even further with this and shown a real willingness to engage with community groups on numerous levels to encourage participation in the newly opened centre.

Headquarters Project

The Executive received an update in July on the progress that has been made with the council's Headquarters Project. The long term savings for the council tax payer are still featuring in the business development. Plans are now in place for the planned departure from buildings such as De Grey House which will allow the development of the Theatre Royal plans for that part of the Cultural Quarter.

It was unfortunate to see such a late intervention by the Victorian Society in the planning process after so much time and effort had gone into working with English Heritage and the Civic Trust along with other organisations in the city.

Building Council Housing !

I am pleased to report that we received support from the Homes and Communities Agency for our plans to build York's first council houses in over 20 years. The development will see nine two-bed homes and 10 three -bed homes built to top environmental standards. The proposed development is one of only a handful nationally that will achieve the code level 5 rating for sustainability.

A code rating of 5 is the second highest rating available under the rating system devised by the Department for Communities and Local Government. It means the houses have double the sustainability rating of standard building regulations. This is developing York's reputation for eco-construction.

The Homes and Communities Agency will be providing £1.12m to support the project.

Sir Bob Kerslake Chief Executive of the HCA visited York on 3rd September and he was shown progress at the Discus Bungalow replacement project, and pilot homes on Temple Avenue by Joseph Rowntree Housing in preparation for the Derwenthorpe development.



St Ann's Court building site for the supported living centre (Sir Bob Kerslake on right)



Pilot House – Temple Avenue

Winter Maintenance Policy

The Executive received the Final Report of the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July and a wider ranging report which it commissioned itself.

The Executive review looked more specifically at concerns expressed by residents and Councillors in relation to network treatment (carriageway and footway) in order to establish a secondary network, problems in contacting the Council at evenings and weekends, provision of information to residents, establishing a cross Council response to severe weather and treating cycleways. A review of the network has resulted in the recommendation that we make minor changes to the coverage.

There were also areas that would have benefited from self help salt but which do not need a bin in a normal winter. Officers propose that we use builders sacks to provide a temporary solution. These have the advantage that they can be filled at the depot and lifted off the back of a lorry. They take up little storage space when empty. Parish Councils and Ward Committees will be consulted on locations for both permanent and temporary self help salt supplies.

Contact with the Council last winter was difficult at weekends and evenings and although by the end of the severe weather this had improved, a major part of this review investigated ways to ensure that there were systems in place that could be activated quickly. YCC are looking at ways of utilising home working, the Warden Call service and the Police control room to make this happen and the technology is in place to allow calls to be diverted directly to the highways section at the Ecodepot.



Salt Barn at Eco Depot – there is more salt in it now !

Communication with residents was also reviewed. The highways team now have access to the CYC website and can update that as the situation changes. The "Clearing snow and ice" leaflet will be updated with publicity on Your Ward and Your City, self help bin locations will be on the web and daily updates sent to members as necessary. An open day at the Ecodepot will take place on 10th October in order that residents can see plans and equipment for themselves.

Improvements to treating cycleways continues to be a challenge as the low level of use doesn't activate the salt. Cycling City money has been used to purchase a specialised Euromec vehicle which can be used on the off road cycle paths. Officers are working with the cycling officer to identify the most heavily used commuter roads for priority treatment.

A winter Maintenance Group has been established to ensure cross Council and multi agency working. They will decide on the use of resources, when the secondary routes should be treated, that the needs of vulnerable groups are considered and that appropriate information is cascaded. Any recommendations are subject to the outcomes of the National Resilience Review which are due in September.

I would again like to thank all our staff who worked so hard to keep the city moving last winter. This review has identified the gaps, offers solutions and gives a framework for the future that should allow the Council to provide an even better service to our residents in times of severe weather.

Traffic Congestion Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee

The Executive received the final report from the Traffic Congestion Ad hoc Scrutiny Committee in its fourth year of consideration. There was clearly some debate about the public opinion survey, and the way in which residents could express their views about a unilateral congestion charge for the city.

The Executive noted the contents of the report, the results from the survey, and made the request that officers should respond to key parts of the report whilst preparing the next Local Transport Plan.

Apprenticeships.

The Executive received the report from the Effective Organisation Overview and Scrutiny Committee into CYC Apprenticeships and work based learning. The new coalition government has stated its support for the apprenticeships scheme and the continuation of funding allocated for such opportunities.

It is good to know that a cross council steering group is being set up and I am sure that they will be able to build on work already in progress both within the council and in local training providers such as York College.

Recycling

The council has been successful in maintaining the downward trend in the volume of waste (recycled and landfill combined) put out by the households of the city. The Executive wanted to respond to residents in parts of the city where recycling had been rolled out in terraced areas where there were not the same views as developed during the pilot in the Groves area. At the insistence of the Executive there has been a thorough consultation with residents which has taken into account local geography,

situations such as alleygating, and re-configuring the recycling collections in some areas. Collections have been adjusted accordingly.



Area Based Working

This follows on from a report in July 2009 proposing area based working. The geographically compact nature of the city reduces the ability to achieve economies of scale and could lead to dilution of standards and expertise and uneven service delivery. The proposal is therefore to an enhanced strategic co-ordination role with a dedicated neighbourhood management team. The area will cover 6 wards and represent rural, suburban, inner city and areas of deprivation. The pilot should encourage improved service standards and better partnership working and Acomb Explore will be used as a hub.

The current working practices will continue across the rest of the city and resources won't be diverted to support the pilot.

The key will be monitoring and evaluation but it is felt that 6 months will be too soon to bring back a report and that 9 months or a year would be better.

Capital Programme.

The 2010/11 budget is significantly greater than that just finished, remaining ambitious and seeking to build on the developments already achieved by the administration. The face of the city has been transformed over the years, and this programme will produce more services for residents and tourists alike.

The request for a release of £25k to Strensall Parish Council is a result of a resolution made in June 2005, when the former Youth Club Premises in Strensall were sold. A scheme has been developed with the Youth Service and Neighbourhood Policing Team, which will provide much needed youth facilities in Strensall.

The Executive considered how to build on the budget consultation process, and the considerable appetite for detail from the public and business. Clearly the emphasis is about saving money, and as there will not be a consultation document going out at

the same time (previously the government required consultation on cycling and Transport in previous years have been combined) therefore a range of communications are planned.

CCTV

In September the Executive considered a report on the operation of the CCTV system in the city. The 70-camera CCTV network has generally been a success story in York producing several examples where crime was either prevented or culprits apprehended quickly.

The cameras also are used to monitor traffic conditions and car parks. There is a demand for additional sites to be installed particularly in sub-urban areas and the news that portable cameras using 3G type technology are becoming available will be welcome. In addition the existing network will be upgraded during 2011 and a modern control room will be provided at the new Council HQ.

More for York

The report in September detailed how savings in procurement had been exceeded by 65% already, and generated a considerable saving for the Direct Schools Grant. The Procurement Team are targeting a more ambitious, yet achievable target before the end of the financial year.

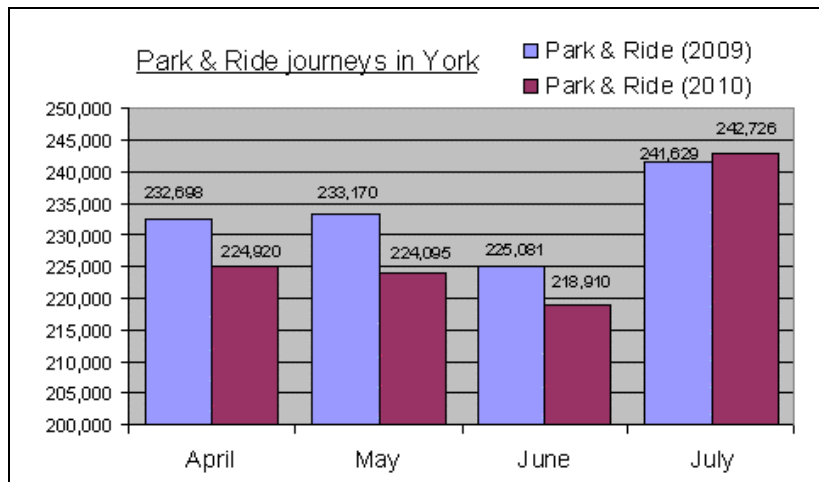
This will require a change of operation within corporate and directorate purchasing teams. More emphasis will be required on driving out savings, mainly by checking that the purchase is necessary and, if there is already a contract to supply, using it rather than going elsewhere.

Quarter 1 Finance and Performance Monitor

The council financial operations bring quarterly figures to measure against budget. The first quarter, being so early in the year allows the opportunity to implement actions to ensure the council outturns on budget. Thus at this time last year officers were predicting that without preventative action there would be a £4.5 million overspend by the end of the year. Due to considerable efforts of officers and Executive Members steps were taken to bring the council in on budget, such that the 2009/10 outturn was a slight underspend of £322K which allowed some carry forward. Therefore the projections at this stage will result in a similar exercise to last year to ensure that the council does come in again on budget..

There will be a report to Executive on 5th October covering the matter of indicators so that we can ensure that those which add value to the operation of the council, and are helpful in showing to the public how the council is performing, together with historical trends which enhance performance management.

Contingency was released for the establishment of 'York Enterprise' which replaces yorkengland.com which partner organisations had withdrawn from. There was a launch of the new organisation on 23rd September at the Mansion House.



Bus and Park & Ride Passengers: The overall number of passenger journeys in York improved slightly on the same period last year (currently 3.67m for April - June compared to 3.61m in the same period in 2009). Park & Ride data is now available up to July and shows a 2.3% decrease (910,651 compared to 932,578 in the same period last year). Although passengers for the first 3 months show slight reductions on last year, July figures show a 4.5% increase and it is hoped that this trend will continue over the next 8 months of 2010-11.

Cycle City update

We are now getting towards the end of the current 3 year Cycling City investment programme. The activities have been diverse ranging from skill training & confidence building, through to major physical works aimed at making cycling the quickest, safest and healthiest option for many short journeys in the Councils area.

Although the usual caveats still apply, but, based on the approach we used last year on the handful of existing counters (where we saw a 7% increase which by the end of the year went up to 8.6%), we are seeing about 15% of the population now cycling.

This means that, based on the overall target for the programme of a 25% increase, we are actually seeing approx 50% increase. So far in 2010 alone we have seen a 9.2% increase, and I was part of a cycle ride with Transport Under Secretary Norman Baker on 27th September.

Freedom of Information

In order to deliver a commitment made in an answer to Full Council earlier this year on the sharing of information from Freedom of Information requests the Executive received a report on how this will be operated in the future using new data systems which will ensure that there will be more information on the council website which will hopefully avoid duplication in the requests for information, and demonstrate the commitment of the council to transparent operation of the organisation.

Target Hardening

A number of schemes were approved for funding in the Target Hardening report in September I have been very keen to develop the target-hardening budget as a catalyst for a rolling programme of actions to respond to residents concerns about public safety and tackling crime. Following meetings with Superintendent Lisa Winward there has been a much greater engagement with the Neighbourhood

Policing teams, and several of the schemes have come through the joint working with councillors and the Neighbourhood Management teams. The roll out of Capable Guardian will assist with this in the future.

Executive Arrangements

Due to a legislative hang over from the previous government the Executive needed to consider the public consultation on changes to the Executive arrangements to the council. The low number of responses (albeit higher than in many other local authorities) indicate that there is little appetite for a change in the structure of local government in York. The focus has to be on creating jobs, completing the More for York programme and promoting the city. The costs of a referendum would be avoided. It is highly likely that there will be a change in legislation before the proposed actions run their course. Therefore the Executive recommendations are for the Leader and Cabinet Model with the appropriate changes to the Constitution to allow for the current arrangements to continue.

More for York

I appreciate the impact that some elements of the programme are having on staff. We have been through a process which has seen the number of Assistant Directors being reduced from 21 to 16, and I would pay tribute to those members of staff who have maintained the delivery of service throughout a difficult time, and for those members of staff who are leaving after years of service to the authority.

As a way of reducing costs in a way that did not result in the loss of posts the Executive agreed to take steps to move staff on weekly pay to a monthly arrangement.

Tourism

The Minister for Tourism, John Penrose visited the city on 4th August. He was shown the re-furbished Yorkshire Museum which had re-opened to the public on 1st August, the Minster, and National Railway Museum.

Over the summer I had a series of meetings with the Heritage Lottery Fund to support the Minster Revealed Project, and to encourage the plugging of the gap left with the withdrawal of Yorkshire Forward's contribution. I was very pleased to see the recent announcement for £9.7 million from HLF to the project which is a tremendous boost for the Minster as both spiritual heritage and major tourist attraction to the city.

I am grateful for the officers who have worked very hard to produce a summer of events across the city covering the annual Food Festival which had a strong Chocolate theme (linked to this year's big city read of 'Chocolat') and a range of other events which drew people to the city from far and wide.

Cllr Andrew Waller