

Deputy Leader's Report

I would like to begin by formally welcoming Mary Weastell to her role as our new Chief Executive as well as putting on record my thanks to Sally Burns, who recently left her role as Director for Neighbourhoods and Communities.

Local Economy

Figures from September show there has been a 28% reduction over the past year in the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance in York. The claimant count for the city represents 0.4% of the working population and contrasts to the regional average of 1.7% and the national average of 1.3%. Whilst this position is pleasing, we know that as an Executive we need to continue to work with partners to do as much as possible to help those looking for work and those in low-paid, part-time or seasonal roles.

In July, we agreed to invest an extra £10,000 to support job fairs as part of our ongoing efforts to help resident's access employment and training opportunities. I was delighted to attend the Jobs Fair at the York Railway Institute last month, where over 70 organisations and training providers were in attendance.

We are continuing with our work to make York a 'Business Friendly Council'. Following a dialogue with businesses, we now have a programme of projects and actions which include:

- Improving how we consult with businesses
- Setting out clearly what we can and can't do for businesses
- Reviewing our website
- Using our working relationships with partners to look at what we can do better as a council.

This local work is crucially important given the national economic picture, which looks increasingly turbulent following the Brexit vote. Our focus will be on working closely with local businesses and continuing to progress big projects such as York Central. We also need to continue to lobby the government to ensure that local businesses (and the local economy more generally) get the support they need with trading opportunities and funding protected. This is where the government should be focusing its efforts – rather than thinking up divisive proposals to force companies to disclose how many foreign workers they employ.

Local Plan

The first major consultation has closed on our new Local Plan and 'Preferred Sites'. Our proposals aim to deliver the housing York needs whilst protecting the character of the city and the Green Belt. Our plan aims to deliver land for at least 8,277 homes for the period up to 2032 and 2,540 homes for the period 2032 and 2037 - in line with York's independently-assessed housing need taking account of completed sites, sites with permission, and supplemented by windfalls.

The consultation ran from July to September and included a special 'Our City' delivered to every household, consultation events across the city as well as updates at Ward Committees, and an online consultation. We received approximately 2,300 individual responses from members of the public, developers and statutory consultees. This includes a high volume of technical representations received on both the preferred and rejected sites. Work is currently underway to log, analyse and summarise each individual comment received through the consultation.

In addition to analysing comments received further evidence base work is progressing including updating the Objective Assessment of Housing Need to take account of the CLG July household projections, running the City Wide Transport Model and undertaking Viability and Deliverability work. A report will be brought to the Local Plan Working Group and Executive in December 2016.

One Planet York

Progress has continued on our ambitious One Planet York project. There is now a growing network of organisations working to make York a more sustainable, resilient and collaborative 'One Planet' city. The work is part of our goal to boost recycling, cut carbon emissions and increase the use of renewable energy as we seek to make York the Greenest City in the North.

In August, my colleague Cllr Waller agreed a new One Planet Council policy and a proposal for a four year Carbon and Resource Smart Management Plan 2015-19. These will help to demonstrate how the council is working to reduce carbon emissions and associated expenditure across its estate. Cllr Waller is bringing forward an update on this work and detailed plans at a Decision Session in November.

Flooding

One Planet York is linked to the challenge of Climate Change as is the issue of flooding in York. The government investment in the Foss Barrier is welcome, and I am pleased the new high-capacity pumps are being installed as we seek to avoid a repeat of the floods which hit the city last winter.

However, on a more disappointing note September's National Flood Resilience Review did feel like a missed opportunity by the government to develop a long-term strategy to tackle flooding. The report did little more than confirm the fact that, by international standards, the country is under-investing in flood defences while at the same time cuts continue to local government and the Environment Agency. A fundamental change of approach is needed.

In terms of our local response to flooding, I am pleased that the independent flood inquiry we set-up is now well underway and a series of public hearings took place in September and earlier this month. These gave residents, businesses, agencies and local organisations the opportunity to share their experiences of the Boxing Day floods. A report will be produced in the coming months, and the independent chair will bring this to a meeting of Full Council. An action plan will then be worked on in response to the recommendations.

If members have any questions on the content of this report or would like further information on other issues then please email me on:

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*Cllr Keith Aspden
Deputy Leader of City of York Council*