

## **BUSINESS PLAN OVERVIEW 2018/19 TO 2020/21**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The initial 3 year agreement of Make It York with City of York Council (CYC) is now concluded with a new agreement for 3 years, and a new SLA, being finalised for the period April 2018 to March 2021.

The performance of Make It York (MIY) against the 2015-2018 SLA is detailed in section 7 of this document. The new SLA should be agreed by June and therefore elements of the operational plan going forward remain flexible, particularly with regard to business support and inward investment.

Going in to the new 3 year agreement, the overall purpose of MIY remains unchanged: to develop and promote York as a great place to live, visit, study, work and do business. MIY's role in supporting the city's economic strategy directly relates to this.

The values of the company also remain unchanged; to be respectful, ambitious, collaborative and entrepreneurial.

The strategic framework for the business can be found at the end of this overview.

What has become clear with the experience of operating as a new company for 3 years is that MIY has to balance 4 different imperatives:

- Delivering on the SLA for the shareholder, CYC
- Creating a sustainable, commercial business
- Delivering on behalf of 800+ Visit York members
- Being agile enough to respond to opportunities

These imperatives are reflected in the plan for the next 3 years.

### **2017/18 - Review of the previous 12 months**

MIY will achieve its budget for the third year in a row, making a small annual surplus of somewhere between £20k and £30k. This despite the payment of a £25k dividend for 2016/17 and a £100k reduction in the contribution of CYC. There has been no reduction in the services

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provided by Make It York and the SLA remained unchanged. This has been managed by successfully raising revenue in other areas of the business and this has effectively cross subsidised areas such as business support and inward investment.

A progress report on what has been achieved over the last financial year can be summarised as follows:

### **Visit York**

Tourism numbers have been strong over the past year, reflecting a strong performance across the UK, helped by the weakness of the pound. For the calendar year 2017, hotel occupancy and room rates were up year on year by 1.4% and 2.4% respectively while visits to the main attractions were up by 4.5%. Marketing activity has been intense with the York Pass in particular being used to good effect. Sales of the York Pass were 6% up on the previous year. A tremendous amount of work has gone into the new Visit York website. The new 'mobile friendly' site will be live before Easter 2018. The Visit York team won a contract to help develop Selby's tourism strategy and this was successfully delivered to time and to budget. During the year, Sally Greenaway joined the company as the new Head of Visit York.

### **Business Support**

Business support in 2017/18 once again concentrated on helping growth businesses with accessing grants and finance, creating events to help with training and development and advising start-up businesses through the Leeds City Region Ad:Venture programme. In the year to date 251 businesses have been supported, against an SLA target of 250. A more rigorous key account management system has been set up with quarterly reports now going to key decision makers in the city. 'Stand and Deliver' is a new, quarterly event aimed at helping new business ideas off the ground. The Top 100 initiative, in partnership with York St. John University and the York Press, was very well received and provides a really good snapshot of the commercial make-up of the city.

### **Inward Investment**

The main focus of activity this year has been the development of the business ambassador scheme. There are now over 50 ambassadors signed up, influential people 'tooled up' to talk knowledgeably about the city as they go about their normal business. The first success of the scheme has been actioned. Following a lead from one of the ambassadors, Enviva Biomass has now established an office in the city, their first investment into the UK. 50 inward investment enquiries have been handled across the year.

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### **Science City York**

Activity in 2017/18 has centred on supporting the agri-food sector through the Stimulating Innovation in the Agri-food Sector (SIAFS) programme in partnership with FERA. The job of the Science City York (SCY) team is to get businesses signed up to the scheme and the achievement of the 400 target is broadly on track. Other SCY activity has included supporting the Guild of Media Arts and the Mediale, continuing to run networking events for the creative, digital/IT and bioscience sectors and doing a major piece of work on developing a new creative strategy for the city.

### **Events and festivals**

This area of the business continues to develop. The 'family friendly' Easter festival is now an established event in the calendar, MIY helped to establish the hot-air balloon fiesta and the development of York's Christmas offer led to the city being voted 'the most festive city in the UK'. A new city-wide ghost hunt was also introduced for the Halloween half-term and was well supported by residents and visitors. Lots of work in 2017/18 was done to develop a really ambitious programme of festivals for the year ahead.

### **Culture**

Make It York supports rather than leads on culture in the city and substantial time has been spent supporting the Cultural Leaders Group. The main action now is the creation of a new cultural strategy for the city, reflecting the ambitions of all key stakeholders. The second York Culture Awards took place in the Minster in November, an event attended by over 300 people from the city's cultural sector.

### **City Centre Management**

After a tough couple of years managing the Shambles Market, things have started to turn around over the last 12 months. Market revenue is up by 12% year on year, bucking previous York and national trends. Crucial to the turnaround has been investment in the street food court which has proved to be a really popular new space in the city centre. One of the food traders is now number 1 on TripAdvisor for York restaurants. No complacency in the city centre though – there is still much to do.

## **2018/19**

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The operational budget for 2018/19 has set a surplus target of £27k despite a further £100k reduction in the contribution that CYC makes to MIY and significant increases in depreciation as a result of the new Visit York website and a proposed investment in a new CRM database for the company. A more detailed financial narrative is presented alongside the budget summary.

The operational plan can be segmented into 3:

### **New priorities**

- Enhance the support given to *new* businesses in York
- With partners, work on a retention strategy for young talent
- Reinvigorate York Business week – give it a real purpose
- Develop York as a hotbed for innovation in the tourism sector
- Address the infrastructure issues in the Shambles Market
- Streamline and improve MIY’s digital output
- Improve the dissemination of PR content for York business
- Enhance support for the hospitality sector (e.g. the hospitality awards)
- Understand the support MIY can give to new developments e.g. York Central
- Horizon scanning for large-scale events and fund-raising

### **Known Developments**

- Supporting an unprecedented array of new festivals (Bloom!, Shakespeare’s Rose Theatre, The Mediale)
- Delivery of the creative strategy
- Delivery of the cultural strategy
- Refreshing the tourism and events strategies
- New SLA requirements (to be confirmed)
- Developing the new Visit York website
- New approach to curating Visit York tourism content
- CRM database project

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- Supporting the Guildhall development
- Bidding for elements of the 2021 Rugby League World cup (Community stadium)

### **Business as usual**

- Developing and supporting Visit York membership
- Building the business ambassador programme
- Completing the SIAFS project
- Shambles market development
- Promoting business tourism
- The key account management
- The annual MIY events and networking programme
- Producing marketing publications
- Supporting existing festivals
- Managing the Ad:Venture programme

The biggest priority in 2018/19 is perhaps ensuring that two festivals – Shakespeare’s Rose Theatre and the Mediale - reach their full potential. In terms of both driving tourism and enhancing York’s international reputation, the opportunity for the city is immense. 2018/19 should be the year when the UNESCO City of Media Arts designation really comes to life.

Detailed operational plans can be found in Annex 1.

### **2019/20 and beyond**

As 2018/19 marks the start of the new 3 year agreement with CYC, it is important to look longer ahead. The new SLA will inform some of MIY’s future direction but there are other longer-term issues that will shape the future of the company:

- The outcome of devolution talks and York’s future role in the region
- York’s response to the Industrial Strategy and the priorities which result

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- MIY's need to find long-term sustainability and additional sources of revenue
- The progress of York's key developments: the Community Stadium, The Guildhall, The Castle Gateway project and York Central.

The other influence, which has become clear over the first 3 years of the company's life, is that it is the strategic priorities of others (CYC, the Universities, the Cultural Leaders Group etc.) that will to a large degree shape future plans and objectives for MIY.

Make It York is a company that can't plan too far ahead. The key thing is to remain flexible, responsive and opportunistic – allocating resource on those things that will give most benefit to its residents, students, businesses and visitors.