

Report of the Executive Leader

Priorities for the new council

This is our first formal Full Council meeting of the 2023-2027 municipal cycle and I'd like to welcome all councillors, both returning and new, officers of the council, and members of the public. We are trialling meeting in the George Hudson Board Room at West Offices in order to give the greatest opportunity for residents of York to attend this important public meeting. No venue in York is perfect but West Offices provides close by Blue Badge parking and, in a time of stretched local authority finances, cost effective rooms and facilities.

I am the first woman Leader of City of York Council since it became a Unitary Authority in 1996. This marks a new, fresh approach to doing business in York, an outward looking, listening and responsive council. The priorities for my administration are to reverse the Blue Badge ban, deliver 100% affordable housing on council owned land, put Free School Meals on the plates of primary school children, cut carbon emissions and implement the Neighbourhood Caretakers scheme. The themes that run through our commitments are improving the affordability of living in our city, considering the environmental impact of all our decision making, improving the health and wellbeing of residents in everything we do and putting consideration of equalities and human rights back on the map across our organisation. I look forward to working with you all on implementing these priorities and commitments and welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with councillors across the chamber and employers, organisations and residents throughout our city to get this programme delivered for the people of York. We are making progress with reversing the Blue Badge ban and implementing the Free School Meals pledges and hope to bring decisions to Executive very soon. Our city is a fantastic place to live, work, study and do business for so many but needs to be a great deal better for others. Working together is the only way we can achieve our aims.

City Engagement

I spent the past two years in leadership roles as the opposition getting out and about, meeting with people and organisations across our city

and am committed to continuing this outward looking, open and engaged way of working into leadership of the Council. It has been great to be invited to so many events and be able to speak to our city and region about my vision for York. This political leadership has been enthusiastically welcomed and seemingly long overdue. There is an awful lot to do and achieve for our city and our partners across the region are keen to get on with it.

I have been honoured to attend the Federation of Small Business, Women's Enterprise Networking Lunch, the York High Street Forum and the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership AGM. Building working partnerships and banging the drum for much needed investment in York through the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, taking advantage of the vast expertise and experience of fellow council leaders through the Local Government Association and welcoming a fantastic array of nationally and internationally recognised experts in their fields, politicians from all parties and residents to the Big Tent Festival held in Dean's Park in mid-June. An opportunity to explore innovative ideas, challenging shifts in society and new governance structures as devolution picks up pace across our country. York at its best.

Devolution

Devolution continues to move forward for York and North Yorkshire with the Order due to be approved by parliament ready for creation of the Shadow Combined Authority in November and election of the Mayor in May 2024. I have been building a working and productive partnership approach with the leadership of North Yorkshire Council, our fellow constituent authority. Making sure that York's priorities are articulated and represented and will be presented to the Combined Authority and Mayor.

We must be ready for this new governance structure, make sure that decision making and oversight stays close to our residents and York is recognised as the economic powerhouse that can bring great benefit to communities across our region as we start to look beyond the initial deal and make representations to government for further devolved powers and investment in our housing, transport system and our environment.

This is a challenging time and great opportunity. I am determined to get early and ongoing influence and investment for our region through this process.

York Central

It has been hugely valuable and productive to meet with the major land owners, Homes England and Network Rail, concerning the progress and future hopes and aims for the York Central site. Presenting my vision for a development that brings tangible benefits to our residents with improved levels of affordable housing, biodiversity gain and reduced environmental impacts alongside good quality jobs, attracting employers committed to investing in the people of York, good quality jobs, paying at a very minimum living wage foundation pay rates and offering good terms and conditions. We hope to see the master developer in place in September when these conversations will pick up pace. York is a fantastic environment for committed, good quality employers to thrive and we look forward to welcoming them to our thriving city.

Local Plan

A vital part of our readiness for new development in our city is the progression to adoption of the Local Plan. The process started in 2018. This process has been long and protracted and won't deliver immediately on all the affordable housing, transport and community infrastructure and environmental improvements our city so desperately needs. But it is a strong move in the right direction and must be adopted as soon as possible. Without it control of appropriate and measured development is impossible. The consultation process and submission of final amendments has been concluded. We now wait for notification of the next steps from the Inspectors. York needs a Local Plan as soon as possible and we hope to complete the process through to adoption in the Autumn.

Haxby Station

The progress towards delivery of a new train station for Haxby continues. It has been confirmed that any funding announcement from Government is expected by Autumn this year to meet its own deadline

for delivering the station. The planning application from Network Rail is expected next month. These two main responsibilities to progress the scheme sit outside the council and so we await further action in each case. I have been speaking to West and North Yorkshire colleagues with influence on regional transport and national political decision making to push the case for speeding up decision making processes and bringing this project through to delivery with a view to improve the rail connectivity between Scarborough, York, West Yorkshire, Manchester and Liverpool. Stimulating our local economy, bringing jobs to people and people to jobs. Council officers also remain in frequent contact with government and Network Rail to push for deadlines to be met to deliver the station.

Armed Forces Week

Armed Forces Week took place from 19th to 24th June. It was a great honour as the council's Armed Forces Champion to be involved in the flag raising at the Mansion House on Monday 19th. An opportunity to stand alongside the Lord Mayor and Councillor Rowley, as the Armed Forces Advocate welcoming our city's military representatives and three WWII veterans to this important event. The week celebrated York's strong military history and gave me the opportunity to meet veterans and serving military personnel across the city at the Spurriergate Drop In and Saturday Breakfast Club and learn more about our community, their challenges and the council's actions and commitments under the Armed Forces Pledge. It's been a pleasure to see Royal British Legion colleagues around the city including at the Rotary Club Dragon Boat Race event.

York Poverty Truth Commission

One of my first actions as Leader of the council was to join the York Poverty Truth Commission as a Civic Commissioner. This is a hugely important commission and action for me. The Poverty Truth Commission brings together people living with poverty, Community Commissioners, and people with senior decision making roles in key organisations in the city, Civic Commissioners. These include senior representatives from the police, health services, our council, DWP and others. A hugely important opportunity for us to work together to understand the barriers and

challenges that the Community Commissioners experience and make changes in our organisations that can benefit people living in poverty in York. We are currently getting to know each other, to build trust, to listen, understand and over time make meaningful and lasting change. I look forward to updating you as the commission progresses.