

Deputy Leader, including Economic Development and Community Engagement

Since May, the joint Executive has been setting out its headline priorities including the publication of our 12 point plan. This includes commitments to safeguard valued frontline services such as Yearsley Pool, rewrite the Local Plan to protect York's Green Belt, and work with residents to increase recycling.

Local Plan

The new Executive is committed to delivering a Local Plan which protects the Green Belt and focuses development on brownfield sites. A paper will be going to the Executive on the 30th July which will provide an update on the work being undertaken by officers.

Staffing

I would also like to take this opportunity to formally welcome Steve Stewart as the new Acting Chief Executive and Ian Floyd as the Deputy Chief Executive.

The Executive has also brought forward a review of senior management which will save £150,000. Linked to this review is our plan to also examine the council's use of interim and agency staff to ensure we are getting value for money.

Early work in my portfolio area has included bringing forward plans for cross-party decision making and proposals to devolve power and funding to revised Ward Committees.

This report gives an overview of the work in my portfolio area. For reference this now covers:

- Electoral Services
- Legal Services and Information Management
- Civic and Democratic Services (inc. Scrutiny)
- Communications and Media
- Community Engagement
- Ward Committees

- Parish Council liaison
- Play Policy
- Youth Support Services
- Economic Development and Regeneration
- Business and Skills Development
- Apprenticeships
- Local Plan and Regional Matters (jointly with the Leader)

Electoral Services

The May elections were the first combined parliamentary, City of York Council and Parish Council elections held since York became a unitary authority in 1996. The small core team of four staff worked hard with support provided by 250 polling staff on Election Day, 200 counting staff on each count, and 100 postal vote staff during the election.

Lots of work went into the preparations, including for the first time individual briefings to political groups in advance of the nomination process. I know these were appreciated by candidates.

For those of us who attended at Energise the count was a long one. Various reasons have been given for this including the combined nature of the elections with higher turnout, more candidates, and electors not voting along party patterns. However, officers say that the parliamentary and local counts were successful in the processes.

Work continues in the team on the Community Governance Review, the 2015 Annual Canvass (the first canvass not using a household registration system) and the continuing effort to make students aware of their need to register.

A request has also been received for City of York Council to remain as the lead authority for the Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) for North Yorkshire for the 2016 Police and Crime Commissioner Elections. Work has begun with the seven local authority Electoral Services teams in North Yorkshire around provisional arrangements for this.

Legal Services and Information Management

I have met with managers in legal services and learnt about the range of work the small team do. This includes taking court action to protect vulnerable children, handling legal work on the Council's major projects (most recently, Make it York), undertaking the legal work on all the Council's property transactions, taking legal action to deal with anti-social behaviour, advising and representing the council on employment law issues, defending judicial reviews against the Council and a whole range of other issues.

The Information Management team is transferring to sit under the Assistant Director of Governance and ICT. It is notable that Freedom of Information (FOI) requests have more than doubled in the last four years with 94.1% answered on time. Officers have taken steps to improve the visibility of FOI responses on the website, but more work will continue in this area.

The Council has invited the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) to undertake an audit. Officers have agreed areas where they and the ICO think the Council can benefit most from their input including records management, subject access requests, and data sharing.

Civic and Democratic Services

I am bringing forward a governance paper and will work closely with Democratic Services to change the way decisions are taken by City of York Council.

This paper will see new policy and scrutiny committees introduced which will allow all councillors to debate and make recommendations on issues before a final decision is taken by the Executive. I hope that the new committees will help to ensure that policy is developed in a more open way with greater cross-party involvement. It also means that the public will be able to contribute every step of the way.

We are also recommending an end to 'officer in consultation decisions'. Instead, these decisions will be taken by the relevant Executive Member in a public decision session with papers published in advance and residents able to attend to have their say.

The recommendations will be taken to a Corporate and Scrutiny Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee on 13th July, the Audit and Governance Committee will also be consulted on the proposals along with political groups and independent members. Following this, a final proposal will then be brought forward in August.

Democratic Services have just completed a full induction programme for newly elected and, in part, returning Members. A key focus of the induction has been the range of sessions, covering a full 'Development Day'.

A further new feature of the induction in 2015 has been the introduction of new 'app', notionally called the 'Membersphere'. This is a developing programme which aims to improve communication and to make it easier for members to access key information and perform day to day tasks. Officers tell me there are teething issues with getting use of the 'Membersphere' properly off the ground. A launch and user guide is planned for the coming months and evaluation of member induction is ongoing.

I have met with officers to discuss the next phase of the Mansion House 'Opening Doors' restoration project. The project will:

- Restore the kitchens and basements
- Provide an oral history project
- Display the gold and silver collection
- Provide conservation of the building and contents.

I look forward to updating members and residents as this project develops.

Communications and Media

I am working closely with officers in the team on a number of projects, including the consultation on the Draft Council Plan.

Community Engagement, Ward Committees and Parish Council

I have worked with officers on a paper called Listening to Residents: Ward Committees. This will begin the process of devolving budget and power to residents through revised Ward Committees.

The plans will see an increased pot of money given to ward committees (£800,000). In 2015/2016 this will be for them to allocate to fund projects such as street clean-ups, offer grants to voluntary groups, and for the first time fund road repairs. I hope the localisation of part of the adult social care voluntary sector capacity funding and road maintenance budget is the first step in devolving a number of funding streams to wards and the paper asks officers to identify further budget areas which could be localised.

The recommendations will be taken to a Communities and Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee on 27th July before going to the Executive on 30th July. If agreed, the revised Ward Committees will hold their first meeting in the autumn with a review later in the year.

I was pleased that the council supported the successful York Pride event, including grant aiding the event, providing the venue at the Knavesmire and assisting with rolling road closures for the York Pride Parade as well as joining with other employers in the city in the “Raise your Rainbow” event.

The new Executive is committed to improving partnership working between City of York Council and Parish Councils. The next ‘Working Together’ meeting, convened by the Council and to which all parishes are invited to send two representatives, is 1pm to 3pm on Wednesday 16th September in King Richard III Room. As well as ensuring that we work with Parish Councils we are committed to fully engaging with Resident Associations. I will continue to work with officers on both these things in the coming months.

Play Policy and Youth Support Services

I am meeting officers in this area and I was delighted that one of my first acts was to secure the future of the Shine magazine after discovering the previous Labour administration had cut funding.

Shine is an excellent resource and the summer edition of the magazine and website, which advertises activities and clubs for 5-18 year olds across York, has just been released. Shine is produced four times a year and as well as being online is available in schools, libraries and

community centres usually three weeks before the start of each school holiday.

An online version can be found here: www.yor-ok.org.uk/young-people/shine-new.htm

August is the month that formally celebrates play, with a National Day to mark children's right to play. Door 84 Youth Centre is hosting York's celebrations, with a host of activities and street based play.

Economic Development and Regeneration/ Business and Skills Development

The new Executive is determined to ensure that the council does everything it can to support local businesses. In our Emergency Budget we are providing extra funding to help local businesses cut red tape and bid for council contracts. I will also be working with my colleague Cllr Waller to re-establish the Green Jobs Task Group.

Over the summer I will be meeting key business leaders in the city as well as representative bodies such as the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chambers of Commerce to discuss the challenges they are facing and how we can work together to improve York's economy.

There are elements of York's economic performance that are strong and we continue to have one of the lowest Jobseeker's Allowance claimant counts in the UK. However, it is clear that there are some challenges with York's economy, especially around productivity and high value jobs.

We are working with businesses in the city to consult on both the council plan and the economic strategy. It is important that these two pieces of work are clearly aligned.

Make it York, the new destination management organisation for York covering the remits of business support, inward investment, tourism, and culture and city centre management; commenced operation as a wholly-owned company by the Council in April this year. The first Shareholder Committee has met as we begin to set up arrangements to ensure the organisation is delivering for the city. I would like to thank Cllr Hayes for

agreeing to chair the committee; the Committee's future meetings will be in public to enable Make it York's progress and performance to be transparent to residents.

The new Executive is supporting the idea of a Business Improvement District (BID). The City Team Executive led by Adam Sinclair of Mulberry Hall is working to ensure that a ballot will take place in the autumn for the city centre. If the ballot is successful, the Business Improvement District will provide nearly £800,000 to be invested to improve the city and will include measures to address anti-social behavior in the city centre, particularly on weekends and improve the public realm and cleanliness of the area. There will be a paper going to Executive later this month on whether we go ahead with the ballot in November.

The new Executive is continuing to keep a watching brief on ongoing activity in the city in relation to York businesses, working with Aviva in understanding any impact their restructure has on York offices and staff; and early work with Primark in making sure York residents will be able to fully benefit from the new jobs its new stores will create in the city.

We are continuing to seek to get the most for York from regional bodies, including broadband funding focused on York's rural areas and a new 'Growth Hub' service for Small Businesses through the Local Enterprise Partnerships we are part of.

As part of this regional economic work (and linking to my portfolio area on Regional Matters), I have had numerous meetings with partners across the region in regards to devolution and attended the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Annual General Meeting.

It is clear that recent discussions show the opportunities which exist for York and the changes which could be on the cards. This is why the new Executive want to examine all options and make sure that for the first time local residents and businesses can have their say. The previous Labour Council took a decision to enter into the West Yorkshire Combined Authority without any proper consultation. We cannot repeat this approach and we are determined to let residents have their say.

We want to present an impartial set of options on York's future. The options will be centred on the pluses and minuses of all options open to York, including a Yorkshire wide partnership, York working with Leeds and West Yorkshire, or working with North and East Yorkshire.

Any new structure put in place must have public backing, deliver the best economic deal for York, and be more accountable to residents.

Apprenticeships

A focus of the new Executive will be to support apprenticeships both inside and outside the council. As of July 1st there were 267 live apprenticeship vacancies in York. The Apprenticeship Hub Team will be running a fourth Apprenticeship Recruitment event at West Offices on the evening of 18th August. This will give young people the opportunity to meet employers and to receive support with applications. It has been timed to take place after the AS and A Level results so that young people completing those qualifications and other Sixth Form or Further Education programmes will be able to attend with results "in the bag".

I am meeting with officers to discuss how to increase the number of apprentices taken on by City of York; numbers fell from 35 in 2011/12 to 11 in 2014/15. We have already recruited 8 apprentices since the start of the 2015/16 financial year, and will soon be launching communications to managers with the aim of having a further cohort of posts available from the autumn term.

It is important that as an organisation we are also able to support potentially vulnerable young people with the application/selection process, and that we are able to better equip them to take on apprenticeships (and succeed in them) by promoting traineeships and more consistent and high quality work experience.

Additional Engagements

In addition to these commitments I have also been meeting and engaging with a wide range of groups and individuals across the city. For example, I have met with York CVS to discuss voluntary capacity

within the city and the future role they can play in the delivery of Adult and Social Care within the city.

If councillors or residents would like any further information on the contents of this report or anything going forward then please do not hesitate to get in touch: my email is cllr.kaspden@york.gov.uk

Cllr Keith Aspden

7th July 2015