

## **Deputy Leader's Report:**

I would like to wish everyone an early Happy Christmas, and thank all members and officers for their work over the last 12 months and ongoing commitment to our city.

## **York Central**

Since taking power last May, we have made significant progress on York Central by working in partnership with Network Rail, the National Railway Museum (NRM), and the Homes and Communities Agency. Our joint plan will deliver new homes, new jobs, and new community facilities as well as a chance to further develop the NRM.

I was pleased to attend the council scrutiny meeting last month to discuss transport options for the site. With funding secured through the West Yorkshire Transport Fund, the crucial next step is getting these access plans right.

This will involve working hand-in-hand with local residents. As the scrutiny meeting recommended, we will ensure ongoing engagement and consultation on the plans, paying particular regard to those residents in the Holgate area as well as citywide. As an Executive we are committed to delivering York Central and ensuring community support for the proposals.

## **Local Economy**

Latest figures show there has been a 26.4% reduction over the past year in the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance in York. There was a decrease in the amount of residents claiming Job Seekers Allowance in September compared to the previous month's figures meaning there are currently 530 claimants in the city.

We are continuing to work proactively to ensure that the local economy remains strong and the correct support systems are in place for all those looking for work and those in low-paid, part-time or seasonal roles. This includes funding job fairs, supporting initiatives such as Acomb Market, and working closely with partners such as Make it York and Business Improvement District (BID) to support the city centre.

## **Barracks/Local Plan**

In my role as Deputy Leader and the Council's Armed Forces Champion, I wrote to the Secretary of State for Defence Sir Michael Fallon MP expressing my surprise and concern about the decision by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to close Imphal Barracks, Queen Elizabeth Barracks and Towthorpe Lines.

As a garrison city, York is rightly proud of its relationship with the armed forces community. This historic bond is one that we all value and respect. This announcement from the MoD therefore represents a significant break, and I have highlighted to the Government a number of areas of concern, including:

- The impact on York's local economy and on the various businesses connected to an armed forces presence in our city
- The impact on local communities which live alongside the armed forces
- The impact on the armed forces communities themselves and plans for reprovision
- The future of the three sites
- The timescale of the MoD's plans and how this may interact with the Council's own vision for York.

The closure of the barracks could also have significant implications for our emerging Local Plan. Council officers have held meetings with MoD officials who have indicated that the MoD preference would be for re-development of the sites for residential use. In light of this, officers will need to evaluate the implications. This will lead to an inevitable delay, but this is necessary to ensure that we get a plan that is compliant with national planning policy and takes into account the potential of the MoD to deliver housing on the sites in the long-term.

## **Autumn Statement**

Like many others, I was disappointed by the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and fear that decisions taken (or not taken) will have major implications for York.

It was disappointing that the Conservative Government could find an extra £240million to invest in bringing back grammar schools, but can not find money to plug the funding gaps in social care or commit to reversing a planned cut to our Education Services Grant.

I will continue to lobby the Government to give York a better deal working with all colleagues across the Council. This will include lobbying for funding for key infrastructure investment such as the York Outer Ring Road.

## **Flooding**

We are now nearly 12 months on from the devastating floods which hit York last Boxing Day. For many, the recovery is still continuing and this process will continue for many months. Having attended the Council's recent VIP staff awards this was another opportunity to thank some of our officers who did so much for the city last winter.

The Council has with partners provided ongoing support, but the most impressive aspect has been the way that so many residents and voluntary organisations have rallied round to help. Not just in the days of the flooding, but in the weeks and months that have followed.

I am also pleased that the Government seems to be slowly waking up to the seriousness of the issue and the ongoing investment in the Foss Barrier is of course welcome. However, as my colleague Cllr Waller has highlighted the plans to scrap regional flood defence committees is a concerning development.

I am sure we all share the wish that York has a quieter Christmas this year and we can all enjoy a safe and peaceful break.

*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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