

Executive Member for Economy & Strategic Planning - Report to Full Council 22 March 2021

I would like to thank all officers within the teams that my portfolio covers for the efforts that they have put into responding to the Covid Pandemic, and the plans that they have developed for the city's recovery plan. The dedication to work across the council, and including partners, has helped York to respond to the challenges of the past year. It is heartening to see this at all levels, and it is vital that we take the learning from this experience to genuinely "build back better" and to have a more inclusive and greener economy and city in the long term.

The "York Way" has been to ensure that as much resource as we have is made available to businesses in the city to help to keep them going. Indeed, recognising the importance of micro businesses and the self-employed who missed out on earlier support schemes led to the creation of the ground-breaking Micro Business Support scheme which was one of the few in the country which sought to address this issue.

Building on the development of the inclusive growth programme (agreed 2019) the teams within the council have been working along with the Leeds City Region Inclusive Growth Working Group to ensure that there is targeted support which will ensure that all communities within the city benefit from the economic success of York as a whole.

Awareness of the need for a long-term economic strategy for the city has been retained throughout the last year. On 16th March 2020 - at one of the last meetings held in person - the Executive Member Decisions Session acknowledged the need to plan for the impact of Covid 19.

The graph (figure 4) from the Imperial College Report of 16th March 2020 published by Government has guided on a regular basis the response from the various teams within the council that I have met with. Whilst there were reduced rates over the summer, the anticipated increases in late autumn and winter followed the projections.

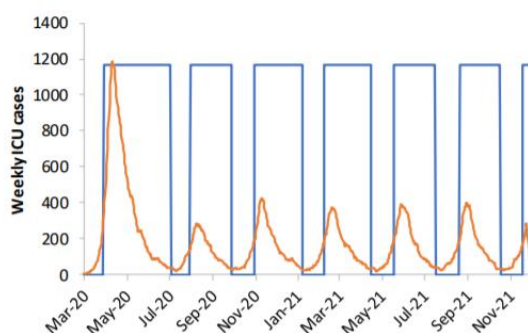


Figure 4: Illustration of adaptive triggering of suppression strategies in GB, for $R_0=2.2$, a policy of all four interventions considered, an “on” trigger of 100 ICU cases in a week and an “off” trigger of 50 ICU cases. The policy is in force approximate 2/3 of the time. Only social distancing and school/university closure are triggered; other policies remain in force throughout. Weekly ICU incidence is shown in orange, policy triggering in blue.

There has been the development of much stronger working relationships with the teams processing the grants to businesses, and the priority has been to get the funds transferred. This has involved a large amount of direct contact with businesses and sharing of work across teams, with engagement with staff in Make It York.

I am grateful to the officers who set up the Sectoral Roundtables which made sure that the council had direct connection to businesses in different parts of the economy, and of different sizes and experiences. These have fed through to the Quarterly Economic Report which has been reported to Executive Member Decision Sessions.

This has meant a much higher take-up of grants and lobbying on behalf of companies that missed out on earlier Government Grant systems;

- Business Rates over £51,000
- Supply chain companies where the individual company was not specifically required to close but a large proportion of their customers were closed
- Self employed people with fewer than three years of accounts.

It has been a rapid learning experience for establishing strong links with partner organisations and getting information directly from businesses via sectoral round tables. This has been invaluable in responding to the needs of specific businesses across the city.

Neighbourhood shopping, and access to services, became a much more important feature of retail and there was a greater awareness of what was in existence on many people's doorsteps.



This has been supported throughout and there will be a meeting on 25th March to develop this further, and support traders' associations.

Brexit and Münster

I have throughout this last year been very grateful for the contacts with our German Twin City Münster, through translation of patterns for facemasks to passing on experiences with the operation of outdoor markets for food and essential goods. It is good to know that there has been a strong willingness to maintain these links despite the impacts of Brexit. I would like to pay thanks to Oberbürgermeister Markus Lewe and his office for their time in sharing information and experiences.

Support for York businesses coping with Covid as well as Brexit has been promoted via the weekly bulletins to businesses. This will need to continue for the foreseeable future as the full impacts of changes from leaving the EU are identified.

York Local Plan

The Council has faced unprecedented logistical challenges over the last 12 months, associated with both the Covid-19 pandemic, and the loss of experienced members of staff from the Forward Planning team. Despite these difficulties, the Council has progressed the ongoing Local Plan independent examination and continued to correspond with the Planning Inspectors in relation to the submission of outstanding/ requested work.

The team have completed the Schedule of Further Work [EXCYC33] arising from Phase 1 hearing sessions in December 2019, including the submission of the following documents:

- **Affordable Housing Note** (February 2020) [EXCYC36]
This note confirms the approach to and likely delivery of affordable housing during the plan period specifically in relation to:
 - The number of affordable homes to be provided through proposed allocations and sites with consent applying policy H10;
 - Information on other sources of affordable homes including through the Council's Housing Delivery Programme;
 - Affordable housing delivery from 2012; and
 - Right to Buy.
- **Audit trail of sites submitted and assessed between 35-100 hectares** [EXCYC37]
The audit trail confirms that all sites submitted had been assessed objectively in the Local Plan process;
- **A joint position statement between City of York Council and Selby District Council** regarding the Housing Market Area (April 2020) [EXCYC38]
The Joint position statement agrees the extent of the housing market area as well as the authority's approach to delivering identified housing requirements;
- **Green Belt Clarification Note** (June 2020) [EXCYC39]
This clarifies the Council's rationale for pursuing a Green Belt boundary extending to approximately 6 miles from the city.
- **Habitats Regulation Assessment** (2020) [EXCYC45]
- **Schedule of Proposed Modifications** (Dec 2020) resulting from the Phase 1 hearing sessions.

Additional information requested by the Inspectors has also been actioned as follows:

- **Request for updated consideration of household projections and the housing requirement** (Inspectors letter of 9 July 2020) – Consultants, GL Hearn, were commissioned to produce a Housing Need Update (October 2020) to respond to this request. This concluded that York’s objectively assessed need (OAN) of 790 dpa remains valid. The Council subsequently confirmed that a housing requirement of 822 dpa (OAN 790 dpa + 32 shortfall) should continue to be used as this is considered to meet the appropriate need for the city.
- **Green Belt Clarifications and concerns** (Inspector’s letter of June 2020) & **Green Belt Topic Paper Addendum** - Officers have submitted (on 15 January 2021) a Green Belt Topic Paper Addendum to present a clarified and simplified methodology to inform the definition of York’s Green belt Boundaries in response to the comments/concerns raised by the Inspectors. An agreed timetable to submit the details annexes to the report has been agreed with the Inspectors in their letter of 03 March 2021; all annexes to be submitted by end of April 2021.

The most recent correspondence in relation to the Local Plan from the Inspectors (03 March 2021) continues to advise that all evidence base submitted since the close of phase 1 hearing sessions (all above) should be consulted on prior to the next phase of examination hearings. This is likely to take place in May following submission of the GB Annexes with the timetable of a hearing session to discuss to be confirmed. Officers are working to ensure the completion of the GB annexes, forthcoming consultation and subsequent phased hearing sessions can happen as expeditiously as possible.

Minerals and Waste Local Plan

The Minerals and Waste Joint Plan is currently under examination. Hearing sessions for the examination have concluded and officers have compiled a schedule of modifications. Officer’s (at CYC, NYCC and North York Moors) are currently finalising the environmental reports associated with the proposed modifications to the Plan which will all be consulted on asap (likely April 2021). Following consent by the Inspector, the final public consultation on the proposed modifications will

be held for a period of 6 weeks after which the Inspector will consider the outcomes. Adoption of the plan is likely to be Autumn/Winter 2021.

Neighbourhood Plans

Officers continue to inform the production of a number of Neighbourhood Plans as required by the Neighbourhood Planning regulations. Plans at key stages are:

- Huntington Neighbourhood Plan - going to 18 March Executive for a decision as to whether to accept proposed recommendations/ modifications and proceed to referendum.
- Heslington Neighbourhood Plan - Currently at examination with an independent examiner. Receipt of the examiner's report is likely to be asap. The report will subsequently be taken to Local Plan Working Group / Executive for a decision.
- Minster Precinct Neighbourhood Plan – concluded second pre-submission consultation. Officers have worked extensively on the preparation of this plan as it unique in the country. Likely submission to the council April 2021 after which there will be a citywide public consultation run by the Council.

Development Services

Throughout the last 12 months Development Services has continued to function and has continued to process planning applications, building control applications and local land charges information.

Development Management has determined over 3000 planning applications and has continued to deal with pre-applications and enquiry requests. Building Control has continued with all elements of its work including assessing dangerous structures at all times and local land charges search requests are being returned within 24- 48 hours which is amongst the quickest in the country.

In recognition of the lockdown situation, we have extended the consultation period from the statutory 21 days to 28 days to allow extra time for comments to be received on planning applications.

All officers have been available to assist the public throughout the last 12 months and will continue to do so.

At my Decision Session there have been reports on responses to the many Government consultations on proposed changes to the planning system which could have a profound impact on the way the service is delivered, democratic accountability, and the way in which ward councillors are able to represent their local communities. Scrutiny has been fully involved with information gathering for the responses.

York Skills and Employment Board

A new board, York Skills and Employment Board, has been established with partners, and chaired by Lee Probert, Principal of York College. This is developing a one year plan along with longer term plans to assist residents and businesses through the recovery from the Covid Crisis. Scrutiny has been involved with the early work for the Board and will be engaged throughout the development of the plans. The need to ensure that national announcements of funding is translated into action on the ground is always important, but never more than now. I would like to thank those officers who have promoted apprenticeships and the skills agenda for their work to maintain this work through the transition from physical meetings to virtual sessions, and on-line jobs fairs.

Public Protection

In terms of the response to the pandemic it is worth recording the work that has been done across the city and with businesses. The team has dealt with over 1500 complaints or requests for advice from members of the public, employees, businesses and other enforcing authorities.

They have provided advice to over 500 businesses directly and carried out over 200 visits, excluding any work undertaken by the Covid Support Marshalls (CSM). Most businesses have been compliant, but we have given over 20 warning letters, served 4 Prohibition Notices, and served 6 fixed penalty notices to date in relation to coronavirus breaches.

I have been out with the teams following concerns in the summer about large gatherings to see how the support and enforcement was being delivered, along with work with the city centre police teams.

In terms of Covid Support Marshall work, they have also engaged with over 800 businesses, over 1200 groups of people, given out PPE (hand sanitiser and face coverings) to 160 people and collected (hygienically)

nearly 1200 face coverings which have been dropped. They have also achieved a customer satisfaction level of 98.8% for our CSM interactions.

In addition to the above, Public Protection have also helped produce the “Let’s Be York” Coronavirus business support pack and provided written advice and legal information for the close proximity sector services and hospitably sector with over 600 letters being sent out. These letters have been recognised as good practice by Government, and some national professional bodies representing businesses.

In terms of engagement with other agencies, Public Protection has provided support to our colleagues in public health with twice weekly meetings taking place and one environmental health office being employed to assist with business support and contact tracing. Daily meetings with colleagues in Community Safety and North Yorkshire Police have also taken place and have resulted in four joint action days to deal with problematic premises, as well as regular joint visits.

In the run to up Christmas, officers worked with North Yorkshire Police issuing tickets to individuals in pubs in the city breaching covid restrictions. Over 160 tickets were issued, mainly people visiting York from tier 3 areas. This work has helped shape the case for lockdown restrictions lifting nationwide rather than a regional/tiered approach as before.

Economic Strategy Engagement

Whilst there has been strenuous effort to ensure that financial support is provided to businesses in the city as quickly as possible, and that steps have been taken to assist with operation under changed circumstances and “pivoting”, there has been a significant increase in the numbers in the city on Job Seekers Allowance, and Universal Credit - the number of people receiving UC in York increased from 13,137 in December to 13,238 in January.

In terms of processing of support for businesses there has been a total of £85 million in grants, and £70 million business rates support which has involved a rapid turn around from the receipt of Government Guidance throughout the last year.

There will continue to be consultation on the Economic Strategy, with details coming to my April Executive Member Decision Session which will build on;

- Real People's Panel work
- Economic Partnership
- Initial discussions through Business Leaders Group and our regular Business Intelligence meetings
- Our Big Conversation

Later in the year there will be further work to enable the report to come to Executive by the end of the year.

This will also build on the new structure developed following the recalibration of arrangements with Make it York following extensive consultation to develop the new contract.

Representation

I have attended meetings on behalf of the city at the following;

York and North Yorkshire

I have represented the city at the Infrastructure & Joint Assets Board which has assisted York with additional funds for the development of York Central, Hyper Hub electric charging points, and across the city with investment in facilities for training for electric vehicles at York College, and with a new digital training centre at Askham Bryan College.

Leeds City Region

- West Yorkshire and York Investment Committee
Which has supported the investments for delivery of the Station Frontage scheme and other funding for the city.

- Green Economy Panel
- Place Panel
- Inclusive Growth and Public Policy Panel