

Leader's Report to Full Council 3rd December 2009

1. Economic situation

The latest Job Seekers Allowance Figures show that York's unemployment rate at 3% remains 1.8% below the regional figure, and 1.1% below national levels. There are positive signs that investment continues to come into the city, with new retailers coming into the city. I have asked for an urgent meeting to be arranged with the new operators of the East Coast train service now that the government has taken back the franchise in order that promises about headquarter functions and jobs remaining in the city can be verified.

I have met with directors from Yorkshire Water, Aviva and Network Rail as part of the regular meetings that I have with major businesses in the city, and since the last meeting of council there have also been meetings of the Economic Partnership, and the Business Forum. Work is continuing with the Green Jobs Task Group to ensure that the city gains full benefit from new jobs being created in this area, and I have visited a number of companies in the area specialising in this part of the economy.

2. York Means Business and Science City DVDs

There was a launch of the DVD promoting the city in the Mansion House on 17th November which has been developed by the Press as part of the 'York Means Business Campaign' and created by local filmmaker Christopher David. Members will have received a DVD from Science City York which also shows the positive steps that have been taken to gain European Union investment into the University of York expansion, and the work that is going to ensure that York has a solid foundation into the research of the low carbon industries of the future.



Launch of York Means Business DVD
Mansion House 17th November
Cllr Waller, Steve Hughes (Press), Denise Stuart
(yorkengland.com)



Christmas Lights : Berwick Kaler,
Sherrif, Lady Mayoress, Sheriff's
Consort and Archdeacon of York 19th
November

End of Year events in the city

I would like to thank officers from City of York Council and Visit York, who have worked hard to deliver a programme of events to promote the city and to get us into the seasonal festivities (with the traditional method of making money stretch further than many other councils manage). St Helen's Square was full on 19th November as the Lantern Parade of young people was met at the Mansion House steps by the Civic Party and Archdeacon of York for the switching on of the lights of the Christmas tree.

START	END	LOCATION	EVENT
05-Nov-09	08-Nov-09	Parliament Street	Big Green Market
07-Nov-09		Acomb Wood	Bulb Planting & Woodland Picnic
08-Nov-09		Eye of York	Festival of Remembrance
13-Nov-09		Parliament Street	York Farmers Market
14-Nov-09	10-Jan-10	Eye of York	Ice Factor
14-Nov-09		West Bank Park	National Tree Week
14-Nov-09		Rawcliffe Country Park	National Tree Week
17-Nov-09	18-Nov-09	York Racecourse	Mary Howard Christmas Fair
18-Nov-09		Rawcliffe Country Park	McMillan Walking on Fire
19-Nov-09	22-Nov-09	Parliament Street	Childrens Christmas Fair
26-Nov-09	29-Nov-09	City Wide	St Nicholas Fayre
29-Nov-09		York Racecourse	Dolls House and Miniatures Fair
03-Dec-09	06-Dec-09	NCEM	York Early Music Christmas Festival
03-Dec-09	13-Dec-09	St Sampsons	Made in Yorkshire
12-Dec-09	13-Dec-09	The Quarter	Festival of Angels
13-Dec-09		West Esplanade	Santa Jog
13-Dec-09		York Racecourse	Toy Fair
20/12/2009		West Bank Park	Christmas Wreath Making
21/12/2009		Rowntree Park	Recycled Christmas Gift Making

3. Efficiency Programme

The Council Executive has considered the More for York Blueprints for the efficiency programme. It is clear that there will be a major reduction in the amount of public sector spending due to the scale of money that has been used to bail out badly regulated banks. Nevertheless it is important that the actions following on from the Blueprints are democratically accountable, and visible. The Executive have passed resolutions to achieve this.

4. 'Breathing Space'

The Executive also agreed the engagement with the 'Breathing Space' Mortgage Rescue scheme to provide interest free secured loans to help home owners in difficulty with their mortgages.

5. Major projects work for the new York Renaissance Team

A positive voicing of support for the future development of York has come from a commitment from Yorkshire Forward with the Economic Masterplan and York Renaissance Team. The new team of six officers will be funded by Yorkshire Forward and English Heritage, and will involve the establishment of a York Renaissance Academy to enhance staff skills in “place making”. Whilst this piece of jargon may be one of those words that has been ‘banned’ by the LGA, the objective is to ensure that there is a long term understanding of how to ‘create attractive places where people can live and thrive’ as it is about the physical quality of development in conjunction with economic and social impacts of developments.

The key issue is progressing projects so that when the economy picks up they are ready to be delivered. The new team will provide project management architecture, urban design and landscape design skills to ensure these major economic projects are of a quality the city deserves. The following key developments will benefit;

- **Castle-Piccadilly** – leading the CYC team in partnership with Centros and their team to deliver a major new retail scheme and world class public realm around the Eye of York
- **York Central** – to take the York Northwest Area Action Plan vision and requirements and then, working with the developers, translate these into a high quality scheme.
- **British Sugar** - to take the York northwest Area Action Plan vision and requirements and then, working with the developers, translate these into a high quality scheme; includes supporting work on the Urban Eco-settlement for British Sugar.
- **University of York new campus** - lead the CYC team in partnership with the University to deliver the new campus
- **Nestle and Terrys** – providing design input to ensure the delivery of these significant mixed use sites
- To deliver the projects that flow from the York Renaissance Project **Economic Visioning and Masterplanning** which has just been commissioned – to be published in Spring 2010.
- To deliver the projects that flow from the **City Centre Area Action Plan** – York’s first comprehensive plan for the city centre since the Esher Report of the late 1960s. There are a number of ‘big ideas’ in the Vision Prospectus for the City Centre Area Action Plan which we are planning to take to the LDF working Group in December

The Executive also put a requirement on how the masterplanning will improve the sustainability objectives of the council in developing York as an exemplar low carbon economy, and how future development can help to stimulate the creation of local jobs, and training.

6. Leeds City Region Forerunner Status

In the 22nd April Budget speech the Chancellor Alistair Darling announced that the Leeds City Region, of which York is part, had been selected to be one of the two forerunner city regions.

By the time of the council meeting we will know what devolution there has been from central government to the Leeds City Region and I shall update members on the evening as the details will be released at the Summit on 27th November in Harrogate. As a precursor to this on 3rd November I joined a delegation from the LCR as Chair of the Housing Panel together with our Chief Executive at the House of Commons. The meeting was chaired by Rt Hon John Denham Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. More details on the proposals are given on the Leeds City Region Website at http://www.leedscityregion.gov.uk/About_Us/Leeds_City_Region_-_A_Pioneering_Forerunner.aspx

The meeting was an opportunity for an exchange of information to develop the details of devolution focusing on housing (Urban Eco Settlement) transport and skills.

7. Second performance and financial monitor for 2009/10.

The Executive considered the second performance and financial monitor for 2009/10.

Key issues coming forward were;

- The latest crime figures indicate that the projection is for a 42% reduction in 'serious acquisitive crime' on the 3459 incidents reported in 2008/9. The percentage of young people (10-17) within the Youth Justice System sentenced to custody has remained low at 3% between April and September against a target of 5%.
- The amount of waste generated from households has continued to fall from the 629 kg collected in 2008/09 which was in turn a 12% reduction on the previous year. This shows that the waste minimisation message is reaching residents, and recycling levels remain high at 45%.



Crime figures moving down



Leaf collection – contributing to street cleanliness

- Staff attendance levels continue to improve with the average sickness levels per full time equivalent standing at 3.21 days compared to 3.64 days for the same period (April to August) last year.

Capital Programme : Monitor 2

The new 'Energise' sports facility has been handed over to the council. I can report that I have received a refresher course on the gym equipment and shall endeavour to achieve the 3 x 30 which the council is encouraging residents to engage with. The Energise Pool is due to open on 14th December which will include a 6 lane 25m pool, a learner pool, a hydrotherapy pool and a new changing area.

The Central Library closed on 31st October for its refit into York Explore a community learning centre, and Changing Places Facility. It will re-open at the start of April.

The Executive approved works at Lendal Boatyard where urgent repairs to the riverbank have been identified, and it is anticipated that savings can be made by utilising the company that is currently making the repairs further upstream at Clifton.



York Central Library as it was
31/10/09

There is a £540,000 refit of the library to bring it to an 'Explore' standard by removing much of the clutter that has accumulated over the last 70 years. This is being done with support from Aviva's CSR programme.



River bank repairs at Clifton – piles being set into river bank, and accumulations of silt being stripped off bank tops



Lendal Boatyard where scouring by the river has created need for repairs

8. Treasury Management

Despite the recession, and the significant reduction in Treasury Management's contribution to the Council's income, the Treasury Management team have performed above both the London Inter-Bank Deposit rate and the average base rate for the period, despite the market interest rates being lower than expected. This is a very good result and credit is due to the officers for achieving it. Again, when borrowing, the team has managed to achieve loans under the long term borrowing rates. As a result the predicted under recovery in income has not deteriorated

9. Headquarters.

The evaluation team has been reviewing the tenders for the Headquarters project and the results will be coming to Executive on 15th December. This will be a positive step forward for the scheme, and the announcement will be of interest to a large section of the city.

10. Barbican

An advert was placed in the Official Journal of the European Union seeking proposals for the delivery of a scheme to bring the auditorium back into public use, as a conference and/or entertainment venue. The advert asked potential bidders to fill in a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire by November 24. The responses will be used as the first stage of selecting bidders, who will then be invited to participate further in the procurement process.

11. Other Items

The executive has also approved a report updating the corporate debt policy, and considered the revised Contract Procurement Rules which will be coming to Full Council for all members' consideration.