

## LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL - JULY 2016

I will begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, Cllr Steward, and to thank him for his excellent leadership of the Council during the past year. It is an honour and privilege for me to succeed him as Leader of the Council and I am delighted that he will continue to make a major contribution to the Council as Executive Member for Finance and Performance.

### EU REFERENDUM

I accept that comment in this forum is usually confined to matters specifically relating to York - matters the Council can actually influence directly. However, the recent referendum on leaving or remaining in the EU is such a major decision and with potentially far-reaching consequences for all communities that I believe it is right to make a brief reference to it.

Whichever side we as individuals voted for, the decision to leave the EU is clear, with 52% of voters expressing that wish. That is the democratic choice of the people and we must respect that decision and act accordingly. I have been dismayed by the reports of hate-crime following the referendum; the sporadic instances of deeply insulting behaviour directed at others, whether immigrants or otherwise. Here in York, all four group leaders have recently issued a joint statement strongly condemning such behaviour.

As politicians we should now do what we can to reduce negativity on both sides and to bring people together in the best interests of the UK. This country is one of the most successful in the world; with our creativity, our inventiveness, our world-class businesses, our strong economy, and our sense of social justice and fair play. We have a fully functioning government with a new Prime Minister and I am confident that our country has a bright future ahead of it.

### LOCAL PLAN

Our revised draft Local Plan has just gone out to public consultation for an 8 week period. This is a sound Plan based on the best expert evidence of population growth and household formation. I believe it reflects the views of the majority of York's residents in providing the right balance between providing much needed homes and jobs, and protecting the natural environment and the heritage of York. We are encouraging residents to make their views known during this consultation period, not only to register their concerns but to say where they support the Plan also.

For those members who are concerned about us meeting the Government's timetable for submission of the Plan, I would like to confirm we are fully on

course to meet the deadline of Spring 2017. This administration's re-working of the Plan has been an extended process since residents were clearly not happy with the previous Labour administration's emphasis on extreme levels of development - something which was clearly demonstrated in last year's election results - but we now have a Plan which is realistic and deliverable and which I believe will be supported by most residents.

## YORK CENTRAL

I am pleased to announce that the York Central project took a significant step forward when a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 8th July by the Rt Hon James Wharton, Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and all the development partners including Network Rail, the National Railway Museum, the Homes and Community Agency and Local Enterprise Partnerships to facilitate the delivery of a project which, with its potential to create 8,000 jobs and provide 1500 homes and 1 million square feet of business space, is pivotal to the future of York, the region, and I think without overstating the case, the entire North of England.

But public consultation and the engagement of local residents is also extremely important with a project of this size and complexity. To that end, earlier this year, an initial public consultation was held comprising a number of bespoke events and a Holgate ward committee meeting on 11th February. A total of over 1200 responses were received and a report detailing the findings was presented to Executive on 14th July. There will be ongoing public consultation as the project progresses and a York Central Community Forum is being established to enable the views of the local community to be heard and acknowledged.

## BUS SERVICES

As members will have noted, at the last meeting of the Executive, we agreed a strategy for making budget savings on subsidised bus routes. We listened to what the public had to say during the consultation period and decided to alter our original budget savings plan in order to maintain certain routes where need was greatest. Without repeating all that was said at Executive, I would emphasise yet again to residents that it is not sustainable to pay hard-earned council taxpayers money for bus operators to run empty buses all over the city. The Council simply cannot support every uneconomic service and more service reviews are likely to be necessary in future. So the message must be 'use it or lose it'.

## PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY

The reviewed Private Sector Housing Strategy was approved by Executive at its 30<sup>th</sup> June meeting. With 86% of the city's housing stock in private ownership (both owner-occupied and rented), the strategy has a number of aims, principal amongst which are; to encourage and support owner-occupiers to maintain safe homes; to encourage private landlords to provide safe and well-managed properties; to facilitate independent living amongst the elderly and disabled and to enable more sustainable homes by improving energy efficiency. As part of this strategy, the Council has given a positive response to the recent government consultation on its proposal to extend licensing of houses in multiple occupation to smaller HMOs , ie those of less than 3 storeys and /or fewer than 5 occupants. Government's intentions with regard to regulating that sector of the housing market are awaited.

Cllr David Carr