

## **Make It York SLA – Narrative Report: April to June 2018**

### **SUMMARY**

Make It York has ended the first quarter of the new financial year ahead of the new budget and the financial control of the budget remains solid.

Work in the first quarter has concentrated on a really busy events programme, and the direct organisation of the “Bloom!” festival, the development of the cultural and creative strategies and ongoing commitment to supporting existing businesses in the city and encouraging new businesses. It has been a particularly active period for inward investment enquiries.

A new Head of Visit York has been recruited to replace Sally Greenaway. Paul Whiting, previously Marketing Manager for Jorvik, is now in position.

### **SLA UPDATES**

#### **Business Environment**

The service level requirements are fully embedded into the organisation. In the quarter, there were 69 meetings with York’s major companies, business support provided to a further 70 businesses, there was contact with 33 start-ups and 39 companies were helped with property support. The detailed Key Account Management report was submitted at the end of the quarter.

A meeting is going to be held in October between all the business support practitioners in the area (the LEPs, the Chamber, FSB etc) to explore further ways of co-ordinating activity. Day to day collaboration though is already positive.

#### **Visitor Economy**

The tourism statistics for the quarter are mainly positive. Hotel room occupancy and rates are slightly down on 2017 but this doesn’t take into account the 6% growth in hotel rooms over the last year - more rooms are being sold. Visits to both large and small attractions were well up on last year and city centre footfall in the quarter was 2% up year on year, bucking the national trend. Shakespeare’s Rose Theatre, “Bloom!” and other major events are clearly contributing to what should be a strong tourism summer.

The recently relaunched Visit York website has been well received with traffic to the site consistently 20% up on 2017.

The refreshing of the Visit York tourism strategy may be slowed down by the change of leadership. Delivery of the plan is still targeted for Christmas. It is a timely piece of work given the rush of new hotel planning applications and various major potential visitor attraction investments e.g. NRM, Castle Museum.

Work is underway for the production of the 2019 Destination Guide.

## **Make It York SLA – Narrative Report: April to June 2018**

The new Hospitality Awards which are aimed at supporting this important sector, take place on 26<sup>th</sup> September at the Everyman Cinema. Nearly 100 entries were received.

### **Culture**

The main focus of cultural activity at Make It York is the development of the city's cultural strategy. ArtReach have been engaged to co-ordinate this work and a major consultation exercise across the cultural community has been completed. The next stage is to create a draft strategy outline that will go out for further consultation and input. The aim is to have the strategy completed and signed off by Christmas. 2019 and beyond will all be about implementing a detailed action plan that will be delivered with the strategy.

Planning is also well underway for the 2018 Culture Awards. These will be held at the Theatre Royal on 19<sup>th</sup> November. Darren Henley, Chief executive of the Arts Council, has accepted an invitation to attend. This presents a great opportunity to showcase York's cultural highlights.

### **Sector Development**

The key focus has been further developing the creative strategy proposals. Key stakeholders are being asked to endorse the strategy with a view to launching it and the accompanying action plan during the Mediale.

Make It York is working closely with the BID, CYC and the retail forum on the really difficult issue of attracting and retaining national retailers. By most measures, York is in a relatively good place on retail occupancy compared to others, but the issues around Coney Street are stark and very visible. Make It York has now dedicated some ongoing resource to consistently contacting potential new retailers. It is a very proactive approach but the results are likely to be long-term rather than short-term.

Other key York sectors are supported on an ongoing basis. Access to finance remains a core service to businesses and there is a pipeline of grants in excess of £1 million.

A lot of work is going into planning a reinvigorated 'York Business Week'. This will run from 13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> November and will include a major business conference, themed days and company open days.

Sector development plans remain outstanding. There needs to be a clear definition and understanding of what these look like. If there is to be a review of York's economic strategy, it would make sense to tie them into this.

### **UNESCO Designation**

The main focus currently is supporting the Mediale which takes place from 27<sup>th</sup> September to 6<sup>th</sup> October - 10 days of exhibitions, live performances and music. The hope is to be able to confirm plans for the 2020 Mediale during the festival.

## **Make It York SLA – Narrative Report: April to June 2018**

During the Mediale, York will host a 2 day visit from the other 13 UNESCO Cities of Media Arts, which is another great opportunity to showcase the city internationally.

Other obligations to UNESCO were fulfilled during the quarter.

It is disappointing that the idea of including the UNESCO designation on proposed new road signs has been rejected. This would have raised consciousness about UNESCO and helped it to gain some traction in the city.

Make It York remains of the view that the designation is an important part of the narrative about York's contemporary assets and aspirations.

### **Markets Management**

Trading on Shambles Market has started the new financial year strongly and ahead of budget. The Food Court continues to go from strength to strength and has had a very busy summer. Make It York has made a further investment of £23,000 in canopies for the space.

There are some key issues for the market that must demand some CYC attention over the coming months:

- For the market to progress, investment is needed, particularly with regard to the electricity supply
- What impact on the market will new counter terrorism measures create? Will it still be feasible to have a large number of vans going in and out of the market every day? Should the market progress with lockable cabins so that stock can be stored overnight?
- Is there a holistic city view of where the market will stand in the context of other developments in the city? e.g. Castle Gateway, York Central

### **Events Programming**

2018 has been an exceptionally strong year for events and festivals. "Bloom!", Shakespeare's Rose Theatre and the Mediale have added to what is already a good programme. The good weather has definitely helped.

"Bloom!" has received some legacy funding from CYC which will see 3 projects come to fruition in the summer of next year. A commitment to running the festival again in 2020 has also been made.

A full programme of events in the city is being planned for the Halloween half-term.

Detailed planning is underway for Christmas. All the various Christmas pitches have been pre-sold.

## **Make It York SLA – Narrative Report: April to June 2018**

Make It York has been working with CYC on a bid to host elements of the 2021 Rugby League World Cup which has now been submitted. This takes advantage of the new Community Stadium.

The longer-term events strategy needs reinvigorating. A draft sits with CYC and needs some input.

The 'toolkit' for event organisers will be ready well before the year-end.

### **Intelligence Gathering**

This is an ongoing activity. Work in progress includes:

- Updating the monthly tourism statistics to reflect new tourism trends
- Finalising a very detailed mapping exercise of the creative sector in York
- Creating a list of 75 'ones to watch' – companies with clear growth potential that can be prioritised for support
- Working with York St. John University to create the 2018 Top 100 York companies listing

### **Brand Management**

Make It York is now rather in the hands of CYC on this one. There is some concern about the 'city branding' project. It is really important that existing work is not left behind and it is essential that key stakeholders are fully allowed to help shape the activity. Meetings are in place to try and ensures this happens.