

# Make It York

Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Progress and activity update July 2019

## **Background**

Make It York (MIY) is constituted as a private limited company with a single shareholder, the City of York Council (CYC). While the company is therefore wholly owned by CYC, this legal status allows MIY to operate in a flexible and entrepreneurial manner, something difficult for public sector organisations to do, constrained as they are by additional regulation. Make it York was established by CYC in 2015 with this opportunity very much in mind.

MIY has an independent Board of Directors to provide strategic advice and oversight, and an executive team, tasked with delivering its wide-ranging programme. This programme has included delivering marketing, inward investment, city centre management and cultural development for the city, and while the company fully recognises its commercial imperatives, the Board remains thoroughly committed to MIY's wider social purpose.

With the arrival of a new Managing Director in January 2019, MIY has revisited its mission and strategic priorities. The Board has agreed its mission as being "to grow York's economic prosperity and wider well-being" and has restated its priorities as:

- City positioning and profile raising
- Network-building and inward investment
- Ensuring an exciting city centre
- Delivering the Cultural Strategy

## **Recent Company Restructuring**

In order to enable the most effective delivery of these strategic priorities and to facilitate further growth, the Board of MIY recently approved a restructure of the executive team, together with a consolidation of the brands used by MIY. There are now five main departments of the company: Business and Networking; Culture and Wellbeing; City Centre

# Make It York

Management and Markets; Communications and Marketing; and, Commercial and Revenue Generation.

MIY's economic development, and wider, work will be conducted under the MIY brand, while consumer facing, tourism-related activity will continue to be carried out using the Visit York brand.

## **Financial and Revenue Generation**

For the financial year 2018-2019 MIY revenues amounted to £4.8m. This was generated from the following sources:

- City centre activity and St Nicholas' Fair (33%)
- York Pass and Leisure Marketing (13%)
- Publications and Advertising (10%)
- Conference and Business events (2%)
- Visit York membership (8%)
- Visit York Tourist Information Centre (15%)
- Science City York (3%)
- City of York Council (17%, Net 6.7%)

With respect to the current financial year, MIY remains on budget in relation to costs and revenues. As well as the annual audit, we have asked to Auditors to return at the mid-point of this financial year to spot-check the position in September.

Within the context of likely-decreasing funding support from CYC over the coming three years, further developing existing and new revenue streams remains a priority for MIY (and will benefit from increased impetus by the appointment of a Head of Commercial and Revenue Generation).

## **Recent Activity and Highlights**

City positioning and profile: MIY has been working closely with CYC and a wide range of businesses and stakeholders on this hugely important project. While there is no doubt that the brand "York" is strong, this initiative is about developing a clear proposition for the city, incorporating consistent key messages for core audiences: residents; employers; investors, academics; researchers; and, students.

# Make It York

CYC has, very much to its credit, commissioned the “A Team” to deliver this work; *For the Love of Place* and *Hemingway Design* have exceptional track records and are acknowledged as world leaders in the place-branding field.

This work will have a significant impact on our ability to present ourselves as the dynamic, modern, international city we know York to be. As part of this, it is central to the profile-raising and inward investment work MIY, CYC and other key players are delivering. That work, in turn, is ultimately about meeting the key city objectives of changing perceptions of the city and providing additional high value jobs.

Network-building and Inward Investment: Again in support of the pursuit of high value jobs, MIY’s work in this area will increasingly focus on the economic sectors where York has acknowledged world-class strengths. These are: Tourism; Bio-Science; Rail-Tech; Digital; and, Financial Services. Supporting existing businesses and encouraging new ones to come to the city in order to strengthen these clusters is the priority.

Suitable space does however remain an issue for the city, making the York Central opportunity especially important to the city’s future economic prosperity. MIY is currently working with a small number of its business Ambassadors to produce a suggested Occupier’s Strategy for CYC. The early sense of this is that, as with many such developments, there will be commercial challenges. However, there is support for a mixed tenant base which is conducive to “organic” business growth.

MIY is very conscious of the need to ensure its work compliments that of the other organisations active in this field: CYC, the LEPs, and central government agencies. Here we believe, with its agility and existing contacts, MIY is especially well-placed to spot, and quickly take, opportunities as and when they arise. Examples could include hosting trade and investor delegations, working with the Commercial and Cultural Sections of key Embassies, and further raising York’s profile in Whitehall and Westminster.

A need to reinvigorate MIY’s Key Account Management function has been highlighted by the Board and this is something that the Managing Director will take personal responsibility for in future.

# Make It York

Meanwhile, MIY will continue to support businesses to secure growth funding, working closely with both the LEPs and using in-house expertise to direct applications. MIY will also be providing businesses a new, dedicated service aimed at helping them to navigate CYC by making relevant departmental introductions and personal recommendations.

## Ensuring an exciting city centre:

York is a beautiful city and is already home to a hugely successful programme of quality events and festivals. MIY staff know the city inside out and so the company is well-placed to help further develop this use of the city centre as a “stage”. In part this is about MIY putting on events: The Residents’ Festival; The Ice Trail; Bloom, and in part it is about facilitating third party events such as Aesthetica, Mediale, The Vikings Festival and The Great Yorkshire Fringe.

Combined with this activity is MIY’s responsibility, working with CYC and the BID, to ensure that the physical environment and city centre atmosphere are as high quality and positive, respectively, as possible. This is perhaps an area where this committee and MIY could work more closely together to good effect.

## Delivering the Cultural Strategy:

As a commercial business with a social purpose, MIY sees its role as helping to drive the Cultural Strategy as a particularly good fit, and one which will be boosted by the upcoming appointment of a Head of Culture and Wellbeing. In part, this is likely to involve helping to establish where there is most overlap between the priorities of individual cultural institutions and those of the Cultural Strategy, thereby enabling a delineation of delivery responsibility.

The other key element of MIY’s role will be to use its business, educational, health and wider stakeholder networks to embed culture as central to the well-being of York’s residents, and, in particular, of its young people.

# Make It York

## **Potential Collaborations between MIY and this Committee**

There are a number of important areas in respect of which MIY would like to work closely with this committee. In particular, the upcoming *My City Centre* consultation will highlight residents' priorities, many of which may well relate to the city centre physical environment and ambience.

Equally, MIY would like to work closely with the committee in relation to York Central. As noted above, as an initial step we are using our networks to help inform an Occupier's Strategy for this development which, of course, falls firmly under this committee's scrutiny remit.

Finally, MIY hopes to be able to collaborate with the committee on embedding and promoting the consistent use of the key messages to investors which will come out of the current city narrative work.

## **Annexes**

Annex 1 – Make It York Annual Review 2018-19