

Leader's Report to Full Council 7th April 2011

1. New starts

Since the beginning of 2011 a wide range of projects have started on site.

The new Headquarters at West Offices has begun, and on 14th February there was a session held at York College to ensure that local businesses and workers knew how they could register to benefit from the work that will be undertaken on site. This has been an important priority of Harrisons as they develop the building which will be a long term saving to the running costs of the council.

Renovation has started on the Barbican, and already ticket sales are going well for the first events.

Work has finally started on family housing at Derwenthorpe, many years after the area had been allocated for housing, and it is a tribute to the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust that they had confidence in the scheme that they had stuck with the project to this point. Building work has started on the first 64 houses, and the infrastructure for the rest of the site which will open up the site for the next phases and the energy centre.

The council has worked with the Homes and Communities Agency and Housing Associations to bring into use some newly built properties where the developers had gone into receivership. Therefore we have demonstrated that we are able to work quickly, with partners and ensure that opportunities are taken up. This has resulted in the opening of affordable rent, and other options such as 'try before you buy' housing in the city. The schemes that help people to save deposits for the homes that they are renting is one which has demonstrated interest in the wider property market, and will be helping to overcome the difficulties that some families are facing in accessing mortgages. These projects are also helping to provide properties for 'downsizing' which will help to release underutilised family homes in other parts of the city as well as providing modern accommodation to meet residents needs.



Pateley Place new flats opening 14th March 2011



Inside Pateley Place flats

The other schemes are at Birch Park, Hungate Phase 1 (where the homes are intermediate rent and absorb the service charges), as well as the Discuss Bungalows.

At the Leeds City Region level the Homes and Communities Agency Board, which I chair, is meeting with lenders in the city region to look at how housing developments can be helped with access to capital by developers, and easing restrictions on mortgages which has left some families who would have readily obtained mortgages in the past either needing to find significant deposits, or being declined. By being part of the city region this is helping each local authority as the discussions are covering an area of over 3 million people.

Auden House was officially opened on 21st March demonstrating the quality of provision for older residents that the Executive is keen to support and develop.

2. Affordable Housing Viability

In order to provide flexibility for the development of housing in the city the Executive approved the Viability Study in the report which came to committee in December and its (current) 25% brownfield and 35% greenfield affordable housing targets for inclusion in the LDF and for interim development control purposes. This included a lowering of the targets by a further 3.5% where a 25% developer profit can be justified, or a lower target, by individual negotiation, following a site-specific viability appraisal.

Year	Total Housing Completions on Qualifying Sites*	Affordable Housing Completions on Private Developments	% Affordable Completions on Qualifying Sites	RSL build, Mort res etc	All Affordable Housing Completions	Completions on small i.e. non qualifying sites	Total Housing Completions (includes small sites)	% Affordable totals as % of total build	Notes
2005/06	458	108	23.60%	40	148	408	906	16%	
2006/07	333	56	16.80%	0	56	465	798	7%	
2007/08	176	21	11.90%	30	51	317	523	10%	
2008/09	163	54	33.10%	97	151	191	451	33%	
2009/10	192	45	23.40%	93	138	222	507	27%	**
Quarters 1 and 2 of 2010/11	174	111	63.80%	31	142	59	264	54%	**
Total	1,496	395	26.40%	291	686	1662	3449	20%	

* For the avoidance of doubt, a qualifying site is a private developer led site, which triggers the affordable housing policy through the planning system. The current affordable housing policy is triggered at sites of 15 homes or 0.3ha in urban areas and 2 homes or 0.03ha in rural areas.

** Includes 18 completions in 2009/10 and 31 completions in 2010/11 on private developments that are in addition to the negotiated affordable housing requirement. These

have been secured through deals with private developers to buy surplus stock and kick-start developments that have stalled due to the poor market conditions. These have covered a range of tenures supported with low rates of Social Housing Grant. Negotiations are currently ongoing to purchase a further 50 homes on private developments across the city.

3. York Local Investment Plan

The Executive approved the York Local Investment Plan which forms the City of York Council's 'ask' to the Homes and Communities Agency for the period 2011-2015.

4. Budget

The Executive received a number of reports relating to the budget that was approved by Full Council on 24th February 2011.

5. Re-ablement Service

The Executive has received two reports on the remodelling of the re-ablement service to ensure that additional time is provided for the aging population in York to assist them to 'get back on their feet' after an admission to hospital or related difficulty in their life. The faster that this can happen the better that it is for the individual, and it also reduces demands on services in the NHS. The Executive received a recent updated report on this item and agreed to support council officers if they wanted to progress a mutual or community interest company option for the future proposals for this service.

6. Transition Board for local NHS

The Executive approved the terms of reference for a Transition Board to oversee the changes in the NHS locally resulting from the white paper 'Liberating the NHS'. It is important for the city that we establish the local priorities that we would expect to be delivered by any new arrangements, and for it to be clear how local elected members can represent the wishes of constituents in the decision making process. We do not want to see the benefits of the successful Health City Board being lost, and the terms of reference show the importance that the Executive attached to ensure that the changes are made as seamlessly as possible which taking full advantages of the opportunities for closer working that are on offer.

7. Annual Performance Assessments : Adults and Children's Services

The Authority received its Annual Performance Assessment letter which grades York as 'Outstanding' once again, continuing the level achieved for the last four years. York is the only local authority outside London to receive such a grading and has kept its place as one of the best performing Children's Services Departments in the country. Ofsted rated York's Children's Services as 'Performing Excellently' which is the highest score available.

This independent assessment for the services shows that the excellent work being done in the department is being recognised nationally. The report to the Executive demonstrated that services to children in the city are of an exceptionally high standard and that improvement

continues all the time. Staff deserve credit and thanks for their hard work in delivering these outcomes.

Adult Social Care has received an encouraging report of progress, marking the consolidation on the "Performing Well" assessment of last year. This recognises the effort of everyone who has contributed to this excellent result including all the Adult Social Care staff who have worked so hard and our partners who have made this result possible.

8. Annual Audit Letter

The Executive received the Annual Audit letter for 2009/10 from the Audit Commission in January which reported that in response to the financial pressures faced by the public sector the council "was amongst the first wave of local authorities to recognise that a strategic response was necessary. The 'More for York' programme was established in 2008 as a council wide initiative to generate £15 million savings by 2012 without compromising the quality of front line services.

The letter also noted that the council takes a proactive stance to tackling fraud and corruption (327 instances of proven benefit fraud identified during the year with a value of £340,000) with appropriate recovery or prosecution action taken in each case. The letter reported that the council has maintained the strengths identified last year in relation to risk management, displaying a strong anti fraud culture, and delivering services that represent good value for money to the public. It noted that good procedures are in place for procurement and asset management, and that the Veritau shared service arrangement had received national recognition.

9. Scrutiny Reviews : Newgate Market

The Executive received a detailed report from the Scrutiny review on Newgate Market which brought forward some short, medium and long term proposals for the market. The report acknowledged the importance of the market to the city centre economy, and the value that it brings to the council. Issues relating to service level agreements on cleansing, improving the public realm can be dealt with immediately, the items relating to the running of the market requires the consent of the market stall holders, and other long term investment will require budget growth bids, especially the very interesting 'pods' model of stall.

10. Scrutiny Reviews : Schools Travel Plans Ad Hoc Scrutiny

The executive considered the report which looked at issues relating to problems surrounding the school run and the proposals were in line with the council's current thinking and so were supported. However, clarification was needed on the incentives to change from bus to cycle use for those travelling to school and so officers will report on this separately.

11. Scrutiny Reviews : Casual Play Opportunities

The Executive considered the report on casual play opportunities to encourage the provision of suitable spaces for play for children aged 5 to 13 years old. The Executive considered

that it was a clear benefit to children to play outside in the open air as a balance to hours playing computer games indoors. The two main recommendations to work with the Taking Play Forward Strategic Board to identify three diverse areas to pilot casual play schemes (although this will probably not stretch to the reminiscences of the chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Looker, who recalled World War II bomb sites around Bristol as being a source of casual play opportunities) and to encourage a buy-in to casual play opportunities by ward committees, parish councils, and residents associations.

12. Race on Line

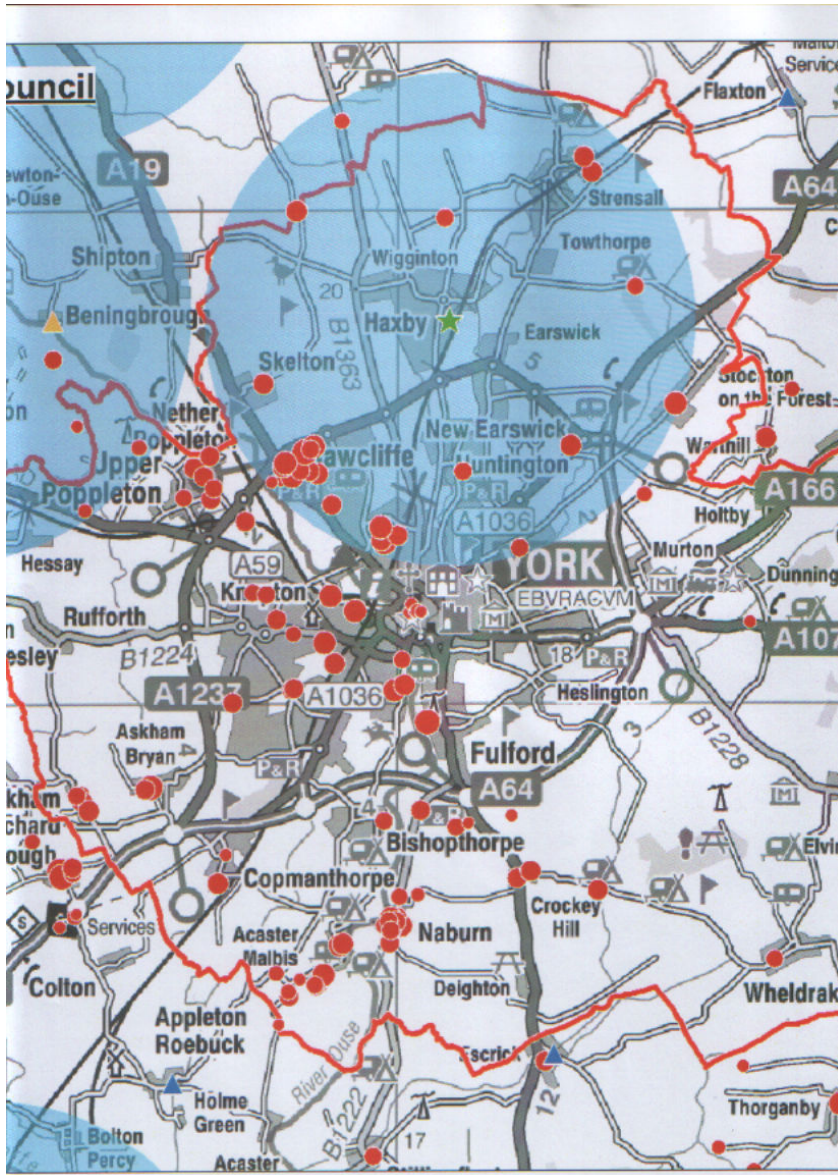
This is a nation wide campaign to improve access to the internet to all residents. The Executive was very keen that York should sign up as an official partner in Race Online 2012 and for the council to work with partners to enable this to take place.

Having a city where residents and businesses have access to the internet is important in the 21st Century. This involves the access to both the computer hardware, for which there are issues of affordability, as well as access to high speed broadband connection. The commitment for a work programme includes the following;

- Take the action plan to the WOW Partnership Board to link digital inclusion into the Sustainable Community Strategy
- Work with IT Services and Economic Development to support digital inclusion
- Promoting the benefits of being online by running a series of roadshows over the next two years, starting with the national Go Online event (17 Jan – 14 Feb)
- Encouraging other organisations to sign up to the pledge
- Producing a map showing free and low cost WiFi access across the City
- Developing use of libraries as key access points to online national government and local council services
- Mapping provision of support and training from basic through to advanced digital skills

There are steps being taken in conjunction with commercial companies to help improve internet connections in the city, and below is a map from NYNET about proposals to tackle 'not spots' within York with a possible community roll out of WiFi in the North of the City (blue circle) and red dots indicating Domestic properties with no service (there may have been some changes since the map was prepared). This was presented to Leaders of York and North Yorkshire councils.

The Executive also requested a further paper on measurements of digital inclusion to include steps taken to improve internet connectivity, and access to the internet amongst older residents, and lower income families.



13. Capital Programme Monitor 3

This report presents the likely outturn position of the Council's 2010/11 Capital Programme, based on the spend profile and information to mid January 2011, and seeks approval for changes to the programme resulting from slippage and for the use of additional prudential borrowing and contingency to progress certain schemes



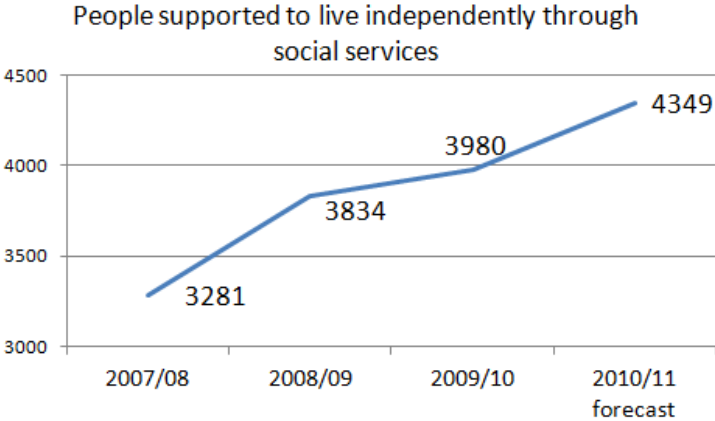
Progress being made with the new Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary School

14. Quarter 3 Finance and Performance Monitor for 2010/11

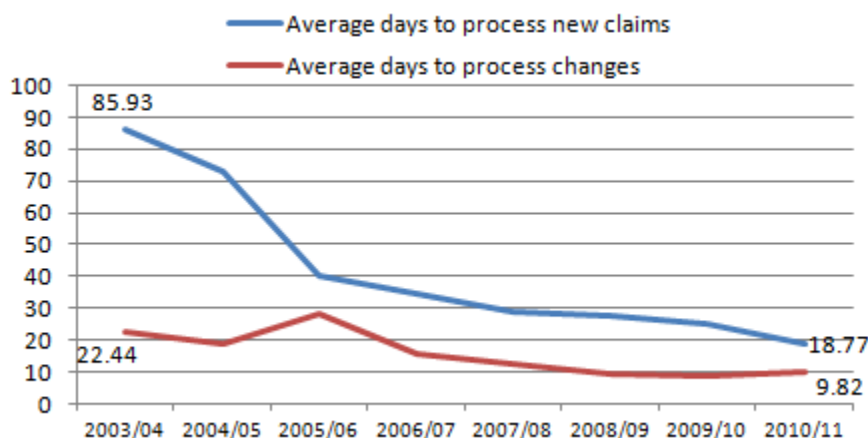
There have been strong achievements over the first 9 months of 2010-11, including, excellent improvement in the number of residents helped to live independently; significant improvement to standards of street cleanliness; a 1% increase in waste recycling levels and a continued reduction in landfill.

The reduction in overall recorded crime incidents in York continues, building on the 24% reduction achieved in 2009-10. There has also been sustained improvement in road safety, with a 60% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on York’s roads.

York continues to buck the national trend in relation to many areas of the economy, including a widening gap for unemployment, a major reduction in the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). Indeed York has recently been recognised as the 7th best performing council in England in terms of low numbers NEETS.



Since 2003/4 there has been significant improvement in time taken to process new benefit claims and put in place changes to existing claims. This can be attributed to - streamlining working practices to process more work at the first point of contact, initiatives such as a 24-hour processing promise, restructuring the service, better use of ITT, enhanced performance management and quality assurance, greater customer focus and staff training.



The amount of waste collected per household continues to reduce and CANS predict we will achieve 590kgs for 2010-11, exceeding the very challenging 2010-11 target of 611kg, set 3 years ago. Since 2004/05 the amount of household and commercial waste that goes to landfill has reduced by 40% and 50% respectively (see graphs below). Despite these reductions, the council continues to pay higher levels of landfill tax each year because of high annual tax increases per tonne (currently £48 per tonne and scheduled to increase by £8 each year until rate reaches £80 per tonne). This was designed to get authorities to recycle more waste when it was introduced in October 1996. Landfill tax rate has more than trebled since 2004/05 and an alternative to landfill is needed to meet statutory targets and to reduce financial burden of paying Landfill Tax.

15. Treasury management Monitor 3 and Prudential Indicators 2010/11

Executive was pleased to note that the Treasury Management Team have continued to out-perform the market, taking advantage of the low rates to borrow long-term.

Over the first nine months of the financial year 2010/11 the Treasury Management Team has out-performed the average 7-day London Inter-Bank Deposit rate (LIBID) earning a rate of return 0.72% higher than LIBID for the short-term investments made. When borrowing every effort has been made to obtain loans at the most advantageous rate possible. While the interest rate offered by the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) has increased to 5.5% the Team remains watchful, as there are still some loans available at lower rates.

At the end of Quarter 3 the Treasury Management budget showed a welcome underspend of £200k, driven by a decrease in financing expenditure, a reduction in the Minimum Revenue Provision charge and an increase in interest received on savings, though it is expected that growth will continue to be slow throughout the remainder of the year.

The Executive also agreed to recommend the Integrated Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Proposed Prudential Indicators from 2010/11 to 2014/15

16. Housing Rent Increases

The Executive noted that with the current system council home rent levels are effectively set by central government which is not a satisfactory state of affairs. It requested that officers progress plans which would allow the council to take more direct control of housing revenue decisions which would include rent levels.

17. Creating a Local Authority Company

Following the success with Veritau there is scope to provide services and carry out works on behalf of other public bodies and private organisations. By approving this the Executive acknowledged the amount of work that is already done in terms of operating other organisations payroll, and options at the Eco Depot to work with other public sector partners.

18. Review of Directorate of City Strategy

The Executive approved the reorganisation which is the inevitable consequence of the reduced resources available to the Department. While there may be delays to some workstreams, the restructure will sustain key front line customer interface activities and aligns staffing numbers to the reduced work volumes.

19. Local Development Framework

The establishment of a successor to the Local Plan has taken a much longer time than had been anticipated when I was first elected as a councillor to the former York City Council. Years of delay have been pushed into the process by central government due to Local Government Re-organisation, and a sudden change from Local Plan to Local Development Framework. However, the Executive appreciates the need to have certainty in the planning process for development in the city so that investment decisions can be made with confidence. At the same time we must maintain the setting of the city, and the beneficial environment which makes York an attractive place to live and work.

Residents have been consulted, and have given a clear view on matters like the Green Belt. There have been a large number of reports that have come to the Executive from the all-party LDF Working Group and it would be appropriate to note the amount of time and effort that has been put in by officers and members to reach this stage in the process.

The Executive agreed to progress a city wide article 4 directive from the LDF working group.

20. Customer Complaints

The Executive approve the report presents the findings of the Task Group set up by the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee to carry out a review of Customer Complaints procedures.

21. Cycle City Review

I would like to put on record my thanks to the Cycle City team and what they have achieved by increasing the numbers of people in the city cycling, and a number of key improvements to the network which makes cycling safer in the city.

Cllr Andrew Waller

29/3/11