

1 Leaders Report to Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> September.

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3 Since my last report there have been four meetings of the Executive.

4 The Executive has agreed a single improvement plan following on from the CPA  
5 review which will build upon the sound progress in community leadership and the  
6 good service delivery of the council identified in the inspection. Particular emphasis  
7 has been made by the Executive to progress those objectives which make an impact  
8 on the lives of residents in the city. There will also be improved arrangements for  
9 budget monitoring, and a rethink of member training which will ensure a more  
10 strategic application of funding and planning of councillor skills development.

11 I am pleased that a conclusion has been reached in terms of extending the  
12 racecourse lease as this will assist with the considerable long term investment there  
13 which is important to the York economy. The importance of this was unfortunately  
14 underlined by the consequence of the weather wiping out the Ebor meet. Issues  
15 relating to tackling anti-social behaviour were taken up by senior members, officers  
16 and Police Staff which was the relevant forum for the response to situations outside  
17 of the grounds of the Racecourse. Since Ascot came to York in 2005, and a new  
18 traffic management plan was implemented, there have been considerably fewer  
19 complaints about traffic on race days.

20 Performance figures for the financial year 2007/08 showed a continued improvement  
21 in delivery of services. Of particular note was the further improvement in street  
22 cleanliness with streets of defined acceptable tidiness increasing from 81.8% to  
23 86.5%, and a significant success in waste minimisation seeing a reduction in the  
24 amount of waste (waste to landfill and recycling added together) from 538kg per  
25 person in 2006/07 to 512.25kg per person. This has helped to push the city's  
26 recycling figure to 43.37%. The introduction of a new system for assessments of  
27 residents over the age of 65 has reduced by 9% the proportion of those waiting for an  
28 assessment. We are now in a position that 70% of Housing and Adult Social Services  
29 are in the top 2 quartiles, compare to 23% last year. In City Strategy the performance  
30 indicators in this category have improved or remained stable. There has been a small  
31 reduction in number using the bus service, although York continues to perform well  
32 relative to other cities outside of London. Planning performance (time taken to deal  
33 with applications) has generally been above target and around City Strategy  
34 Performance is markedly above levels in 2003.

35 The city's children continue to perform well in York's schools which is essential for  
36 the continued economic success of the city, and their own access to jobs in the  
37 modern economy. Exclusions have been reduced, and all eight Children's Centres  
38 are open, or on track to be so in the near future. Officers are to be thanked for the  
39 recent outstanding JAR (Joint Area Review) report with 90% of indicators being  
40 above the unitary average

41 Generally it was also a good year for the resources directorate with significant  
42 improvement in benefits section- setting a record for the processing time for new  
43 claims and changes in circumstances. Other significant improvements have been  
44 seen in the York Customer Centre where calls are now being answered promptly and  
45 only a handful of calls are being abandoned. Customer Satisfaction sits at 99%  
46 according to independent research.

47

48 There has been some misrepresentation of the council's outturn figures, and whilst  
49 the accounts were signed off at Full Council on 30<sup>th</sup> June, it is worth pointing out that  
50 of the £6.7 million surplus, nearly half had been accounted for by carry forward and a  
51 reduction in the 2008/9 council tax. Of the remainder, the improvement was due  
52 largely to one-off grants or "wins" on the money markets due to interest rates which  
53 can easily work against the council in future years. Indeed the council was fortunate  
54 that major loans were taken out before the "credit crunch". It would be unsustainable  
55 to use these "one off" benefits for revenue expenditure

56 The council's finances are in a strong position thanks to careful budgeting, and  
57 strenuous attempts by officers and Executive Members to ensure that spending was  
58 brought back into line by the year end within the set budgets. There is a need to  
59 improve the monitoring of expenditure and income through the year and the Third  
60 Quarter monitoring report has been restored.

61 The 2007/08 Capital Programme was one of the most ambitious ever undertaken by  
62 the Council. It has delivered several significant improvements for the city over the last  
63 year.

- 64 1- Refurbishment of Yearsley Pool with an upsurge in swimming at the pool
- 65 2- Improvements to Acomb Library with visitor numbers increasing
- 66 3- Schools modernisation works totalling £1.36 million
- 67 4- Completion of the Skills Centre at Danesgate
- 68 5- £2.7 million invested in 5 children's centres across the city
- 69 6- £2.0 million investment in IT equipment in schools
- 70 7- Design work started on the new Joseph Rowntree School
- 71 8- £2.4 million of the £10 million works on York High School
- 72 9- £6.3 million invested in roads and transport- including the highly successful  
73 Moor Lane roundabout
- 74 10- £11 million works to York's Housing stock.

75

76 In July the Executive responded to the consultation on the Sub National Review  
77 which has been undertaken by central government. Clearly this is of significant  
78 interest to York when the Regional Assembly is abolished, and more powers are  
79 transferred to the Regional Development Agencies. Whilst there are currently good  
80 links between local government in the region and Yorkshire Forward, there is the  
81 potential for a democratic deficit in decision making, and the apportionment of  
82 budgets by an unelected quango.

83

84 Nevertheless, York has a key role to play in the Leeds City Region which has  
85 become the new sub-regional division. The Leaders Board has already played its  
86 part in challenging government policy on eco-towns and the promotion of a solution  
87 which would see more investment in brownfield sites in the sub-region.

88

89 The Multi-Area Agreement (MAA) for Leeds City Region deals with training and skills,  
90 and transport, both of which are key drivers towards a successful economy and high  
91 employment levels in York. However, the fact that it is a top-down approach, rather

92 than the combination of Local Area Agreements in the sub-region does indicate that  
93 there is need to have better working. The transport section of the MAA represents a  
94 reasonable analysis of the issues that the sub region faces. Until recently York fared  
95 poorly in the allocation of capital funds but now we have secured major funding for  
96 Park and Ride and cycling. The MAA may allow us to gain a higher level of  
97 investment.

98

99 The "Thriving City" programme was developed as part of the inclusive "One City"  
100 agenda that I have been pursuing as leader to address the issue of economic  
101 success and social inclusion. Many other cities are now working on council led "credit  
102 crunch" work, and so I have been pleased at how much further ahead York has been  
103 in developing this agenda. The report in July was a "call to arms" across the city, and  
104 I was pleased at the number of responses that the council has received, and officers  
105 have been very busy over the summer, as have I, in meeting local businesses to  
106 investigate what can be done in particular to support small locally owned businesses  
107 who feel particularly vulnerable from the downturn in the national economy. Clearly  
108 there were very strong steers from the Future York report, with progress having been  
109 made on a number of the key recommendations of that report, with the Business  
110 Forum due to commence in October, and a chair of the Economic Development  
111 Partnership having been found in Peter Kay.

112 There will be a report back to the Executive in October when there can be a strategic  
113 review of investing the returned business rate (LAGBI) money in a way which will  
114 deliver sustained support to the York economy and help support jobs, and  
115 employment creation.

116

117 The Executive is fully committed to tackling inequalities within the city, and the report  
118 on the Kingsway West Project marks progress with the work that has been piloted in  
119 the area (although for completeness the Super Output Area boundaries cover parts  
120 of the Foxwood Lane and Gale Lane areas).

121 Good links have been made with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and an  
122 appointment has been made for a community worker, working out of the Citizens  
123 Advice Bureau. The co-ordination of multi-agency work in the ward through the Joint  
124 Action Group (now "Capable Guardian") and links with the KARA, Kingsway Area  
125 Residents Association has assisted the development of planned activity in the pilot  
126 area. There will be considerable work on the take up of benefits, and the Credit  
127 Union, and Energy Efficiency Advice Centre have offered to assist with the follow up  
128 of assistance to individuals. A launch event on 11th September began the dialogue  
129 with the community of the aims and objectives of the pilot to ensure that residents are  
130 engaged with the process which will involve a high degree of doorstep work.

131

132 Another major worry for the city resulting from the national "credit crunch" has been  
133 the increased potential for homelessness due to mortgage repossessions adding to  
134 the existing housing problems. Clearly it is grossly unfair that York families should  
135 suffer from the weaknesses in the regulation of mortgage lenders, but the Council  
136 needs to respond to the issue, and the Executive adopted the Homeless Strategy for  
137 2008/13 which has been drawn up by Housing and Adult Social Services EMAP in  
138 June.

139 The York City Football Club has been through a difficult time since 2003, and the city  
140 has been fortunate that many supporters have worked hard to retain professional  
141 football in the city. The Supporters Trust enabled a short term solution to the

142 ownership issues of Bootham Crescent to ensure that they had a home ground in  
143 order to continue running. In July and September the Executive received reports on  
144 plans to help to ensure that the Football Club survived the period between now and  
145 the completion of a community stadium.

146 Initial designs have been assessed against the benchmark of the Princes Park  
147 "green" stadium in Dartford. A scaled up version of this basic design has been  
148 dialogued with the football and rugby clubs over the last 2 years.

149 For the council to stand aside and allow the Football Club to fail would result the loss  
150 of £2 million contribution to the new community stadium from the Football  
151 Foundation, and the loss of a revenue stream from a paying tenant of the new  
152 stadium. Therefore it would substantially assist the business case for the Football  
153 Club to continue in operation.

154 A number of options were explored over the summer. From the work that has been  
155 done, and with close co-operation of the Football Club it was agreed that the Football  
156 Foundation be approached to roll up the interest payments in the value of the ground.  
157 In return the council would kick start the project for the development of the  
158 community stadium with the appointment of a project manager. This post will have  
159 the responsibility to develop the business case for the community stadium, identify  
160 funding, and consult with the York City Football Club, York City Knights, existing  
161 sports users at Huntington Stadium, and with the wider community for the  
162 development and delivery of the new stadium. This will involve covering issues of site  
163 location.

164

165 The Access York Phase 1 Park and Ride development programme and consultation  
166 plan was approved by the Executive at the end of July. This is essential in order to  
167 access the funding which should be available for the delivery of a new Askham Bar  
168 Park and Ride, with two entirely new sites at the A59 and Wigginton Road. The  
169 investment amounts to £21 million from the Regional Transport Board towards the  
170 total cost of £24 million which will make a major contribution towards reducing traffic  
171 congestion and emission levels in the urban area. Currently there are 4 million P&R  
172 journeys made each year, and this programme will help to intercept more cars from  
173 entering the city centre. Anticipated development, such as York Central , makes  
174 improvements like this essential, and it is a tribute to the speed of response to the  
175 opportunity that officers and senior councillors were able to make a successful bid  
176 for the resources. New features include "park and cycle", and at least two would  
177 offer the long term possibility of "park and rail". In order to secure the offered  
178 funding there is some urgency in concluding the submission of the business case  
179 for these schemes.

180 The Executive received the Tang Hall Area Asset Management Plan Ad-hoc  
181 Scrutiny Committee Final Report, and the Tang Hall Area Asset Management Plan.

182 The basic argument for the new headquarters still remain, with considerable  
183 savings to the council tax payers resulting from the convergence of offices to a  
184 central Headquarters. In parallel there is the need to deliver a customer centre  
185 equipped for 21st century expectations, improved working conditions, and buildings  
186 which are environmentally friendly. These are matters have not gone away. The  
187 Executive set out a decision making framework which is robust, objective, and  
188 measured in pace so that decisions are not rushed, but at the same time built on an

189 appreciation that delays eat into the financial advantages delivered by the  
190 headquarters project. This is after all a project which has previously received in  
191 principle all-party support, and is being done for the benefit of the residents of York  
192 for a fit-for-purpose building.

193 In order to demonstrate that the council is ensuring that the correct option is being  
194 progressed for value for the council tax payer, and achievement of the key  
195 objectives of the scheme, a review has been made of all the original sites, and any  
196 others that have come forward since the previous assessment.

197 The Executive does believe that the headquarters should be based in the city  
198 centre, to contribute to the regeneration of the city centre, and to support city centre  
199 businesses. However in the interests of demonstrating objectivity an appraisal of  
200 city centre versus 'out of town' will take place, in order to test the previous work that  
201 was done to come forward with a city centre location.

202 The report received in September will ensure the rapid assessment of a refined  
203 number of options. Officers are keenly aware that the preferred options need to  
204 come within the existing budget. The appointment of a consultant is to ensure that  
205 the Director of City Strategy, who has taken on specific responsibility for leading the  
206 project, has capacity to deliver what is expected of this part of the process.

207 A meeting took place with Maddy Jago of English Heritage (Regional Director)  
208 involving the Chief Executive and myself on 19th August. Since then I have  
209 received a letter from Maddy Jago in response to mine which sets out a way  
210 forward for progressing closer working between English Heritage and the council  
211 which is vital for future developments in the city.

212 Also in the interests of improved communication with key consultees I have  
213 supported the creation of a 'Design Consultation Group'. Whilst this will not have a  
214 'design by committee' remit, it will nevertheless assist with an improved dialogue  
215 within the city.

216 The Executive have considered a report on the issue of cross bus company  
217 ticketing which has been an issue for over 20 years, and was a by-product of the  
218 deregulation legislation introduced by central government.

219 The officer report revealed that in York, where most services are provided by First,  
220 only 5% of bus journeys involve passengers changing from one operator to another.  
221 Unfortunately the introduction of a system that would allow for a single fare to be  
222 paid for these split journeys would cost over a third of a million pounds to introduce  
223 plus an ongoing commitment from taxpayers of £130,000 in subsequent years. This  
224 equates to a subsidy of £2.45 per journey and is far beyond the financial resources  
225 currently available to the Council. Such a pass system would also take about 2  
226 years to implement.

227 The Executive did however ask officers to explore whether we can introduce cross  
228 ticketing to those destinations which attract significant numbers of passengers.  
229 Such destinations would include the University, the Hospital and possibly some  
230 retail developments.

231 The introduction of a more general "go anywhere" smart card may have to wait until  
232 the current YorCard trials in South Yorkshire have been completed. The extension  
233 of the Yorcard system to York - which is similar to the Oyster card used in London -

234 would not only get over the difficulties of cross ticketing on buses but would also  
235 open up the opportunity of Metrocard type use on local trains.

236

237 Cllr Andrew Waller