
Meeting	Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	27 July 2021
Present	Councillors Norman (Chair), Daubeney (Vice-Chair), Douglas, Hook, Orrell (Substitute), D Taylor and Wann (Substitute)
Apologies	Councillors Hunter and Pearson
In Attendance	Councillor Waller (Executive Member for Economy & Strategic Planning)

1. Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests, that they might have in the business on the agenda. No interests were declared.

2. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

3. Q4 Finance Monitor

Members considered a report which provided details of the 2020/21 finance and performance out-turn position across services within the Economy and Place Directorate, as reported to Executive on 24 June 2021.

The report highlighted the main financial issues resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, including the need to employ additional staff in the Waste Collection Service, funding provided to assist local businesses, and the impact of the lockdowns on income streams such as parking charges. Details of performance against the relevant core indicators in the Council Plan were attached at Annex 1, and the 2020/21 scorecard at Annex 2.

In response to questions from Members, officers confirmed that:

- The variance in Development Management related mainly to a reduction in larger applications and an increase in household applications, which brought in less income.
- There had been no significant increase in vacancy rates in the city centre.
- All travel modes had significantly reduced during the pandemic, reflecting a rise in people working from home.
- There was no evidence of a move from cycling to car travel; although cycling rates were lower than in 2014, that year had seen a 'bounce' due to the Tour de France.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To confirm that the committee has been updated on the directorate's latest finance and performance position.

4. Quarterly Economic Update

Members considered a report which provided an update on York's economic position and response to the Covid-19 pandemic for the period April to June 2021. In presenting the report, officers confirmed that the city was experiencing a strong recovery but that challenges remained, including around recruitment; notably in relation to apprenticeships, hospitality and HGV drivers. An update was provided on the unemployment figures at paragraph 13, which by the end of June had fallen to below 4,000.

A number of local business representatives had been invited to the meeting to provide their opinions on the situation in York and the council's response. The following representatives attended and addressed the committee as summarised below, then responded to Members' questions:

- Martin Spencer, of Splatt and Kchoom, said he was grateful for the financial support provided by the council and recovery since re-opening had been good so far. He would like to see a more visible police / street ranger presence and a focus on the city centre as safe and family-friendly, plus action to address public concerns about a lack of rubbish bins and toilets.
- Rebecca Hill, of Galtres Lodge, said that from an Indie York perspective most businesses had bounced back well; her own hotel and restaurant were at capacity. However, she remained concerned about potential staff shortages, the interpretation of legislation on pavement licences, noise, and uncertainty around the extension of footstreet hours.

- Carolyn Frank, FSB Development Manager for York & North Yorkshire, thanked the council for their response, which had put York in a uniquely strong position. However, concerns remained about the level of debt faced by businesses and full recovery was a long way off. She would like to see a one-stop shop for businesses to go to for help and advice, and a wider focus that went beyond tourism and the city centre.
- Martin Bradnam, of Hospitality Association York, said there had been a substantial recovery in occupancy rates in York, which in July were only 8% lower than in 2019. There was a reliance on domestic travel and social events, as international and business travel remained low. Staffing shortages were causing problems and a recruitment drive was under way. There was a need to look further ahead, and he would be speaking to Make It York about a marketing strategy.

The Chair thanked the speakers for their contributions and they were invited to contact officers directly with details of the issues raised.

In response to questions from Members, officers clarified that the community hubs remained the focus for information and guidance and for support to more deprived wards. Officers were open to suggestions for improvements. A report to Executive in August would provide details of plans for the remaining Covid grants and the council's support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) via its city centre holdings. The Executive Member for Economy & Strategic Planning confirmed that he had requested that details of the community impact of the current economic situation be included in the next quarterly update to his Decision Session.

Resolved: That the contents of the report, and the information provided at the meeting, be noted.

Reason: To confirm that the committee has been updated on York's economic position and response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

5. Work Plan

Members considered the committee's work plan for the remainder of the 2021-22 municipal year.

Resolved: That the work plan be approved, subject to the following amendment:

- The meeting on 3 November 2021 to be a forum, and the meeting on 21 December 2021 to be a formal meeting, enabling the Local Transport Plan to be scrutinised in public.

Reason: So that the committee has a planned programme of work in place.

Cllr G Norman, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.28 pm].