

**Decision Session – Executive Member for
Economic Development and Community
Engagement**

2 May 2017

Report of the Assistant Director - Communities and Equalities

York Human Rights City

Summary

1. This report sets out how the Council will contribute to the York Human Rights City initiative.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member is asked to commit the Council to supporting the York Human Rights City initiative and to pursue the 5 human rights indicators.

Reason: To promote York as a vibrant, diverse, fair, safe and international city.

Background

3. On 24 April the Lord Mayor, as first citizen of York, will sign the declaration of York as a city of human rights, the first in the UK.
4. This initiative is steered by the York Human Rights City Network (YHRCN) which includes representatives of the City of York Council, York CVS, Citizens Advice York, University of York, International Service, North Yorkshire Police, the City of Sanctuary movement and York Explore. Financial supporters include the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Economic and Social Research Council.

5. The aim of York City of Human Rights is :

To establish York as the UK's first Human Rights City. To be a catalyst for York people, organisations and business to champion a vibrant, diverse, fair and safe city.

6. Being a human rights city is about going on a journey. We will have reached a significant milestone on that journey when:

- Practitioners and policy-makers in the City use human rights to guide their work
 - Public awareness and debate about human rights issues occurs through regular public events
 - Human rights are used to provide protection for vulnerable groups, both locally and as a form of international solidarity
7. A human rights city is consistent with “A sustainable, resilient and collaborative One Planet York” and will make a contribution to One Planet York’s aim of a fair and inclusive city determined to identify and root out poverty and disadvantage.
 8. The YHRCN began its work in 2011. To generate public awareness and debate, it has hosted regular human rights-related events in the city including *Opionate* workshops in secondary schools and an annual Human Rights Film Festival. To foster the city as a safe space and protect vulnerable groups the Network supports a range of initiatives, for example, the White Ribbon initiative tackling domestic abuse, whilst the Centre for Applied Human Rights hosts a protective fellowship scheme for human rights activists from around the world who are at risk. A conference held in 2016 brought together national and international delegates to share good practice and champion York’s approach.

Key Implications for the Council

The Indicator Project:

9. At the heart of York City of Human Rights is a unique human rights indicator project. An indicator is a piece of information which helps tell a story about and measure York’s progress as a Human Rights City. City of York Council has supported the project both through providing statistical information to help develop the indicators and, as a service provider and commissioner, by embedding the indicators into the Council’s work.
10. At the outset of the project, residents of York were asked to identify their priority rights. Five clear local priorities emerged:
 - education
 - non-discrimination and equality
 - health
 - an adequate standard of living
 - housing

11. For each right one or more indicators was identified, determined by consultation, expert input and the availability of data. These indicators are not a comprehensive list of local priorities, but they are a means of developing an inclusive conversation about human rights in the city. YHRCN will publish a report annually documenting and analysing progress against these indicators. More indicators may be added over time.
12. The indicators are attached at Annex A.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

13. The Council has embedded a human rights approach into its decision-making processes through the introduction of an integrated impact assessment tool which is currently being rolled out across the authority. This asks officers and elected members to consider any new policy or service provision against questions relating to human rights, equalities, sustainability and health. This “better decision-making” tool ensures that human rights are properly reflected within the council’s decision-making.

Workforce training:

14. Senior Council Officers from across directorates have received human rights awareness training delivered by the British Institute of Human Rights.

Way Forward

15. Organisations in York are now asked to pledge their support for York’s priority rights. To be a Human Rights City means that we all - individuals and organisations - support York’s priority rights and believe that a human rights approach can help make York a better place to live, work and visit.

Council Plan

16. The York City of Human Rights initiative contributes to the following Council Plan priorities:
 - All York’s residents live and thrive in a city which allows them to contribute fully to their communities and neighbourhoods
 - All children and adults are listened to, and their opinions considered
 - Every child has the opportunity to get the best possible start in life
 - Residents are encouraged and supported to live healthily

- A focus on the delivery of frontline services for residents and the protection of community facilities.

Implications

17. There are no additional implications associated with this report.

Risk Management

18. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy.

Contact Details

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Specialist Implications Officers: N/A			
Wards Affected:			All ✓
For further information please contact the author of the report			

Abbreviations:

YHRCN – York Human Rights City Network

Annexes:

Annex A: York's Human Rights Indicator Baseline Report