
Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member For Economy And Strategic Planning
Date	24 November 2020
Present	Councillor Waller (Executive Member)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Executive Member was invited to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests that they might have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been one registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Cllr. Claire Douglas Ward Member for Heworth spoke on agenda items 4 and 5.

Regarding agenda Item 4, York's Inward Investment Approach, she expressed concern that of the 1,852 new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects the UK secured in Financial Year 2019/20, the Yorkshire and Humber region attracted 104 projects, of that York attracted only two projects over the same period, creating 18 jobs. She considered this to be below what should be expected for a city of York's stature, transport connectivity and highly trained workforce base.

Regarding agenda Item 5, the council's Apprenticeship Levy Strategy, she was in agreement with the need to transfer as much unused City of York Council levy to local SMEs as possible and expressed concern with the level of unused levy the council held.

3. SECTOR ROUNDTABLE UPDATE - OUTPUT AND NEXT STEPS

The Executive Member considered a report which provided an update on the Council's sector roundtable initiative, an initiative

established in partnership with York's key business support agencies.

The Economic Growth Manager, Economy & Place, was in attendance to present the report and to respond to questions.

Key points arising from discussion on this item included:

- Businesses had found the roundtable discussions beneficial and had welcomed the opportunity to have a two-way discussion with the Council. The intelligence gathered from these sessions had also helped the council to shape its response to businesses within the City.
- The Executive Member highlighted the ways in which he and the Council Leader had written letters on behalf of businesses who may have missed out on grants, along with other council's making similar representations, which will have played a part in the lifting of the bar on support for businesses with rateable value greater than £51k and therefore not eligible for the governments Covid-19 business support grants.
- The Executive Member was pleased to note the level of direct contact with local businesses. Over a thousand businesses had registered for the weekly business update with a further two thousand receiving this information through the various business network channels the Council worked with.
- Arising from roundtable discussions, it had been useful to gain further insight on the obstacles businesses were facing, looking towards long-term recovery. Aspects such as: utilising space for grow-on companies, providing support to assist businesses to re-locate within the centre of the city, and the expansion of companies to ensure that opportunities for job growth were maximised. The Executive Member requested that the next update report include the work undertaken to respond to such requests.
- The Executive Member was pleased to note the efforts to support businesses in the City in preparation for the EU exit. It was reported that the North Yorkshire LEP had received funding from BEIS to employ a further five Advisers to assist businesses in the City with direct, on hand support. Further information was available online from the Chamber of Commerce and Make It York, regarding accurate form compliance to ensure goods could get in and out of the country. The Executive Member requested regular updates closely monitoring this

transition, to be included in the quarterly economic updates received.

Resolved: The Executive Member:

- (i) Noted the contents of the report on the Council's sector roundtable initiative;
- (ii) Agreed to continue business engagement through the sector roundtable approach, recognising that levels of engagement would vary in accordance with available staff resource;
- (iii) Requested that the next update report include work undertaken in response to obstacles businesses were facing, in relation to long-term recovery; and
- (iv) Requested regular updates closely monitoring businesses transition in relation to EU exit, to be included in the quarterly economic updates received.

Reason: To support York's economic recovery from Covid-19 and to ensure that local business receive their fair share of support in preparation for the EU exit.

4. YORK'S APPROACH TO INWARD INVESTMENT

The Executive Member considered a report outlining York's Approach to Inward Investment. He had requested this report, conscious of the need to ensure York was in a strong position in respect of recovery. The Head of Economic Growth was in attendance to present the report and to respond to questions.

Matters arising from discussion on this item included:

- It was noted that there was current interest in moving businesses out of large cities. York was ideally placed for this. Where they work with our existing businesses such as Bio-sciences, rail tech, that would be an important feature of long-term recovery.
- It was noted that uncertainty of trade agreements in relation to the threat of a hard Brexit had had a significant cooling effect for foreign investment to the UK.
- Equally, uncertainty over York Central. The Executive Member thanked officers for their efforts in persuading Government to ensure significant funding for this project would be made.

- The Executive Member highlighted the need for all parties and organisations to work together to ensure that the work outlined in this paper is continued and to secure long-term, consistent investment that fits with the strengths of the City.

Resolved: The Executive Member:

- (i) Noted the contents of the report and approve The Council's approach to inward investment;
- (ii) Approved the creation of a York prospectus that outlines the city's inward investment offer and sector-specific propositions; and
- (iii) Requested regular updates are included within the regular quarterly economic reports to show what is being done to encourage people to perceive York as an area of long-term investment.

Reason: To attract inward investment to York, boosting economic activity and creating new jobs.

5. APPRENTICESHIP LEVY TRANSFER STRATEGY (CYC)

The Executive Member considered a report which recommended that the council promotes its apprenticeship levy transfer service to: support micro, SME, public sector and VCSE organisations to benefit from any of the council's unallocated levy funds, up to a maximum of 20% (threshold for reviewing allocated funds) and, encourage other local levy paying businesses and public sector organisations to do similar. This would help to ensure that any unallocated apprenticeship levy funding is reinvested in York to support local priorities, rather than it being lost to the city. The Skills Team Manager, Education & Skills and the Assistant Director – Education & Skills, were in attendance to present the report and to respond to questions.

The following key points were made during discussion of this item:

- Officers had recognised that they were unable to use all of the allocation due to Covid restrictions limiting activity and had been encouraging partners to access this.
- It was noted that there had been very strict restrictions from the outset, regarding how this funding could be spent. It had not been a general skills budget. It had been

intended to promote apprenticeship activity within organisations to encourage new or existing apprenticeships. That staff apprentice would still need to: receive a salary, be allocated a work based mentor and would need a time allocation to liaise with the provider. Many other local authorities had also not been able to spend their allocated levy.

Resolved: The Executive Member:

- (i) Confirmed the council's commitment to transfer any of its unallocated annual apprenticeship levy funds, up to a maximum of 20% (threshold for reviewing allocated funds), to local employers to support the city's economic recovery;
- (ii) Agreed the framework through which local micro, SME, public sector and VCSE organisations can apply to receive a transfer of the council's unallocated levy funds to support new apprenticeship starts within their organisation;
- (iii) Noted the expansion of the Council Apprenticeship Task Group's remit to include decision-making on applications for City of York Council Levy Transfer;
- (iv) Agreed that the City of York Council can actively promote the opportunity for local micro, SME, public sector and VCSE organisations to benefit from the council's apprenticeship levy transfer service and its support for other local levy paying businesses to do similar; and
- (v) Requested regular reports, through the quarterly business updates, on the outcomes and experiences of the apprenticeship team with the aim of addressing obstacles to accessing and utilising relevant grants.

Reason: To support local businesses (large and small) to make use of any unallocated apprenticeship levy funding, by reinvesting it in the city to support local priorities.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT

The Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No.2) Regulations 2019 requires a contribution receiving authority to publish an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) no later than the 31st December 2020.

Resolved: The Executive Member:

- (i) Noted the contents of this report and delegated to the Corporate Director of Economy and Place, responsibility to publish the IFS on the Council's web site in accordance with annual deadlines; and
- (ii) Would receive an annual report on this matter to this decision session.

Reason: To ensure compliancy and in order to monitor its progress.

Cllr Waller, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.58 am].