

Executive

11 February 2021

Report of the Chief Operating Officer
Portfolio of the Leader of the Council

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy – February Update

Summary

1. This report provides an update on activities both directly in response to Covid-19 and the work to support recovery and renewal. This follows previous Executive decisions to approve the Recovery and Renewal Plan, which frames the Council's recovery activity for this year.
2. In this month's report, there is an update on response work related not only to Covid-19 but simultaneous concerns around flooding, pressures upon discharge from hospital and cold weather. The impacts of Brexit are considered, alongside the need for the safe reopening of the city when restrictions allow.
3. It is highly likely given the fast-changing nature of the pandemic that some of the information within this report will have changed between publication and the Executive meeting. Updates will, therefore, be given at the meeting.

Recommendations

4. Executive is asked to:
 - a. Note the contents of the report

Background

5. On 25th June, Executive received a report to outline the council's 1-year Recovery and Renewal Strategy. This highlighted the need for a revised set of strategies to address the very significant and immediate impacts of coronavirus across all aspects of life in our city.
6. The strategy set the following principles upon which we will build our response:

- a. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of our residents, against the immediate threat of coronavirus and the consequences of changes to the way we live. Public Health guidance will be paramount in all the decisions we make.
- b. Support the economic recovery of the City, helping to create a strong, sustainable and inclusive economy for the future. Learning lessons from the challenges of coronavirus, promote a system that utilises the strengths of our city and region to the benefit of all York's residents and businesses.
- c. Protect and prioritise the City's environment and reinforce our work to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- d. Pursue improvements in service delivery where they have been identified as part of the Response phase, creating a more efficient and resilient system.
- e. Reinforce and restore public confidence in the resilience of public agencies and resilience to future challenges and emergencies.

7. Included in June's report was a One Year Transport and Place Strategy, as the first part of the economic recovery approach. A report in July supplemented this with a Business Support Plan, a Skills and Employment Plan and a Tourism Marketing Plan.

CYC Recovery and Renewal Plan (1 year)				
Economic Recovery Plan			Communities	Corporate
Business Support Plan	One Year Transport and Place Plan	Skills and Employment Plan	Recovery from coronavirus: A community-based approach	Organisational Development Plan
Tourism Marketing Plan				

Latest Outbreak Update

8. Given the rapidly changing context and increase in cases in York, an update on the latest situation will be given verbally to the Executive at the meeting.
9. The latest official 7 day rate of positive cases of Covid in York is, at 29 January, 269.2 per 100,000 population. This is higher than the average rate of cases for the Yorkshire and Humber region but below the national average. In recent weeks, the case rates in the city have fallen substantially following a sharp rise. However they are still too high, and the council is reminding everyone of the importance of staying at home where possible, to protect the NHS and save lives.

10. During the third week of January, a combination of factors began to put additional strain on the council's response efforts. Snow melt and heavy rain across the catchments of the Ouse and Foss led to rising river levels. Whilst normal flood protocols were enacted, additional challenges were created by the need to ensure Covid-safety for officers, partner agencies and residents during these operations. The council and partners went out early with mitigation measures which helped to allow residents to plan and enact their own flood plans. The response worked well, despite the challenges, and with river levels peaking at just below 4.8m, the defences protected as many homes and businesses as possible.
11. At the same time, additional pressure was being felt by social care teams working closely with health colleagues, as the number of people who needed hospital care increased significantly. This required all parts of the system to work together to identify places where people could be safely cared for and supported, including those with highly complex needs. Partnership working, incredible commitment and flexibility by all staff and good communication between agencies ensured safe arrangements for patients and residents but the challenge was and remains significant.
12. Towards the end of the week, the weather also turned colder again and gritting teams were deployed across the city. Given the multiple competing demands upon council front line teams and back-office support, the fact that response protocols coped with the challenges was pleasing, acknowledging the round-the-clock efforts of staff required to respond.
13. The council continues to support the Vale of York CCG and Primary Care will the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccination programme. The vaccination programme continues to progress well and is expected to meet the target of offering the vaccine to the first four Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) priority groups by 15th February 2021. There has been good feedback about the mass vaccination centres in York. Initial logistical teething problems with parking and flow of people have been resolved and the sites are operating at a high-level of throughput.
14. The council is progressing well with the implementation of the Covid-19 testing and contact tracing strategy for the City. Testing for people with symptoms of Covid-19 continues to be available at the drive-through site at Poppleton Bar and the walk-in site at Wentworth Way. Rapid asymptomatic or symptom-free testing continues to be available at the York public health team run sites at York St John University and University of York, with a further site opening at the York Stadium Leisure Complex on 8 February 2021. There are also mobile testing sites at York Acorn Rugby Club and in Haxby to improve access to testing in those communities that have recently seen a high rate of infection.

15. This approach to providing testing in areas of higher rates of infection is proving effective at identifying cases and represents a flexible model to continue to address community transmission. The council is also lobbying for more granular data from Government and health agencies to support this more targeted approach to testing and support local track and trace systems.
16. The council contact tracing service provided by the Public Health Team continues to be effective in reaching the majority of positive cases referred by the NHS Test and Trace Service

Recovery Updates

Economic

17. Given the current lockdown restrictions, the council has continued to ensure businesses can access available grants and financial support as quickly as possible. Looking ahead, when lockdown restrictions are lifted, there is evidence from recent reports (including Centre for Cities) that York is well placed to recover quickly in comparison to come other places.
18. In particular, the return of visitors to support York's visitor and tourism economy will be welcome for the many of our businesses. However, it is likely that York will be a very attractive destination as soon restrictions allow visits from further away and it is important that the city can cope safely with the volume of people, given the need for ongoing social distancing.
19. Officers are working with businesses and transport operators to ensure plans are robust to deal with a return to high levels of visitors, supporting local businesses whilst prioritising public health.
20. Since 31st December, the UK has been subject to post-Brexit rules and regulations. As previously reported to Executive, Covid-19 has been a far higher immediate priority for businesses and there was uncertainty both in terms of the intelligence the council received and businesses themselves as to whether all necessary preparations had been made.
21. At this point, the evidence base of impacts is still emerging. The York and North Yorkshire LEP has been continuing to liaise with business at a regional level and has reported some emerging issues with trade arrangements. Over half of the region's import and export activity is to/from the EU. There are emerging concerns about:
 - a. shipments not complying with Rules of Origin or not adhering to Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) requirements;

- b. some items not meeting EU rules on export. One example is raw sausages and other minced meats (unless frozen);
- c. a drop in available migrant workers;
- d. the additional administration costs needed to trade with the EU, especially given the predominance of small businesses;
- e. the ending of EU funding programmes for sectors such as BioTech.

22. The council itself has seen some isolated challenges in terms of supply chain. This has affected spare parts for mechanical equipment from European suppliers, impacting on the availability of particular machines. Work is ongoing with suppliers to try to rectify the supply issues.

23. So far, the council has helped more than 6,000 businesses, paid out £56m in business grants, awarded over £140million in grants and relief, with City of York Council one of the fastest paying councils in the UK. In January, senior councillors approved proposals to extend grant payments to businesses severely impacted by current national restrictions. These additional categories eligible for the Additional Restrictions Grant were:

- a. Offering grants to businesses which trade almost exclusively in York, but are not residents of the area, including many York-licensed taxi drivers and market traders who missed out on previous grants
- b. Giving the small number of B&Bs and hotels who legitimately pay council tax, rather than business rates, the same level of grant as other accommodation businesses
- c. Adding the childcare sector to the list of eligible businesses, and allowing nurseries to qualify for the highest level of grant
- d. Supporting supply-chain businesses who are dealing with the closures of their customers.

24. For those businesses who apply successfully for the first time, a grant for November's lockdown period will automatically be paid. Any business which has already successfully applied for the schemes does not need to reapply. Grants will automatically be distributed and this is being managed by the council's payments team, who are aiming to process the grants quickly.

Communities

25. 31 January marked a year since the first cases in the UK were reported in York. Over the last 12 months, as it has throughout the city's history, York's community spirit and resilience has been displayed time and time again.

26. For example:

- a. Over 4,000 people stepped forward to volunteer.
- b. Thousands of residents have been supported from our 9 community hubs.
- c. We have home-schooled, supported local businesses and adapted to the many challenges
- d. Schools and early year's settings have worked hard to keep schools open. 100 per cent of schools are open for vulnerable children and children of key workers
- e. City of York Council continue to provide 2,100 children free school meals and 6,400 vouchers have been provided with a value of £95,000

27. The efforts of residents, communities and institutions across York have been remarkable. However, it is clear that much of the impact of Covid-19 remains to be felt, with the likelihood of increased poverty and debt, mental health and other health issues, rising inequality and the need to rebuild and strengthen community connections which have been impacted by enforced isolation. The refresh of the Council Plan and development of a 10 year City Plan (see paragraph 33 below) is driven directly by the recognition that the human costs of Covid will continue to be felt for years to come.

Corporate

28. 31 January marks a year since the first cases in the UK were reported in York. At the time, nobody would have predicted the enormity of impact of the pandemic to come. However, there is evidence that the initial response by all agencies in York was effective. Research published in the *Epidemiology and Infection Journal*¹ shows that following those first two cases, there was no onward transmission and for a short time the actions taken helped keep the city and the country safe.

29. The anniversary has attracted considerable media scrutiny, reflecting the media interest at the time. As a result, the council has worked with local, regional and national media to make sure the way York's response is reported reflects the considerable effort of officers and members, public health, partners and residents and businesses to continue to keep the city safe.

30. Following local and national insight showing that people are suffering from "Covid fatigue", with the risk they are less likely to adhere to the restrictions or follow public health guidance, the council has launched a campaign designed to highlight the impact of Covid on York residents and businesses. Known as "mycovidStory", the campaign retells sometimes

¹ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/epidemiology-and-infection/article/covid19-public-health-management-of-the-first-two-confirmed-cases-identified-in-the-uk/86BFB6BE58CA5260915C3E4B45D31D59>

harrowing stories from residents, medical professionals and those adversely affected by Covid. The campaign has been supported by a wide range of partners including York Hospital, CVS, St Leonards Hospice, Universities and sports clubs.

31. As outlined in the Capital Budget Report, also on this agenda, there continues to be significant investment in York to support a strong and sustained recovery. The council remains committed to the key capital investments in support of our major regeneration projects.
32. 2020 was a really significant year for the York Central Project. Following the granting of the Outline Planning consent in 2019, the Reserved Matters application for the first phase of enabling infrastructure was submitted in April and approved in November. In August the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) awarded a £77.1m funding package to the landowner partners Homes England / Network Rail for delivery. Detailed Design work for the infrastructure was completed, benefitting from the outcomes of Early Contractor Involvement, and pricing is being confirmed by the contractor. In July, delivery of an early phase of enabling works was approved by Executive with CYC / York North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnerships (YNYLEP) funding, ahead of the MHCLG announcement. This has now been contracted and starting on site this month to clear areas of the site ahead of the main works.
33. The information necessary to discharge the West Yorkshire Transport Fund Final Business Cases conditionality was submitted in December and formal approval and release of the £23.5 WYCA Transport Fund is anticipated by March 2021. We should therefore see delivery of the infrastructure commence later in the year to open up the site for development.
34. To ensure that the full potential of the York Central development to deliver wider social and environmental benefits is realised; Executive released £150k in November to undertake a Housing Feasibility study for the initial phase of development, working with the landowner partners. A YNYLEP funded review has also examined the potential to deliver the standards of Environmental Performance necessary in commercial developments to accord with the Council's net zero carbon ambitions
35. There has been significant progress too on the Castle Gateway project. Planning permission has been secured for both Castle Mills and the new St George's Field multi-storey car park which are the first key sites in the delivery of the masterplan. Procurement is under way to appoint a contractor to undertake the detailed design of Castle Mills and provide a tender price for construction. At that point a report will be brought to the Executive in the autumn of 2021 to approve the project and allocate the total construction budget, and to decide whether to proceed with the

procurement of a contractor for St George's Field. This would provide the replacement car parking which would allow Castle Car Park to close to be replaced with new public realm. The design work for that public realm is underway, with a planning application due to be submitted in the summer, to create a shovel-ready project to give the council the best opportunity of securing external or government funding

36. Recognising the changed context within which the council will be operating for the coming years, the Council Plan is being refreshed to identify any areas of new or additional focus. Alongside this, work is underway with city partners to structure a 10-year plan to help shape recovery and build on York's strengths. The plan will unite the strategic direction provided by existing city-wide strategies and policies, creating an overall direction of travel at a city level over the coming decade. By doing so, the increased alignment of the objectives of city partners will support greater clarity of messaging out to communities, businesses and investors, supporting York's recovery. York is already being identified as a place with significant potential to recover quickly and build back better. Creating a compelling strategy at a city level will support and add to this potential. This will be reported on to Executive in due course.

Council Plan

37. The Recovery and Renewal Strategy outlines activities for the next year to allow the continued achievement of Council Plan outcomes.

Implications

- **Financial** – No specific impacts identified in this report.
- **Human Resources** – No specific impacts identified.
- **One Planet Council / Equalities** – A principle of recovery is to ensure climate change is considered in decisions taken. The economic recovery plans recognise and respond to the unequal impact of coronavirus and the risk of increasing levels of inequality as a result.
- **Legal** – No specific impacts identified.
- **Crime and Disorder** – No specific impacts identified.
- **Information Technology** – No specific impacts identified.

Risk Management

38. There remain significant areas of risk in responding to this crisis across all areas of recovery. The highest priority continues to be the health and wellbeing of residents and all planning and decisions will be taken with this in mind.

Contact Details

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**Report
Approved**

Date 03/02/21

Wards Affected: List wards or tick box to indicate all

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Reports

Update on Coronavirus Response – 7 May 2020

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s139955/Coronavirus%20Executive%20Report.pdf>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy - June

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=59688&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI55501>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy Update – July

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/mglssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=59899>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy update - August

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=60167&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI55914>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy update – September

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s142400/Recovery%20and%20Renewal%20Update%20Report.pdf>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy update – October

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=60724&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI56530>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy - November Update

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s144127/Recovery%20and%20Renewal%20Update%20-%20November%202020%20v0.3.pdf>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy – December update

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=61412&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI57153>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy –January Update

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=61755&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI57489>