
Executive

17th November 2009

Report of the Director of City Strategy

Economic Masterplan and York Renaissance Team

Summary

1. This report seeks the approval of the Executive to a proposal to undertake an economic masterplan for the city for the delivery of major projects, to establish a York Renaissance Team and to create a York Renaissance Academy to provide a programme of training and development in place-making for existing staff and the new team, to be funded by Yorkshire Forward.
2. The report has a good strategic fit with the long term aspirations of the city, particularly in relation to the Thriving City themes within the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Background

3. One of the recommendations contained in the Future York Group report was that the City of York Council should prepare a Masterplan, reflecting the Future York vision, to guide development and investment decisions, and to promote development. The Group identified this recommendation on the basis that a detailed plan was required to show how their vision could be implemented with information about developments in particular areas and timescales and phasing required. Since the work of the Future York Group, their considerations around the vision have been considered as part of the review of the Sustainable Community Strategy, subsequently approved by the Without Walls Local Strategic Partnership and the Council last year. The York Economic Partnership has also been established as the strategic thematic partnership with responsibility for the objectives set out for “Thriving City” and to consider how best to take forward the recommendations of the Future York Group. Economic conditions have changed since the Future York Group report and a further insight into the prospects for a prosperous local economy has been provided by the Centre for Cities report on York. This report has been considered by the York Economic Partnership and a number of key actions have been identified in response to this.
4. The need for an economic masterplan and a positive approach to attract investment to development sites in the City has therefore only exacerbated in recent times. There are an unprecedented number of major projects underway or in the pipeline in York which will shape the city for generations to come. These include the expansion of the University of York, major city centre mixed use schemes, the York Northwest sites and an Area Action Plan for the City Centre that will seek to improve the quality of the public realm and accessibility. The city is likely to grow and change significantly in the forthcoming years, and it is important to ensure that new developments leave a positive legacy in terms of both economic impact and high standards of design. The importance of this initiative has also been recognised in the Geographic Programme for York established by Yorkshire Forward. Discussions have taken place with Yorkshire Forward and English Heritage over how best to take forward this initiative. Approval from both these organisations has now been given to a programme for

the renaissance of the city, encompassing three distinct but related elements:

- an economic masterplan and visioning exercise, to be funded by Yorkshire Forward;
- the creation of a York Renaissance Team consisting of 6 additional posts for 3 years, with part funding to one post by English Heritage and the remainder of funding for these posts to be provided by Yorkshire Forward; and
- the development of a renaissance academy in York which will enhance staff skills in “place-making”, again to be funded by Yorkshire Forward.

5. The purpose of the economic masterplan is essentially to examine the economic potential of the city and consider how the various major projects, current and proposed, can be pulled together into a coherent strategy that will provide greater certainty for future investment. It is intended that this work will have a strong focus on the delivery of major developments, ensuring these take account of York’s attractiveness and heritage, as well as maximise their economic, social and environmental potential. This visioning and masterplanning work will also help to inform future work with the preparation of the Local Development Framework, particularly in relation to the City Centre Action Plan. The Local Development Framework will set the land use and planning framework for planning future developments in the City; the economic masterplan will help the delivery of major projects and give a physical expression to the policies and proposals set out in the LDF. Further details of the visioning and economic masterplanning work to be commissioned by Yorkshire Forward is attached in Annex A to this report. Yorkshire Forward are proposing to appoint Professor Alan Simpson to lead this work with a view to the economic masterplan being completed by May next year. A programme for significant consultation and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders is currently being prepared.

6. The economic masterplan will also provide the context within which a newly established York Renaissance Team will function. This new team will consist of 6 newly established dedicated posts for a three year period, namely:

- Head of Renaissance;
- Senior Regeneration Architect;
- Urban Designer;
- Landscape Architect;
- Heritage Renaissance Officer;
- Renaissance Assistant.

The post of Heritage Renaissance Officer is part funded by English Heritage with Yorkshire Forward providing the funding for salary and on costs for all other posts. The Council will be required to provide accommodation and other support costs for the team; this will need to be found from existing budgets. Job descriptions have been prepared for these posts and gradings are currently being evaluated; an update on gradings will be given at the meeting.

7. The York Renaissance Team will lead on the delivery of major developments in the City, in line with the economic masterplan. It will also help to deliver the key projects emerging from the work on the City Centre Action Plan, including public realm, accessibility improvements and proposals to enhance gateway streets. This team will work closely alongside existing staff, particularly those involved with the LDF, Action Plans, conservation and development control. The programme has been specifically designed to complement existing activity within the Directorate of City Strategy, with initiatives to enhance skills of existing staff alongside the York Renaissance Team. The new team will add value by bringing in additional capacity in relation to major development projects and will also bring additional design skills (architecture, urban and landscape design) to supplement the very experienced but limited in house resource. This will enable the achievement of both maximising economic impact as well as high design quality across a significant range of major projects and

initiatives in the pipeline, such as existing major developments, projects emerging from the economic masterplan and the City Centre Action Plan.

8. A significant element of the programme is the renaissance academy which will focus on enhancing staff skills to leave a longer term legacy from the initiative. The recent Centre for Cities report on York identified a gap in “place-making” training for key staff and recommended that the Council should increase the capacity and core skills of staff involved. The renaissance academy will provide a tailored programme of training and development for City of York Council staff involved in place making. It would aim to build multi-disciplinary working across professionals and encourage staff to think in new ways about ensuring that major developments maximise their potential, both in terms of economic impact and good quality design. The academy will also help to embed the new York renaissance Team within the Council by bringing them together with existing teams who work on major projects around a shared agenda of maximising economic impact, quality development and place-making.
9. The approval of Yorkshire Forward and English Heritage has now been given to this programme. The Council will work alongside both the consultants engaged to undertake the economic masterplanning work and the York Renaissance Team. A strategic board involving the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and the Director of City Strategy with representation from Yorkshire Forward, English Heritage and the York Economic Partnership will be established to oversee the development of this programme.

Options

10. The Executive are requested to either endorse the proposal to undertake the economic masterplan, the creation of the York Renaissance Team and the establishment of the renaissance academy, or not to do so. It is recommended that the first option is adopted.

Corporate Priorities

11. The actions in this report support the Thriving City element of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council’s Corporate Strategy.

Implications

Financial

12. The costs associated with undertaking the economic masterplan and the salary and on costs for the York Renaissance Team are to be fully funded by Yorkshire Forward and English Heritage. There are some associated costs in relation to provide accommodation and associated costs for the staff which will need to be borne by the Council. These will need to be found from existing budgets.

Human Resources (HR)

13. The council will be responsible for the employment of the 6 new posts to be created within the York Renaissance Team on a 3 year fixed term basis. Job descriptions have been prepared and posts have been evaluated under the Council’s pay and grading system. Council procedures will be used for the recruitment of all new posts.

Equalities

14. This initiative will seek to address equalities issues, particularly through examining the potential for accessibility improvements in the city centre and through major developments.

Legal

15. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, although the funding arrangements between Yorkshire Forward and the City of York Council will be set out in a contract.

Crime and Disorder

16. This initiative will seek to address crime and disorder issues through consideration of crime prevention through good quality of design in the city centre and major developments.

Information Technology (IT)

17. There are no strategic IT implications.

Property

18. There are no direct property implications, although the outcome from the work of the economic masterplan and renaissance team may enhance the Council's commercial portfolio.

Risk management

19. The purpose of this initiative is to seek to provide greater certainty to the development industry with the planning of major developments within the City which will enhance the future local economy. This programme will therefore look at risks regarding all aspects associated with the viability of major developments in the city.

Recommendations

20. That the Executive endorses the proposal set out in this report and agrees to:
 1. the preparation of an economic masterplan for the city, to be funded by Yorkshire Forward and completed by May 2010;
 2. the creation of the York Renaissance Team of 6 officers on three year fixed term contracts, employed by the City of York Council and funded by Yorkshire Forward and English Heritage;
 3. the establishment of a York Renaissance Academy to enhance staff skills in "place-making", to be funded by Yorkshire Forward.

Reason: To provide greater certainty for future investment in the City.

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Report Approved

For further information please contact the author of the report

Wards affected – ALL

Specialist implications officer

Financial: Patrick Looker, Finance Manager, 551633

Annexes

Annex A: York Visioning and Economic Masterplanning commission