

## **Report to Council from Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture and Social Inclusion, March 2012**

### **Introduction**

During my time as Cabinet Member, my aim has been to put leisure, culture and social inclusion at the heart of the city's agenda, making the case for culture in a very challenging financial climate, and ensuring that it delivers on the city's key priorities, especially the economy.

My chief focus in achieving this has been to protect services, consider alternative service delivery options where necessary to do so, drive service improvement and, without taking any satisfaction from so doing, implementing my portfolio's share of the Government's cuts.

More positively, 2012 is a hugely exciting time for York and for me as portfolio holder responsible for York 800. It is a year I will ensure York takes full advantage of to maximise the benefits for the city.

I would appeal to all Members to make as much noise and tell as many people as possible about what a special year this is going to be for our city, including getting people to come here and experience it for themselves.

On a personal note, I represent the city on the LGA Urban Commission and I am pleased to report that I have now been appointed to the LGA Urban Commission **Steering** Group.

I have also recently been appointed to the Regional Arts Council.

I attend regular meetings with Tourism, Leisure and Culture Leaders both across the region and nationally and we exchange ideas and information on good practice.

I have spoken at LGA workshops and conferences on the pressures and the changing climate of Leisure and Culture locally due to Central Government funding cuts. It is clear that when those cuts are twinned with the associated cuts in the budgets of supporting arts, culture and sports related organisations such as the Arts Council for England, there are real threats to Leisure, Culture, Sports and Tourism portfolios everywhere.

However, the good news is that York now has a growing reputation for being an outward looking, innovative council and I have played my part in relaying the message that York is open for business once again.

## Culture

I have launched the York 800 civic celebration. This important initiative is designed to build an understanding of York's unique heritage as a city, create a sense of belonging in the present for all our communities, and contributes toward a shared vision of the future of York. Through the year-long programme we will enhance our established festival offer and work with partners to undertake a range of additional activities, consisting of:



- A visit from H.M. The Queen;
- The staging of York Mystery Plays in Museum Gardens bringing 30,000 additional visitors to the city;
- Charter Weekend celebration on our rivers with a regatta, and giving the city a new choral voice with the performance of Ebor Vox involving over 25 local choirs;
- York Stories, a story-capturing programme going out to a wide range of communities across the city to record their stories of this special city and create a unique archive of York in 2012;
- A range of one-off events with partners covering community activity such as the Hamilton Panthers Youth Football Gala, Heworth Golf Club York 800 Open Challenge and City of Quilts;
- The launch of festival activity that we hope to continue on an annual basis including the Chocolate Festival in April and the Medieval Festival in August.

The programme aims to promote participation in cultural activities by York residents, attract additional profile for the city in regional and national media, and enhance the visitor economy.

The year's programme began with an expanded Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) programme including a series of lectures, films, and public discussions, a photographic exhibition drawn from survivors of the Holocaust living in Britain today and the civic events at Clifford's Tower and Tempest Anderson Hall.

The event was hailed as much improved and more inclusive than previous years and we aim to continue that by encouraging increasingly diverse participation on the HMD Steering Group.

We have successfully applied to host both the Olympic and Paralympic torch relays. The Olympic torch relay will be in the city overnight on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> June and we are hosting an evening celebration at the Racecourse provided in conjunction with The London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) which is expected to attract 10,000 visitors with a further 5,000 lining the route through the city.

The BBC is interested in broadcasting the relay and the arrival of the flame on stage will be broadcast on national BBC News. The Council will use this opportunity to launch 19 weeks of Olympic Sports-focused activity with its partners in community sport all across the city. A bid has been submitted for York to be a UNESCO Creative City. Although UNESCO's funding position means that the programme is on hold, we still expect to take our place in the Creative City network.

I am working to ensure that the Illuminate York Festival grows in 2012 and increases its profile with a big name artistic offer, which would attract many more people to the city, helping the York economy.

After extensive discussions with Great City Attractions I'm delighted to have helped drive the process forward to a point where the Planning Committee was in a position to pass the application for a Big Wheel to return to the city. It has proved a worthy addition to York's tourism offer.

I have secured The Arts Development UK 2012 conference for York to be held at the Barbican. Again, this is great news for the profile of the city and for the local economy.

After significant involvement in the process for selecting public art for West Offices, funded from £220k of developer contributions, I'm delighted to confirm that a number of local artists have been confirmed to produce works for the new HQ.

## Leisure

The Sport and Active Leisure (SAL) team have assisted in providing over 25,000 opportunities for residents to take part in walking and cycling programmes and our “kick start” participation events such as charity runs have resulted in over 15,000 people participating in mass sporting events, an increase of 5,000 over last year.

In the library service, the cafés at York and Acomb Explore Centres have been refurbished and takings are up around 25%. The installation of self-issue machines has been undertaken which will help to reduce costs.

A “pump” bike track has been opened at Rawcliffe Country (a pump tracks is a continuous loop consisting of a series of rolling bumps and banked corners - originally developed for professional racers to improve their skills they have now turned into a fun activity for anyone who can ride a bike). The idea came from young people and is part of my commitment to deliver on what young people tell us that they want.



A restoration process has commenced in Tower Gardens (focussing on footpath improvements and tree removal).

We have secured a £50k lottery award for Bootham Allotments for security and drainage with the aim of opening up new plots.

We have supported 55 Voluntary sports clubs in the city through officer time and expertise to gain nationally recognised accreditation.

A number of indicators are exceeding their targets including:

- Through an opt-in offer with the reissue of the York Card approximately 15,000 members have now signed up to receive the monthly Yortime e-newsletter, which provides up-to-date information on all Communities and Culture events from festivals and author events to new adult education programme and sports initiatives (far exceeding the 2,500 target).

- There have been increases in the number of views on the Shine page of the YorOk website, and in the number of children and young people gaining their new York card; more than half of the population of young people now have cards
- The targeted sport and active leisure programme continue to show success with continued increases in the number of people with a limiting disability undertaking 3 x 30 minutes of active leisure per week

Staffs are to be congratulated for their part in the following achievements:

- Energise has been identified from the APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) data analysis as one of the best national performers for Sports and Leisure facility management and was nominated for the performance network's best performer award this year.
- Acomb Explore has been awarded the "Good Place to Come" award from the Children's Society aimed at disabled children
- We have been successful at Stage 1 of an HLF bid to create a new City Archive accessible to everyone in York. The Stage 2 bid will be submitted in July
- We have been awarded £36k from the National Catalogue Grant Scheme to catalogue the City Archive for the first time in over 100 years
- In Britain in Bloom the city was Awarded Silver Gilt in 2011

## **Inclusion**

York hosted its second Celebrating Ability Day in August 2011 which I attended with over 300 disabled people sampling over 20 sport and physical activity opportunities including tag rugby, athletics, football, climbing, health walks, sportsability, danceability, goalball, wheelchair basketball, badminton, wheelchair rugby and cycling. The event was Inspire Marked and held up by the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games as an example of best practice.



I also attended a number of new active leisure programmes many of which have been launched including a new Pilates session as part of the HEAL (health, exercise, activity lifestyle) programme for those with neurological conditions has been launched with 12 attendees now regularly attending, whilst Eng-AGE in physical activity launched Zumba

Gold and Tai-Chi sessions at the Heworth Without Community Centre in September. This has been a great success with 35 Zumba and 25 Tai-Chi participants attending weekly since October 2011.

The Council has signed up to City of Sanctuary, aiming to investigate potential new ways of supporting marginalised and vulnerable people in York.

The Council reached “Achieving” status in July in the Equalities Framework for Local Government. There is a long way to go to get to “Excellent” but I am putting in place a robust plan to get there by March 2014.

A number of Change Champions events have been held designed to involve and engage with children and young people to gain an understanding of local issues that affect them. One of the highlighted issues of the Acomb Change Champion event was older teenagers drinking alcohol in the under 8’s play area. Working with the Police young people talked through the possible alternative methods of addressing this behaviour. As a result of the actions taken this is now an area which can be enjoyed by young people with no incidents of young people drinking alcohol in the area reported for several weeks.

Following a successful active citizenship programme which took local democracy sessions into schools and engaged with over 2,000 children, Take Part York has produced a primary school resource called "Future Decision Makers". It's packed full of activities, lesson plans and ideas which schools can use as part of lessons about local democracy, community issues, the role of ward and school councillors, and whet an appetite for lifelong participation in democracy as future voters.

City of York Council has entered into a Community Covenant with the armed forces and is now actively investigating new ways to engage with armed forces staff, personnel and veterans. Four applications were submitted in the latest round of the Community Covenant Fund including bids to enlist York's forces personnel in York 800, and for sport and play initiatives. Following an approach to me from a York resident who is a member of the armed forces, we are working on a new corporate membership deal for forces members in our leisure facilities.



Free Wi-Fi has been installed in all Libraries (as well as at Energise) and I am reviewing the offer in all libraries so that it is more closely tailored to the needs of the community that each library serves.

Two volunteering roles have been developed providing one to one support to help people to get online. I have spent time volunteering on that project at York Explore which has enabled me to learn more about what support is required. We have so far recruited 10 volunteers.

A voluntary sector Transformation Fund has been set up and operated resulting in a number of awards to innovative schemes around community transport, community cohesion, and setting up social enterprises to support various communities of interest.



We have recruited and trained 64 Snow Wardens who took up their snow scoops in January this year. A second recruitment drive is ongoing and the training programme now includes Age UK 50+ information ensuring snow wardens concerned about vulnerable neighbours can signpost them in the future.

Over twenty front line staff from a wide range of organisations have undertaken 'Community Conversations' training. This will enable us to assist local communities experiencing tensions.

Council Officers have worked in partnership with the Sports and Active Leisure team (SAL) to carry out consultation with older people to establish what activities they would like to access. The consultation on the Older People's Activities Survey was enhanced by the involvement of volunteer community interviewers.

The "Tell Me More" programme has been running for 12 months. It is a series of hour long seminars for CYC, voluntary and private sector front line service deliverers looking at cross-cutting topics. Subjects covered have included Community Contracts, cohesion, hate crime and the older people's strategy. One of the ideas arising from the Parish Charter session was to develop and circulate a good practice guide. They have been very well attended.

The following awards have been achieved in this area:

- Acomb Explore has been awarded the "Good Place to Come" award from the Children's Society aimed at disabled children
- The Upfaders youth project was shortlisted for the LGC "Making a Difference" award

