

**Executive**

**26 August 2021**

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

## **City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy – August Update**

### **Summary**

1. This report provides the final monthly update on activities both directly in response to Covid-19 and to support recovery and renewal. Given the ongoing significance of Covid-19 in shaping the priorities of the council, future updates will be provided to Executive through all relevant reports related to the normal business of the council.
2. This report provides a summary of some of the work undertaken over the past 19 months. It describes work around business support, financial inclusion and supporting the city centre. It then looks ahead at the challenges that Covid continues to pose for the council and the city. Recommendations are made to Executive to allow the consultation process on the future operation of the footstreets to be considered and for the use of available funding for supporting businesses.
3. It is possible that some of the information in this report will change between publication and the meeting. Updates will be given at the meeting in that event.

### **Recommendations**

4. Executive is asked to:
  - a. Note the contents of the report
  - b. Note the use of ARG funds and the positive impact of this approach on the York economy and agree to allocate
    - i. £500k to the business voucher support scheme
    - ii. £100k to support York's music venues
  - c. Request a final allocation report to be brought back to Executive at the end of 2021.

Reason: To support the York economy in its recovery from the Covid pandemic.

- d. To request officers obtain the necessary permissions to extend the current temporary footstreet arrangements, which are due to expire in September 2021 so that the 127 of businesses currently operating street cafes can continue to operate in the interim and so that all available options are then presented to Executive in November to consider the future operation of the footstreets. This will include extending the additional blue badge parking provision that has already been provided.
- e. To note the number of mitigations (found in paragraph 40 and Annex 1) enacted since the approval of the Temporary TRO to help support Blue Badge Holder access to the city centre.

**Reason:** This will allow Executive to consider future arrangements of the footstreets extensions together with further improvements to accessibility in the city centre. The extension of the temporary orders will allow the current arrangements initiated in response to the Governments COVID 19 guidance and Pavement Café License legislation to continue until Executive have been able to formally consider the statutory consultation and feedback on the further mitigation options.

- f. To approve the extension of the Temporary TRO for continued one way operation of Coppergate with contraflow cycle lane until 19 December 2021 pending consultation on the potential changes to the arrangements including removal of the restrictions and to approve the removal of the current pedestrian barriers from the southern footway immediately.

**Reason:** This will allow Executive/Executive Member to consider the results of engagement with stakeholders prior to making a decision in line with recent directions from the Department for Transport. Pedestrian barriers are no longer considered necessary at this location with the removal of social distancing restrictions.

- g. To request officers to continue the engagement with disabled people's advocacy groups and to engage with the Human Rights and Equalities Board on the emerging ideas from the summer's strategic review of city centre access and parking and any additional suggestions for improving access in the city centre from the statutory consultation.

**Reason:** To ensure we work to improve access to the city centre for all.

- h. To note that reports will be brought to November 2021 Executive on the future operation of the footstreets, My City Centre, Review of

Access and Parking and the Future Funding of Dial a Ride.

**Reason:** This also allows the Executive to consider the decision on the future operation of the footstreets in light of the My City Centre and the Strategic Review of Access in full.

- i. To consult and engage with a scrutiny on the future operation of the footstreets, accessibility of the city centre and the surrounding constraints before November Executive meeting.

**Reason:** To ensure that consideration is given to all ongoing constraints and opportunities regarding the extension of city centre footstreets.

- j. To approve the implementation of additional dropped kerbs within the city centre footstreets around pavement cafes as mitigation by prioritising these locations as part of the LTP programme.

**Reason:** to mitigate the impact of the continued presence of café licences on mobility aid access where some premises may not now be accessible without considerable detours.

- k. To allocate £20k from the Covid Recovery contingency to support York Wheels/Dial and Ride and Shopmobility to promote their services to potential users.

**Reason:** In recognition of the critical role they have played and will continue to play in the recovery of the city centre.

## Background

5. Executive has received monthly reports since May 2020 to provide updates on activities in response to Covid-19 and plans for recovery and renewal. Following the updates to the Council Plan 2019-2023 at May's Executive, the ongoing activities required to respond to Covid-19 are included within the council plan. For this reason, the context of Covid response is now considered to be part of our ongoing operating context. Unless there is a specific need, decisions in respect of Covid response will be made through normal decision-making routes appropriate to the relevant functions of the council.
6. It remains absolutely clear that the impact of the pandemic will continue to influence much of the council's work for years to come. The response of the city has been incredible, across all sectors and communities, and York should be proud of how it has responded so far. The challenge remains but there is every reason to be optimistic that the city will continue to respond strongly with kindness, compassion and resilience.

7. The last 19 months have seen the greatest level of disruption to people's lives since the Second World War. The need to isolate, to reduce contact and the potential for transmission, has impacted on everyone as individuals, as communities, organisations and businesses. The council has also had to adapt almost every aspect of service delivery to continue to support residents' lives. The following data relates to the position in July 2021.



8. A fundamental role of the Council is to support the Public Health response to health emergencies. Throughout the pandemic, the council's Public Health team, supported by a wide range of colleagues, have co-ordinated the city-wide pandemic response from a public health perspective. At the beginning of the pandemic, this involved sourcing and distributing PPE and sanitiser from around the world, advising on its use, arranging local testing, developing local trace and contact arrangements and advising on the safe reopening of services and city activities. Any one of these activities would be challenging, but the combination of requirements upon the team, themselves having to work in different ways to avoid infection, has been extraordinarily difficult and required a huge level of ongoing commitment

and resilience. Working closely as part of a network with NHS, police and other emergency response organisations, in liaison with the Local Resilience Forum, council teams have successfully co-ordinated activity through the multiple stages of the pandemic, supporting a cohesive city-wide response.

9. From the early stages of lockdown, it was clear that it was essential that communities were supported to ensure everyone, including the most vulnerable residents, had the essentials they needed. Our Communities teams, along with staff redeployed from other areas, established a network of hubs to ensure that people had food and medication, and had contact with people to ensure ongoing support. This was especially important for Extremely Clinically Vulnerable people needing to shield. Following an appeal for volunteers, thousands of residents came forward to support their neighbours, helping to deliver much needed support and supplies. A helpline was created to ensure people needing help could get in touch, Feedback from residents suggested that knowing there were people around who could provide assistance gave a significant sense of reassurance and reduced the feeling of isolation.
10. Supporting vulnerable adults and older people also presented a huge set of challenges. Early in the pandemic, adult social care teams worked rapidly with colleagues in the acute sector ensure people who could be moved out of hospital were found suitable support, freeing up bed space for the predicted rises in patients hospitalised with Covid. This required quickly setting up new processes and arrangements which considered the different range of risks presented within the pandemic. Because of the risks of infection, the capacity with the care sector had to be carefully managed to reduce onward transmission. The care sector itself was immediately put under extreme pressure with staff being impacted by the infection, reducing operational capacity just as demand was rising.
11. The ongoing impact across adult social care continues to be felt with increased demand across many areas of the service. Social care teams are continuing to work flat out to respond to this increase in demand, with support being provided from other council teams as far as possible.
12. Ensuring that all residents are safe from harm remains one of the key responsibilities of the council, no matter what context we're working within. The council's Children's Services have been on an improvement journey, and despite the significant challenges of the pandemic, have continued to develop practice which further supports the safety of all children. Through the necessary changes to operational activities during Covid, multiple opportunities for more flexible and agile working practices have been identified. The effective working of the safeguarding partnership has recently been described by the independent scrutineer in her contribution to the Safeguarding Partnership Annual report, providing assurance "that the Partnership is running as it should, that people remain committed to

making it work and to do so successfully”.

13. Supporting schools and Early Years settings to operate safely within the national advice has been a huge undertaking. Teams have supported getting testing set up in schools and advised on social distancing measures alongside how best to ensure educational provision is continued, whether virtually or face to face. With constantly changing national guidance, often received very late, the need to working within and between schools has been significant, helped by the strong partnership already in place within York’s educational system. The universities and colleges have faced many challenges, in keeping students safe whilst their studies continue, requiring the Education teams alongside public health colleagues to support tailored testing and vaccination programmes for the different institutions.
14. The need to get almost the entire council workforce working in a completely different way created significant challenges for all our back office functions. Providing ongoing support to front line services was essential. Many staff were redeployed to support critical functions, whilst moving to remote working processes. A huge information and data need was supported by Business Intelligence, underpinning test and trace and vaccination programmes, as well as epidemiological information to support the councils overall response. Communications officers have provided a vast array of information across multiple channels to keep residents and partner organisations as informed as possible. Democratic services colleagues set up processes to allow remote meetings to happen and continue democratic decision-making, also delivering the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Elections in May 2021.
15. Officer delivered the processing of thousands of applications for business support and individual funding, described in more detail below. Trading standards colleagues took on new responsibilities around ensuring Covid-compliance of businesses in the city, in parallel with changed requirements related to Brexit for Environmental Health functions.
16. The above provides only a brief sample of the many examples of changed working within the council. The council’s role to support wellbeing of residents has been at the fore, working alongside NHS colleagues on the frontline of treating and protecting people. The partnership working between the council and NHS has been absolutely essential. Through the necessity of Covid response, greater understanding of the pressures across all organisations has developed and will support the ongoing work to create local health and care systems which are more closely aligned.
17. Residents, volunteers, key workers, council officers and those working across all sectors of the city have all pulled together to support people in need, allowing critical functions to operate in the most challenging situations. Colleagues in the NHS have continued to go above and beyond

to save lives and support wellbeing alongside our own public health and social care teams. Our frontline officers have ensured the city has remained a safe place for people to live, visit and work, and our back office functions have faced unprecedented demands to process support for businesses and residents and keep the council operating. Of course, at the same time as these pressures, staff as individuals have faced the same challenges as everyone, supporting their own families, dealing with isolation and uncertainty, and trying to live in a different way.

18. Not only should the city be proud of its response, but it should also recognise the strength of the collective efforts and partnership working which has underpinned that response. It was a clear illustration of how different sectors and groups can work alongside each other, delivering outcomes which make the most significant differences to people's lives.
19. At the heart of all these efforts has been a focus on the wellbeing of York's residents. As the city continues to face the challenges the pandemic brings, this focus must remain, to ensure we build back better and stronger as a city, for all our residents.
20. The council is working with city partners to identify appropriate ways of thanking and recognising the work of all those across the city who have supported York's residents through the pandemic.

### **Latest Outbreak Update**

21. The latest validated rate of new Covid cases per 100,000 of population for the period 4.8.21 to 10.8.21 in York was 327.9 (692 cases). The national and regional averages at this date were 306.1 and 381.6 respectively (using data published on Gov.uk on 15.8.21).
22. As at 15.8.21 a total of 149,922 CYC residents have had the first dose of the vaccine. This represents 84.1% of the estimated adult (16+) population of York (ONS 2020)
23. As at 15.8.21 a total of 124,465 CYC residents have had both doses of the vaccine. This represents 69.8% of the estimated adult (16+) population of York (ONS 2020). Since the last update, 16 and 17 years olds are now eligible for vaccines, so the estimated 16+ population of York is now being used as the denominator, instead of the 18+ population.

### **Recovery Updates**

#### *Financial Inclusion*

24. Throughout the pandemic, the council's priority has been to support the wellbeing of residents. Recognising the financial pressures which have

emerged for many residents, the council has put in place a number of measures to support those most in need.

25. The council provides a broad range of welfare support to residents through the York Financial Assistance Scheme, Council Tax Support (CTS) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). The breadth of this support was increased across 2020 to help residents during the Covid-19 pandemic.
26. In April 2020, emergency decisions were taken to allocate an additional £1m of support which is administered and managed through the York Financial Assistance Scheme, within which the criteria was widened to include all residents finding themselves in financial hardship during the pandemic. The widened fund saw contributions to pay for the Free School Meals (FSM) vouchers during the October 2020 half term holiday, community hubs, mobile phones and internet, and community awards for items such as white goods, furniture and carpets. £839k was spend in 2020/2021.
27. The council also supplemented the Winter Support Grant to provide £547k to support residents with food and utilities, and essential digital connections.
28. £340k of isolation grants were processed, alongside Council Tax Support for 13,078 residents during 2020/2021.
29. A full report on the council's financial inclusion work can be found here: <https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=6228>

### *Supporting York's businesses*

30. To support residents, the Council has also taken measures to support businesses and ensure the continuity of jobs within the city as far as possible. Prior to the Covid pandemic, York's economy had been performing strongly, with steady jobs growth, productivity as measured by GVA per-hour-worked well above levels elsewhere in the region, and the prospect of further growth driven by progress on the key York Central development. There were some concerns around the global changes being seen in high street economies and their impacts on York's city centre, but vacancy levels were amongst the lowest in the country and the visitor economy was growing strongly, with a raft of new hotels and attractions in the planning.
31. As the pandemic broke, with the first UK cases seen in a York hotel, we rapidly assessed the risks to the York economy, identifying 30,700 jobs and £1.1bn GVA in high risk industries, representing 25% of jobs and 17% of GVA. In particular we considered that "*retail of non-essential items (were) at considerable risk, especially in stores rather than online... accommodation and food services (at) significant risk...arts entertainment*



*and leisure like to be an early impact*". Beyond the consumer economy, we identified risks for commercial landlords, disruption in the education sector and significant impacts on public transport and construction. All of these risks proved to be accurate, however the potential impacts on jobs and productivity have been mitigated by the provision of grants and other support. These are summarised below.

32. In recent years, York's economic development resource had become fragmented, with public-funded staff spread across CYC, Make it York and the Universities and Colleges, and multiple strong private sector networks such as the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and York BID. With such a broad range of impacts across sectors, it was clear that we needed a strong coordinated response, and early efforts were therefore focussed on drawing all of these partners together to share intelligence on the emerging impacts, increase direct communication with businesses, and work together to develop our local policy response. This partnership approach has endured, leading to a reconfiguration of the CYC/MIY resources into one team and continued joint working with Higher York partners and the business networks which is now driving our longer-term economic strategy.
33. Within a week of the first lockdown at the end of March 2020, Councillors had committed £1.14m of CYC funds to supporting small and micro businesses which were beyond the scope of Government grant support. We provided free FSB membership to over 600 businesses, giving access to a wide range of free helplines and practical support, and made available grants of up to £1,000 to small and micro businesses through our Micro Grants scheme. Independent evaluation has shown that these commitments supported 1,114 enterprises, saved around 300 businesses from failing and protected the income of over 500 households across York. The approach also provided new insight into the importance of small and micro businesses for the York economy, and the wide range of sectors and industries in which such enterprises operate. This too is now informing our future plans for the city.
34. Government provided over £100m in support to York businesses through various grant rounds, rates relief and loans. The grants and rates relief were administered locally and our Rates team worked tirelessly to channel funds as quickly as possible to over 3,500 businesses across the city. York was consistently in the top 5% of Local Authorities in terms of volume and speed of distribution of grants. As the pandemic developed and more grants were provided, our approach of passing funds on rapidly and targeting discretionary funds at those excluded from the main funds has shown to have been very effective. Many businesses across the UK are still complaining that they have had little help, however in York the majority of businesses have been assisted with grants. It is worth noting that York is the UK city that has seen the smallest rise in unemployment, as measured by Centre for Cities. This has been no accident, and reflects the

principles we have developed through the pandemic of supporting those most in need, recognising the value of small employers and self-employment, and of working with business organisations such as the FSB, Indie York and the Institute of Directors to inform delivery on the ground.

35. In July 2020, the Executive agreed a 1 year strategy to provide business support, help with skills and employment, and to make adaptations to the city centre public realm and transport arrangements to help our businesses trade. These measures have helped the city centre to provide a warm and safe welcome to residents and visitors, with the effectiveness of our support shown in measures of footfall and spending which put York among the best performing cities. We have seen both a reengagement by York's residents with our city centre and huge interest, when allowed by covid restrictions, by visitors. York is consistently named as one of the top UK staycation locations, with our hotels and attractions reporting strong performance this summer. Our independent shops, championed by Indie York, are also trading well, with a good mix of local people and visitors as their customers.
36. Beyond the city centre economy, our business engagement has helped track the progress of businesses across the full breadth of the York economy. A series of roundtables across a dozen different industrial sectors has helped channel support into financial and legal services, manufacturing, food and drink, creative and cultural businesses, the bio-economy and foundation services. These many groups have helped to develop our emerging Skills and Employment strategy and will play an important role in shaping our economic strategy. They have also helped us to maintain a broad understanding of the impacts of the pandemic lockdown beyond those most visible in our city centre. In recent months, as we have begun the final phase of grant distribution, we have been able to focus on those still impacted by the lockdown such as language schools, performance and event venues, community halls, and those dependent on international travel.
37. Through our effective use of the previous allocations of discretionary funding from the Government's Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), we have now received an additional tranche of £1.4m of funds. This must, in part, fund £400k of existing commitments to support adaptations in Parliament Street and Exhibition Square, to provide help for events and festivals as they re-emerge from the pandemic, and to back trader-led initiatives across the city. The extension of Step 4 to 19 July added 28 days of additional restrictions for a wide range of businesses. In consultation with Executive Members, it was agreed to make further payments to businesses still impacted to provide a further 28 days of support at existing levels at a total cost of approximately £145k.
38. The Council unanimously passed a motion in support of "Protecting Live Music Space" in December 2019, recognising that a thriving, vibrant,

diverse and responsibly managed early-evening, evening and night-time offer is a crucial part of the city's economy, and calling for York Music Venues Network to be established and supported. At its March 2020 meeting, Executive recognised the importance of York's live music venues as an integral part of the city's cultural offer and agreed to a range of measures including a commitment to work closely with the York Music Venues Network to assist in supporting and developing this crucial part of the city's night-time economy.

39. Clearly, music venues have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. In discussions with the York Music Venues Network, it has become clear that, while venues have been receiving grant funds through the Arts Council, support is now diminishing and local venues are facing a very challenging financial period. They are still only able to open with restricted audience numbers and are reliant on the live music industry returning to previous touring patterns and levels over the coming year. To ensure that venues can survive, it is proposed to make a further £100k available to them to meet ongoing costs while there is a shortfall in income and to help them reopen and reengage with audiences. Applications would be sought from individual venues, looking to extend the support previously provided by the Arts Council through the Emergency Grassroots Music Venues Fund and using the same criteria (see [Arts Council website](#)), without the restrictions on infrastructure and buildings. Beyond individual venue support, some funding would also be made available to YMVN to support activities which would help venues to reengage with audiences and attract people back to live music. Allocations from this fund would be delegated to the Assistant Director (Customer and Communities), in consultation with the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities.
40. There remains a commitment to provide £500k for a business support scheme enabling small and micro businesses to relaunch and refresh with help from within the York business community. Our proposal would enable businesses to think through the key issues they face before accessing local specialist resource to begin implementing these changes. It is our intention that the advice and support received by micro and small businesses accessing the voucher scheme is locally-based (City of York local authority area) to encourage more business-to-business activity in York, keeping spend local and raising awareness of what professional business support services exist locally.
41. The scheme would seek to match businesses looking to further develop their products and services with local firms able to help with advice and expertise. For example, a landscaping company might need help with developing its marketing, financial planning and recruitment. The voucher scheme would help them define what help they need, put them in touch with a range of local providers, and then pay for the support they have chosen. All those involved would benefit – the landscaping firm through the advice and help it received, and the specialist advisors through the

voucher payments.

42. ARG funding must be spent by local authorities by the end of March 2022 and therefore it is important that the Council's business voucher scheme gets underway during the early autumn to ensure delivery. The scheme will be managed by the Council's Economic Growth team, however to ensure maximum take-up in the city's small business community and provide the temporary resources essential to ensure the scheme can deliver quickly, it is proposed to utilise 10% of the budget allocation to procure private sector support for process design, eligibility checks, quality assurance on each business services provider, and a diagnostic for businesses to effectively identify their support needs.
43. Delivery of a York-based business support voucher scheme continues City of York Council's innovative approach to business support, and builds upon the success of the Council's Micro Business Grants Scheme which saw grants of up to £1,000 provided to 1,114 small, micro and one-person businesses during the early stages of the pandemic. Findings from an independent evaluation of the Micro Grants Scheme demonstrated that a little investment in small enterprises can go a long way, with the pay-off for some being beyond expectation with businesses winning lucrative contracts, gaining international customers, entering a new world of technology and shifting their whole business model to deal in the virtual, rather than the physical. The evaluation also identified further areas of support required by businesses to improve their competitiveness – access to finance; sales; PR and marketing; business planning; health and wellbeing; leadership and management; skills support and digital and ICT. These support areas will be targeted through the Council's voucher scheme.
44. With eligible businesses receiving a business support voucher up to the value of £1,000 to spend on eligible support services, at least 450 businesses will be supported by the Council's voucher scheme, with many more York businesses benefitting due to the take up of their services. Project outputs will be evaluated following the completion of the voucher scheme, with an update provided back to the Council's Executive.
45. These proposals can be summarised as follows:

Additional ARG Allocation	1,405,725
Less: Existing commitments	(400,000)
Additional restart payments	<u>(145,000)</u>
Remaining funds	860,725
Voucher scheme	500,000
Music Venues	<u>100,000</u>
To allocate	<u>260,725</u>

46. The remaining £260k provides something of a buffer should there be further restrictions on the economy, or should the provision of these amounts bring forward other businesses which are facing particular challenges. It could also be used to supplement any of the existing commitments outlined above, should further funds be needed. The deadline for spend is 31 March 2022, and a final allocation will be brought to Executive at the end of 2021 to ensure that all of the ARG funds are utilised as any unspent funds will be clawed back by Government.

47. Executive is asked to agree to allocation of:

- £500k to the business voucher support scheme
- £100k to support York's music venues

### *City Centre Access*

48. In light of the Covid 19 pandemic, it has also been necessary to make some changes to access arrangements within the city centre. When the pandemic hit, in order to allow social distancing, it was necessary to reduce access for vehicles into the city centre to allow pedestrians and people using mobility aids to use the road space as well as pavements. The city's street space has also been used to create outside space for restaurants and cafés, with the extension of café licenses, supporting local businesses and city centre economy, as part of the city's continued recovery from the pandemic. These decisions have been made in the context of the Council's duty to protect public spaces, promote the economic viability of the city centre, reduce carbon emissions and ensure accessibility under the Equalities Act.

49. A range of temporary restrictions are coming to an end and it is necessary to consider the extension of these arrangements in line with Government policy to ensure the continuity of safe city centre activities. Extensive consultation is ongoing with city centre users, particularly disabled people, to ensure that the subsequent arrangements for the longer term (beyond these temporary measures) are as accessible as possible for everyone, whilst recognising the best methods to support York's economy and ensure the city centre is safe.

50. In response to the COVID Pandemic and to support recovery on 8th June and 6<sup>th</sup> July through an officer decision, the Council established a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order to remove the blue badge exemption from Blake Street, St. Helen's Square, Lendal, Goodramgate, Deangate and College Green, Church Street, King's Square and Colliergate. Changes were also made at Castlegate and Fossgate to create space for social distancing, outdoor queuing and café licenses. Coppergate was made one way to create additional space for pedestrians.

51. Simplified Pavement Café licenses were introduced by the Government to support the economic recovery of hospitality industry in response to Covid and were due to expire on 30/09/2021.
52. The Government recently announced that the Simplified Pavement Café Licences will continue for another year until 30/09/2022 to continue to aid the economic recovery and any future COVID restrictions that may be required. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jenrick-confirms-extension-of-pavement-licences-to-help-high-streets-recover>
53. The Council also extended the hours of operation of the footstreets to 8pm to further facilitate these café licenses and support local businesses.
54. Our approach to creating new spaces for businesses to trade, whilst maintaining social distancing has been crucial to ensuring that York's city centre food and drink sector remains as profitable as possible in light of the various Covid-19 restrictions imposed by Government to limit infection rates. By providing a safe and welcoming environment for residents and visitors to enjoy York's nationally-renowned hospitality offer, in addition to the Council's direct economic response, we have supported city centre businesses to survive the pandemic and ensure that the local economy and in turn local service delivery is protected. Businesses are now able to enjoy the benefits of an increase in city centre footfall and visitor spend above pre-pandemic levels according to data provided by Centre for Cities' High Streets Recovery Tracker.
55. The introduction of the Temporary TRO has been well received by the local business community, due to the difficulties posed by the pandemic, particularly in creating new space for businesses to trade, whilst maintaining social distancing. The move was supported by the Retail Forum, York BID and other organisations in the city, and a total of 129 pavement licences have been awarded, of which 113 licences are located within the footstreets area (including Castlegate) and in Fossgate.
56. Recognising the impact on city centre access, the temporary TRO was accompanied by a number of mitigations to help support blue badge holders affected by the TRO. These included:
  - a. The restriction for blue badge holders on the section of Goodramgate from Monk Bar up to and including Deangate and College Green was terminated by Executive in November 2020 as this was one of the primary issues raised by those affected. This was advertised and promoted to blue badge holders who would once again be able to park here and promote the space on St Andrewgate.

- b. 16 new dedicated parking spaces for Blue Badge Holders created as close as possible to the footstreet area, with capacity for seven vehicles on Duncombe Place, two on St Saviourgate, five on Dundas Street, and two on Carmelite Street.
- c. 40 Disabled parking spaces were created at Monk Bar along with a free taxi shuttle for Blue Badge Holders. Following feedback the taxi was removed and the number of additional spaces reduced by 30.
- d. 4 additional Blue Badge Spaces were created at Bootham Row Car Park.

57. Our understanding of the impact of the footstreets changes, potential mitigation measures and the wider issues of accessibility in York city centre has been built through extensive engagement with blue badge holders, disabled people and advocacy groups, as well as other stakeholder groups like cyclists, delivery drivers/riders, taxi drivers, and city centre businesses. 3 citywide surveys have been issued, online and via the Our City publication. A survey aimed specifically at disabled residents was completed by 427 residents last summer. 169 disabled residents have completed the access questions in this summer's My City Centre survey, whilst the Our Big Conversation survey has been completed by 165 disabled residents.

58. Each stage of the consultation process has been complemented by online workshops, with 30 disabled residents and allies or advocates attending workshops in the run up to last November's decision. A similar number have attended facilitated workshops and insight meetings this summer, with two workshops covering cycling groups, two specific to accessible streets, one about the Shopmobility services, one for taxi associations and one for delivery drivers and couriers. In addition, consultants Martin Higgett Associates hosted accessible routes audit workshops, one on site in the city centre and another online.

59. In November 2020 the Executive gave approval to start the statutory consultation process for considering the future operation of the footstreets. In this further mitigations were considered. Through this further mitigations to improve the level of Blue Badge Parking amenity were considered in the following locations:

- a. Junction of Blake Street/Duncombe Place
- b. Duncombe Place Horse Drawn Carriage Bay
- c. St Andrewgate
- d. St Andrew's Place
- e. Deangate
- f. Stonebow, outside Calvert's Carpets
- g. St Denys Road

- h. Cumberland Street, adjacent to the Grand Opera House
- i. Lord Mayor's Walk
- j. St Leonard's Place, outside De Grey Rooms

60. This list was approved for consultation with the exception of St Andrew's Place recognising the objections received.

61. A map contained at Annex A shows the footstreets, the changes already made and those that have been consulted upon.

62. Business which are granted café licenses are often located between dropped crossings, so in order to enable disabled access in such streets a recommendation is included to increase the number of dropped crossings based on a footstreets tour with the Thomas Pocklington Trust and members of the Highway regulations team. Funding for additional dropped crossings can be accommodated within the Transport Capital Programme budget. The existing Local Transport Plan budget includes an allocation for minor pedestrian schemes including dropped crossings. It is proposed to increase the allocation to allow the provision of additional dropped crossings in the footstreets to improve accessibility. The LTP programme is delivered on an over-programmed basis to account of the complexity of the delivery of some transport schemes and the multi-year funding stream. The impact on the delivery of other schemes in the Capital Programme will be reviewed to take account of the additional funding for improving accessible access in the city centre and the delivery programme adjusted where necessary in the next monitoring report. The Access Fund also includes an allocation for improvements for walking routes in the city centre.

63. The consultation has a planned second phase to explore how access to the city centre can be further improved for the disabled residents. However, a clear issue that has emerged through the consultation so far is that some of the disability residents are not aware of the services offered by Shopmobility and Dial a Ride. Further promotion of Shopmobility and Dial a Ride. Therefore we propose to work with the organisations to promote these services and improve the service offer. It is recommended that a sum of £20k from the Covid contingency is set aside to support this work which may be direct provision to the services or the council undertaking direct promotion.

64. The November Executive will further consider other possible mitigations and access improvements, such as, changes to the footstreet hours of operation, potential improvements to bus stops, improvements to pavements on routes to and from key car parks, rest stops and other measures.



65. The Government are reviewing the duties placed on local authorities for the prevention of terrorism. The Council has a city wide partnership, with permanent hostile vehicle mitigation measures as one of their key projects. Following advice from the Police's Counter Terrorism Command Unit, this year's Christmas Markets would see the Hostile Vehicle Mitigation Measures placed at the end of the footstreets. Each Christmas the Footstreet hours are extended for the Christmas Market period to 8pm on Thursday to Saturday under a TRO. The decision in November to determine the future operation of the footstreets will allow the project team to develop proposals for the location of permanent hostile vehicle mitigation measures for future years once work is completed.
66. The statutory consultation on the future operation of the footstreets, which includes the consultation on further additional mitigations as detailed above has just closed. However, there is not sufficient time for the results of the consultation to be properly considered and decisions made before the temporary traffic regulation orders expire in September.
67. Due to the above and the recent announcement from Government on café license extensions, a decision is required to temporarily extend the existing traffic regulation orders to continue the facilitation of the pavement cafes to continue and allow a decision on the future operation of the footstreets to be made in November.
68. Officers are also recommending a further series of workshops with disabled community advocacy groups to additionally include the Human Rights Equality Board to explore the issues that arose during the formal consultation before a recommendation is made Executive on the future operation of the footstreets and the necessary improvements to accessing the city centre.
69. Following a request from the Executive before the future operation of the footstreets are considered in full, a Commissioned Scrutiny by Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee on the future operation of the footstreets and accessibility is recommended.

### **Outlook for the future**

70. As outlined above, the city's response to Covid has been strong. There is growing confidence that the city can recover strongly, however, this does not mean that there are not challenges ahead.
71. Recent epidemiological reports highlight the possibility of further levels of infection. A report to the Outbreak Management Advisory Board provides further detail.

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s150961/4.%20COVID%20modelling%20paper%20for%20OMAB%20july%2021.pdf>

72. Whilst the link between infection and serious illness is decreasing with the rollout of vaccines, there will remain a proportion of the population who remain vulnerable. By the targeted end of the vaccination programme, a significant proportion of the population will have more protection. However:
- a. some will still not be eligible (under 16)
  - b. some will be eligible but not taking up their vaccine (Cabinet Office assumptions are for 95% uptake in over 50s, and 90% uptake in over 18-50s)
  - c. some may not have full protection from second doses against the Delta variant (PHE data suggests Pfizer is 96% effective and AZ 92% effective against hospitalisation and death from the Delta variant)
73. This leaves potentially up to a third of our population still not fully protected. The harms to this population are mitigated by the fact that they are likely to be younger and less vulnerable to consequences of COVID infection, and vaccine effectiveness against severe illness and death is likely to be higher than it is against infection. However, Long COVID / post-COVID syndrome can be a severe debilitating health condition, not always related to strength/effects of symptoms during the acute phase, and is reported to have affected up to 2 million people in England. In CYC so far, 18 members of staff have taken an average of 50 days off work due to Long COVID.
74. Additionally, this does not take into account the role immunity due to past infection plays in this, with an rate of past infection in the UK estimated at 15.6% and evidence that immunity due to infection could last as long as a year.
75. It is entirely plausible, however, that a surge in cases in the remaining at-risk population may occur similar to the size and scale of previous waves, although higher levels of immunity may produce a 'herd' effect that would slow down the speed at which this moves through the population.
76. Other risks also apply, beside the infection rate:
- a. The impacts of Long-Covid
  - b. The impacts on Mental Health Services, with demand significantly increased.
  - c. The additional demand for social care services for both children and adults.
  - d. Significantly increased attendance at A&E
  - e. High demand for primary care services

- f. Influenza and winter planning - rates of flu were very low in the last winter; this puts us at risk of a higher number of cases this coming winter due to lack of residual immunity (passive and active).

77. It is clear that pressures upon services will continue for some time, and as a city it is important that there is collective working to manage demand as much as possible.

78. From an economic point of view, there is cautious optimism about the longer term recovery in York. The city centre has recovered strongly, with footfall back up at pre-pandemic levels and spend also high. This is also reflected in out of town retail settings, and the hotel sector and visitor economy are also reporting strong performance and forward bookings.

79. Interest in York as place to do business remains high with several indigenous businesses looking to expand in the city and a number of enquiries received from businesses keen to establish a presence locally. There is also strong demand for industrial space outside the city centre, with speculative builds coming onto the market quickly snapped up.

80. Key challenges are being reported in recruiting staff at a range of levels, with the most significant short term shortages being seen in skilled and semi-skilled roles, particularly in customer-facing sectors such as hospitality, retail and social care. Further information on the council's response can be found here: [https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s151322/Quarterly%20Economic%20Update%20July%202021\\_ver.2%20Final.pdf](https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s151322/Quarterly%20Economic%20Update%20July%202021_ver.2%20Final.pdf)

## Council Plan

81. Covid-19 will continue to have an impact across the delivery of all Council Plan outcomes. The updated Council Plan recognises these impacts and identifies the actions required to achieve the outcomes of the plan in light of a revised operating context for the council.

## Implications

- **Financial** – The allocations from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) of £600k can be funded from within the overall ARG allocation provided to CYC.

The additional support to Dial and Ride and Shopmobility Services totalling £20k is proposed to be funded from the Covid 19 recovery fund. Budget Council approved a £2.5m revenue budget as a Covid 19 recovery fund to support the council deal with challenges that arise from the Covid 19 pandemic. In the report there were identified projects totalling £650k leaving £1,850k available. Releasing £20k for this support reduced funding available to £1,810k. Members will be aware that as part

of the Performance and Finance Monitoring Report elsewhere on the Agenda the council is facing a significant overspend and therefore future releases from this fund need to be carefully considered.

The cost of additional dropped crossings will be accommodated within the council's Local Transport Plan allocation.

- **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. Annex B is the Equalities Impact Assessment that covers the Transport & Place response to COVID and covered the extension of the pedestrianised footstreets to include Lendal, Blake Street, St Helen's Square, Goodramgate (between Deangate and Low Petergate), Church Street and Colliergate to provide additional pedestrian capacity. Annex C is the Equalities Impact Assessment and relates to the ongoing extension of the city centre footstreets in response to Covid-19 that were initially introduced through Economic recovery strategy (COVID-19): Transport and Place Strategy. The Equalities Impact Assessments will need to be reviewed for November's decision on the future operation of the footstreets.
- **Legal** – The Council has powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to make Traffic Regulation Orders and Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders ("TTRO"). A TTRO can remain in force for up to 18 months and therefore extending the TTRO to 19 December 2021 is permitted under the legislation. In making the decision to extend the duration of the TTRO the Council has considered the criteria within Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in particular the duty to make decisions to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians)

### The Public Sector Equality Duty

Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 a public authority must in the exercise of its functions have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. This is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

Statutory guidance issued in May 2020 reiterates that the Public Sector Equality Duty continues to apply as Councils make changes (permanent

and temporary) to their road networks in response to Covid-19, and the needs of disabled people and those with other protected characteristics must be considered. A fair and proportionate balance has to be found between the needs of people with protected characteristics and the interests of the community as a whole. Case law has held that achieving such a balance is not a breach of the PSED and that there is no prescriptive way to evidence due regard. The measures taken by the Council by making and extending a TTRO are those considered necessary to achieve the objective of helping to limit the spread of Coronavirus and are therefore considered to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The report details how the Council is considering and mitigating, where possible, any disproportionate impacts of the highway changes on people with protected characteristics and meeting its Public Sector Equality Duty, particularly in relation to disabled people.

- **Crime and Disorder** – No specific impacts identified.
- **Information Technology** – No specific impacts identified.

## **Risk Management**

82. 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 17/08/21**

**Wards Affected:** List wards or tick box to indicate all

All

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

## **Annexes**

Annex A - Map of the footstreets and mitigations  
Annex B – Equalities Impact Assessment for the Covid-19  
Economic Recovery - Transport and Place Strategy  
Annex C - Equalities Impact Assessment ongoing extension of the  
city centre footstreets

## **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/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=59688&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI55501>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy Update – July  
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IId=59899>

CYC Recovery and Renewal Strategy update - August  
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.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/ielIssueDetails.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/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=61412&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI57153>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy –January Update  
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=61755&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A157489>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy –February Update  
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s146708/Recovery%20and%20Renewal%20Update%20-%20February%202021.pdf>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy –March Update  
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=61990&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A157770>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy –April Update  
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=62864&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A158384>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy – May Update  
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=62866&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A158386>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy – June Update  
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=63229&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A158774>

City of York Council Recovery and Renewal Strategy – July Update  
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=63231&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A158776>