

Report of the Deputy Leader of the Council

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Funding:

I am very pleased to report that the City of York has been given an indicative award of £17.36 million over three years to support the development of key bus schemes and initiatives across the city. While our bus services still face significant challenges with the withdrawal of government covid funding at the end of September, driver shortages and rising fuel costs we are far better placed than councils that failed to secure BSIP funding.

At the end of last year, we submitted our bid to the Government to help make major improvements to bus provision across the city. These plans were outlined in our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), a document required by the Dft following the publication of National Bus Strategy in March last year.

The BSIP sets out a vision to help improve York's bus network, aiming to make it more inclusive, accessible, attractive and welcoming. Key objectives within the plan include:

- Improving the frequency and punctuality of bus services and supporting the reintroduction of park and ride services from Poppleton Bar following its use as a COVID-19 testing centre;
- Better, cheaper tickets for young people, and better tickets which are valid for travel on all bus services in York;
- Completing the electrification of York's bus fleet, building on the 33 electric buses already operating in the city;
- Providing bus priorities and supporting rapid bus services to new developments around York;
- Upgrading York's Park and Ride network, allowing it to support a wider range of bus services, providing a secure overnight parking option at some sites and refurbishing the two oldest sites, at Rawcliffe Bar and Grimston Bar.

We are now in the process of finalising details with the DfT to confirm the funding. This includes providing all the necessary paperwork, detailing the new arrangements for the creation of an Enhanced Bus Partnership, which will manage the funding and oversee improvements

to services across the city. This will be the successor to the longstanding Quality Bus Partnership which has been the basis for working with local operators over the past 20 years.

With rising fuel costs and the impacts of the climate emergency becoming ever clearer, the importance of high-quality public transport has never been more significant. I look forward to improving public transport and building a resilient operational model across the city for years to come.

ZEBRA Funding:

In addition to the £17 million received via the BSIP, York has also been awarded over £8.4 million to support the purchase of 44 fully electric buses. This is one of the key sustainable transport schemes and initiatives which the council wants to deliver as part of decarbonising transport and boosting our city centre Clean Air Zone.

The DfT announced the funding at the end of March following a successful multi-million pound bid to the Government's Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) scheme to further support the roll-out of zero-emission buses in York, where 33 double deck electric buses already operate on the city's Park & Ride service.

The ZEBRA bid also brings significant investment in York from FirstGroup, with First pledging £10m towards the new buses, alongside the DfT's £8.4 million. The new single and double deck buses will be used on First's routes 1, 4, 5, 6, the Hospital Shuttle Bus and Park and Ride route 2.

This investment is hugely important to achieving the city's carbon reduction goals, whilst also supporting public transport access to new development set out in the Local Plan.

A new Haxby Station:

Over recent weeks, the council has been asking residents for their views on the initial plans, designs and use of the proposed new station in Haxby, ahead of the funding bid being submitted to Government. In addition to the online survey, a number of in-person drop-in events were held in Haxby and Strensall, and officers gave updates to parish council meetings and provided paper copies of the consultation to get as wide a range of views as possible.

Following the consultation, over 1,000 responses have been received backing the proposed railway station in Haxby. Over 80% of respondents supported the administration's proposals to build a new station in Haxby and 83% said they would use it. Officers are currently working to fully analyse all the comments and responses to the consultation. An initial summary of the findings shows:

- 1,200 people participated in the consultation;
- 81% of participants support the station proposal;
- 83% of respondents say that they would use Haxby station, to one extent or another;
- 78% said that they would use the station for leisure travel (for example, shopping; visiting families), 66% would use it as part of longer distance journeys (such as for journeys to London and Manchester Airport), 33% would use the station as part of their daily commute;
- 65% of respondents said that opening a station in Haxby meant that they would not need to use their car as much; 53% said that they would be able to access Manchester Airport via rail;
- 70% said that they would be more likely to visit Leeds due to a new station in Haxby, 64% said York city centre and 63% said that they'd be more likely to visit Scarborough.

It is encouraging to see such large local support for Haxby Station and that so many felt a station in Haxby would mean they don't need to use the car as much. Design work on the new station is progressing prior to submission of commencing the pre-application planning process. The design will provide a fully accessible station and will incorporate sustainable access provision to the station. This is just one example of the many benefits a new station would bring. Our focus now is to ensure those responses form part of our funding bid for Government to bring trains back serving Haxby for the first time since 1930.

Our Big Conversation:

Our Big Conversation, the Council's city-wide consultation about some of the biggest challenges and opportunities facing York, has launched its next phase as we seek views from residents and businesses on the three major developing strategies for the city – climate change, the economy and health and wellbeing.

Just like previous phases, the responses we receive through Our Big Conversation will shape the final development of the Economic Strategy and Climate Change Strategy, which will be taken to Executive for approval in October 2022, and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy that will be approved at September's Health and Wellbeing Board.

We want to make sure that our plans for the city take account of the varied ways that people want to be able to live, work, do business and relax in York. We want to know what changes people expect to make living sustainably an attractive choice, and better understand how they want us to respond to the local and global challenges of the next decade. Alongside these key strategies we are bringing forward the draft Local Transport Strategy to underpin the transport elements of these strategies and help to determine the infrastructure requirements of the Local Plan.

Digital Respark:

Following the process of market engagement, procurement and implementation, colleagues will know that a new Parking IT system, Taranto, was introduced and went live in September 2021. This move was needed due to the fact that the old system was life expired and crucially, did not meet IT security compliance.

The new system also offered the opportunity for the majority of users to move to the online platform, in line with the Council's efficiency approach to customer contacts. However, it was always anticipated that some residents or customers would not be able to use an online process and therefore, an offline process was created for those people who could not use the online system and we are working to provide the necessary support for such residents, businesses and relatives or carers.

As often experienced when introducing and embedding new IT systems, a number of issues have been identified in terms of the user experience, particularly around the ability of users to create and manage permits, as well as complete transactions.

In response, we have been in continuous contact with the System Supplier to secure IT system support to the council and ensure the system is without error and available 24/7. Additional internal support from the Council's own ICT team has been deployed to help resolve technical issues between systems.

From mid-September to mid-March, the first 6 months of the system being live, 3,558 permits have had officer intervention and 13,602 permits have not had intervention. The reality is that some online customers will need more support than others. The Contact Centre and Business Support will always need to continue to support some customers who are online, and they are reporting that contacts are now back to the same levels as before the system was introduced.

Looking forward, we will continue to ensure that IT support is in place for the integration and usability of the new system. We will continue to keep progress under review, particularly after September when the system will have been in place for a year and all existing permit holders will be renewing within the new system. A provisional plan for Economy and Place cross party scrutiny expects to review the whole issue in November this year.

Active Travel Programme

While there have been delays in delivery of some of the ATF2 schemes for which £600k funding was approved in Nov 2020, in Mar 2022 the DfT approved a further £350k ATF3 funding: £150k to upgrade city centre cycle parking and £200k to improve conditions for walking and cycling in the vicinity of Clifton Primary and Badger Hill Primary schools – both schools where Sustrans did work with staff, parents and children in 2021 focussed on sustainable travel to school. A similar 'People Streets initiative at Carr Junior school (with some funding from ATF2) has recently concluded local consultation. All of the above, together with the outcome of design feasibility work on some of the ATF2 schemes will be coming to the Jul 19th Executive Member for Transport Decision Session, papers for which will be published by the time of full council meeting. As with many highways construction schemes at present, cost increases are presenting significant challenges which officers are working through to recommend the most cost effective use of the grant funding in order to meet our sustainable transport objectives.

Clean Air Day 2022:

I was pleased that we continued our support of national Clean Air Day earlier this month. Every year, air pollution causes up to 36,000 deaths in the UK and the World Health Organisation and Government recognise that air pollution is the largest environmental health risk faced today. To support the campaign, a number of free resources were made available to schools, businesses and healthcare services, including

information and material on our anti-idling campaign, which continues the health message about vehicle emissions which shouldn't really be needed given the current high costs of diesel and petrol!

Signposting was also provided to the council's iTravel website, which contains lots of ideas for healthy active travel, lists groups in and around York that organise led walks, and provides information for schools about how to boost walking or cycling on the school run. Making the choice to walk cycle or scoot for short distance trips, instead of driving, has many positive benefits, including improving local air quality and bettering people's physical and mental health for all those who are able to do so. I would like to pay tribute to the regular work of the itravel team, road safety team and cycle trainers who work across the city with schools and businesses to promote healthy active travel, bus use and car sharing, helping to reduce pressure on school/ workplace parking, school gates danger and long term ill health caused by sedentary lifestyles.

Delivering Zero Carbon Homes:

The Council has recently contracted Caddick Construction to build the council's first ever zero carbon homes. Contracts have been signed to build 112 certified Passivhaus homes as part of the council's ambitious Housing Delivery Programme.

These first zero carbon homes will be built on sites at Duncombe Barracks and Burnholme. Local residents have helped co-design the projects alongside the council's Stirling Prize-winning architects, Mikhail Riches. As much of the homes' construction will take place off-site, neighbours will find less on-site activity than on conventional builds.

Duncombe Barracks' neighbours and local residents were invited to meet Caddick's and the council's development teams in June, so they could meet team members and have the opportunity to ask questions about the building schedule and the techniques that will be used ahead of construction starting on site this month. A similar event will be organised at Burnholme later this year.

As part of this work, 30 new jobs will be created, 22 work placements and a programme of training and development for 14 to 19 year olds. Besides aiming to source 70% of their subcontractors and suppliers within 30 miles of the site, they will offer training on site through apprenticeships, traineeships, and higher qualifications for new and existing staff. Working with York College, York Apprenticeship Hub and

Job Centre Plus, they will support the development of Green Skills in the supply chain. Caddick's team will do this by taking part in local construction industry skills forums, engaging with local trades and construction firms, and contributing to construction training content.

Planning permission was recently granted for the new Ordnance Lane development which will not only feature new Passivehaus inter-generational homes but also the retrofitting of the original 'Married Quarters' block and some new commercial and workspace close to the Fulford Rd frontage.

Our work to deliver Passivhaus homes is an integral part of our efforts to tackle climate change, reduce energy bills for residents and crucially, inspire other developers and builders to be equally progressive and carbon-conscious. The high-quality, highly energy efficient homes Caddick will build are a significant step forward for housing in York, whilst also creating at least 40% affordable housing in the new developments.

Apprenticeship Support:

The Council's Apprenticeship team has been working to encourage local businesses access help and support in taking on apprentices this September.

Apprenticeships continue to play a significant role in supporting the city's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, with 730 new apprenticeships started in York from June 2021 to January 2022. A total of 79 of these were in the council and local authority-maintained schools, which is an increase of 49% in the last six months. We have also agreed support for 27 apprentices in nine other organisations across the city, committing £160,000 of support through the Apprenticeship Levy Scheme.

This national initiative enables larger employers to transfer unspent apprenticeship levy onto other businesses or partner organisations, enabling the funding to remain local, benefitting smaller organisations and enhancing the pool of skilled workers in the city.