

**Report of the Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning & Sustainability as lead member for Reinvigorate York**

**Reinvigorate York – Investing £3,300,000 in the City Centre**

**Executive Summary**

1. In September 2011 the Reinvigorate York board had its first meeting. With Sir Ron Cooke as chair the board now comprises the Cabinet Members for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, Environmental Services and the Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning and Sustainability as the lead Cabinet Member on the board. The board operates in an advisory capacity to Cabinet and is tasked with suggesting ways to improve the public open spaces and movement in the city centre with the following objectives in mind:
  - Reinvigorating the city centre economy.
  - Increasing footfall in the city centre.
  - Improving the overall quality of life for residents.
  - Increasing the sense of York as a special place.
  - Maintaining York as a top tourist destination.
  
2. The board has now suggested a suite of projects aimed at creating significant improvements to the quality of a series of key public spaces within the city centre and improvements to the way people move around, and interact with, the city centre; either on foot or by a mode of transport. The Reinvigorate York projects are a key element of a wider programme of work being developed to create a world class, diverse and dynamic city centre. With prosperity being seen as the key to sustainability, the programme seeks to improve the economic viability and stimulate further growth in the city centre economy. A city centre investment and action plan is being developed to support this work

3. Progress was reported to Cabinet Decision Session on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011, and the setting up of a City Centre Design Group agreed. An initial £200k of funding from the Council's Economic Infrastructure Fund (EIF) was approved in July of this year for an initial package of improvements to paving, lighting, seating, bins and de-cluttering of public spaces. The next stage of the initiative is to progress and deliver a programme of specific area improvements in the city centre.
4. The suite of six key public space projects, supported by other improvements around movement and accessibility, lighting and environment, are proposed to go forward over the next 3 years, together with four other area improvements which will have a positive impact right across the city centre. They have been short-listed from a much longer list of 'opportunity areas' which were highlighted in the City Centre Area Action Plan (Issues & Options, 2008) as well as a number of ideas for improvement set out in the York Economic Vision (New City Beautiful), 2010.
5. The projects are discrete but also have strong linkages with each other. Movement and accessibility issues are addressed throughout the city centre, and an overall vision to improve the quality and use of public spaces underpins each project. Plans showing the improvement areas are set out in Annex 1 (Plans 01-03), and a brief summary is set out in paragraphs 29 – 42 below. A draft work programme is illustrated in Annex 1 (Plans 05 - 07), and a programme for delivery is set out in Annex 2 of this report. The spaces are:-
  - 1) Parliament Street (including Piccadilly/ Coppergate junction)
  - 2) King's Square
  - 3) Exhibition Square/ St. Leonard's Place/ Bootham Bar
  - 4) Fossgate/ Pavement
  - 5) Duncombe Place/ Blake Street
  - 6) Micklegate
6. A fund for smaller projects to uplift the city centre, in a similar way to the £200k of improvements approved by Cabinet in July of this year, is also proposed. These will include new seating, an uplift on maintenance programmes in order to source high quality materials where appropriate, and consideration of trees and green spaces in the city centre. This allocation will allow the project to deliver a number of the recommendations of the York Public Space Manual and the Central Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal.

7. The capital fund request is £3M with a request for an additional £300k in revenue funding. In order to properly specify and design each project we will need to expend revenue and some capital on design fees with both our highways engineering team and external specialists. Project management costs are also included in the budget and will allow us to provide the impetus and management needed to deliver the suite of challenging projects in a relatively short timescale.
8. Linked funding is identified through the Better Bus Area Fund (BBAF) and Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). The improvement projects identified in this report very much compliment improvements targeted in these funds. The Better Bus Area Fund projects are shown in Annex 1 (Plan 03) of this report.
9. A number of other projects to improve the city centre are also underway in terms of design, funding bids and consultation, and these are identified in Annex 1 (Plan 04). They include Minster Plaza (funding and planning permission approved), Newgate Market (subject of a separate EIF bid) and Station to Lendal route (proposals received, funding identified).
10. The Reinvigorate York programme will, ultimately be responsible to Cabinet and as each project is developed, in detail, it will be presented to Cabinet for sign off. The Reinvigorate York board will advise and steer the process. Project progress and performance management will be provided by the major projects board.
11. In addition to these specific area-based projects it is also proposed to fund access management improvements at the entrance to the foot street areas such as Spurriergate and High Ousegate (Project 7), new way finding initiatives (Project 8), and improved new lighting across the city centre (subject of a separate EIF bid).
12. The total package of improvements will provide clear benefits to all those who interact with York city centre whether they are residents, tourists, business or workers. It is intended to give an increased impetus to city centre investment and confidence to York businesses in their investment decisions. It is clear that, in asking businesses to make a commitment to York, we need to demonstrate that we have a commitment to York and the people that make York a unique place. An analysis is set out in paragraphs 48-68 below, with reference to a number of case

studies where city centre improvements have stimulated growth and prosperity.

## **Background**

13. While the city centre has a lively and diverse range of activities, including some of the most attractive small, niche retailing environments in the country, the physical fabric within which it sits does not showcase York's assets or provide a good platform for events, and presents challenging movement and accessibility issues. Research has shown that a pride in your place increases the sense of wellbeing and promotes a desire to protect and promote that place.
14. In retail terms York is competing with smart new city centre investments in places such as Hull, Leeds, and further afield in Manchester and Newcastle upon Tyne, as well as heritage cities like Bath, Bruges and Barcelona. Like all those cities, York faces challenges from its own out-of-town shopping destinations and from online retailing.
15. The York Visitor Survey 2011-12 found that the overwhelmingly top activity of our 7 million visitors each year is to "stroll around and enjoy the ambience of York", together with "eating and drinking out". Less than 2 million of the 7 million visitors actually go into the major attractions. This illustrates the vital importance of the quality of public spaces. It is vital in attracting entrepreneurs, investors, students and people looking for jobs.
16. Investment to uplift the city centre, together with facilitation of new development proposals at key sites like Castle Piccadilly and Hungate, the bringing forward of additional retail and commercial floorspace into the city centre, and the refurbishment of Newgate Market is important to encourage a greater proportion of the city's residents, as well as visitors, to spend more time in the city centre.
17. In addition, local businesses have identified accessibility and movement in and around the city as being essential to improve, and key stakeholder groups such as Visit York, English Heritage, York Civic Trust York and the Future York Group have all identified the need to improve streets and spaces across the city centre to provide a high quality public realm that is spectacular by day and night. Making the city more business-friendly will increase demand and build private sector confidence.

18. The Reinvigorate York programme will enhance the quality of York's unique and special selling point - the quality of its historic core - so that it builds further its international competitiveness, compares effectively with other world heritage cities, continues to attract residents and visitors to the centre, and helps to sustain economic development and promote new jobs in the city.
19. The initiative is a key part of a comprehensive action and investment plan for the city centre which will bring together indigenous and inward investment, tourism, city centre management, and transport/ accessibility work streams toward a common vision. This work will provide an opportunity to engage with wider stakeholders in shaping the future of the city centre, working with the expanded City Team - itself born out of the city's bid to become a Portas pilot<sup>1</sup>. The wider work will ensure that the Reinvigorate York project is supported by developments in the city's digital infrastructure and business environment, markets, and a refocusing of the tourism agenda to generate further footfall in the city centre.
20. The Portas Review highlighted the challenges that face city and town centre's. With shopping habits changing, high streets need to evolve – to build on their unique offer and strengths to create a viable and exciting alternative to out-of-town and internet shopping. High streets and town centre's that are fit for the 21st century need to offer a different mix of retail, services, commercial uses (eg. offices and workshops for creative, cultural, digital and technical industries) and facilities, a different style of interaction, and a variety of experiences that are about more than shopping.
21. A new DCLG guide on *re-imagining urban spaces to revitalise high streets (July 2012)* has just been released, and this talks about the benefits of “decluttering streets for pedestrians, creating a lively atmosphere with pavement cafes, pop-up shop spots and entertainment so they are more family friendly fun places to go.” It goes on to say that “there is no point in simply chasing the traditional model of the high street - a place where people come together to shop. Retail is an important element of a thriving town centre, but it's not sufficient. Instead, you need to re-imagine your high street and town centre, and drive towards a new future where

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<sup>1</sup> [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/regeneration/pdf/2082386.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/regeneration/pdf/2082386.pdf) for reference

people come together for many different reasons. Simply continuing as you are is not an option."

22. The DCLG guide endorses the Portas Review and asks us to look again at the potential of urban spaces and how, with some imagination and creative thought, they can add identity to a place to help combat clone town syndrome, and help make the local high street a destination of choice.
23. The New City Beautiful: Toward an Economic Vision report 2011<sup>2</sup> strongly advises that quality of place and a rich diversity of activity in reinvigorated streets and spaces do affect personal and business location decisions. Improving the physical appearance of the city, improving retail and commercial opportunity and activity, ensuring better accessibility and improving image and perception are all important.

### **Options – Why these projects and why now?**

24. The quality of the city centre and its public spaces is critical to the continued economic prosperity of York, and particularly the city's ambition to become a top 5 UK city and top 10 mid sized European city<sup>3</sup>. The city centre, as the 'face' of York, whilst still popular with many visitors and residents, is looking tired in places and will struggle in future years to compete with competitor cities across the UK and abroad. Over the years the city centre has picked up a lot of clutter in the form of street signage, road markings, and bollards. Some of the peripheral streets have struggled economically through a lack of footfall and investment in the local environment.
25. Commenting on the City Centre Area Action Plan (Issues & Options, 2008), English Heritage said that "compared to other cities, both within this Region and elsewhere across Europe, the quality of the public realm in York is poor and, in a number of areas, detracts from the setting of its historic assets. Therefore, we welcome the intention to invest in the improvement of the public realm of the City."
26. The Central Historic Core Character Appraisal (2011) reported that York is widely loved and admired for its wonderful historic buildings and picturesque townscape. However, the Appraisal also found

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<sup>2</sup> [www.york.gov.uk/environment/Planning/ldf/evidencebase/YorkNewCityBeautiful/](http://www.york.gov.uk/environment/Planning/ldf/evidencebase/YorkNewCityBeautiful/) for reference

<sup>3</sup> York Economic Strategy 2011-15

that the poor quality of streets and spaces (the 'public realm') substantially detracts from the character, appearance and the experience of the Conservation Area. Whilst there are plenty of examples of good design and finish, it has not really been addressed in a holistic manner but rather has evolved piecemeal through the introduction of street furniture, paving, signage and other maintenance in a range of different materials and designs.

27. Immediate and noticeable improvements made to the quality and image of the city centre would be significantly to York's advantage. This is the right time to plan and invest. York will stand-out as an attractive location for business, shopping, tourism and leisure and will be in a position to take best advantage of the upturn and changes in lifestyle choices over the coming decades.
28. The projects set out below were first identified in the City Centre Area Action Plan (Issues & Options) 2008 and Economic Vision (York New City Beautiful) 2010. Those reports included a longer list of projects for consideration. Each project will be evaluated and costed in detail, and reported back to Cabinet as soon as the scope of the project is agreed.

1. Parliament Street (including Piccadilly junction)

29. Demolition of the public toilets was completed in April of this year, and paving reinstated in May. A lot of the iron guard railings were taken out in June, but the area remains cluttered. There is now an opportunity to observe and consider the public space options and link these to improvements of the junction. This has heavy car and bus use, effectively cutting off pedestrian movement and flow from Parliament Street to Piccadilly. The junction should be made pedestrian friendly, not least to ensure that there is an enhanced footfall into Piccadilly. Detailed sub base investigation and work should be carried out, as well as service diversion, changes to traffic signaling, new build outs if appropriate, paving and street furniture.

2. King's Square

30. This is an important public space, framing great views of the medieval cityscape, including the Minster. The square is not convincingly harmonized with surrounding buildings and has disabled access issues. There are raised levels to consider and some areas of poor surfacing. Much of the uncoordinated

benches, bollards, bins and signs have been removed but there remains an opportunity to create a larger public space and a more unified and elegant environment that builds on the success of King's Square as a performance space.

### 3. Exhibition Square/ St. Leonard's Place/ Bootham Bar

31. A major city centre space with unique views of the Minster and surrounded by high quality listed buildings and the City Walls. There is great potential to better integrate the civic buildings and the environment within. All stakeholders – Museums Trust (Art Gallery), University of York (King's Manor), Theatre Royal and De Grey Rooms, and Rushbond (St. Leonard's Place) - have expressed a strong desire to contribute and most have plans of their own to improve their buildings and spaces outside over the next few years.
32. Whilst there are challenging issues to address (bus and car movement, air quality) the area provides a great opportunity now to make improvements to public use and enjoyment of this space, including the setting and entrance treatment of Bootham Bar, and also to consider future use. The 'Theatre Interchange' area has been identified in the Better Bus Area Fund with £400k allocated for improvements.

### 4. Fossgate/ Pavement/ Whip-ma-Whop-ma Gate

33. A very popular destination for restaurants and a mix of independent retailers, but suffers from bad parking, signage, road markings and poor quality seating and trees. It also links with the Coppergate- Stonebow cross-city route to the north-west, which is suffering from physical deterioration, and to Walmgate immediately to the south-east, towards the Barbican and University. It should be more pedestrian friendly and encourage footfall into Fossgate. The Footstreets Review identified Fossgate as the next phase to be pedestrianised, and local traders have been very supportive. Evening footstreet use might be considered, potentially as a pilot for other areas in the city centre.

### 5. Duncombe Place/ Blake Street

34. Duncombe Place was deliberately created in 1859 in order to provide a spectacular view of the Minster. There is an opportunity now to improve and showcase the last section of this key approach



to the Minster from the station, which also links through to St. Leonard's Place, Exhibition Square and Bootham Bar. Given the wider aspirations and funding implications for this huge area, it would be better in the shorter term to concentrate improvements on the entrance/ gateway treatment of the space, and consider similar gateway/ entrance treatments in other areas such as Micklegate.

35. Guard railings have been removed from this junction, which has clearly helped the pedestrian flow, and other complimentary measures will be considered through consultation.

## 6. Micklegate

36. Micklegate is one of the prime Georgian streets in York but has, over time, become detached from the main city centre. It is one of the main gateways to the city but has become more of a through route than a destination with retail revenues below that found elsewhere and high turnover of retail lettings. Our approach is two fold; to change the character on Micklegate to make it more of a destination and to celebrate it as an important entrance to the city. In the same way as entrance treatment of Duncombe Place can begin to reveal the wider intentions to improve the quality of public space in that area, so a high quality treatment of Micklegate Bar can improve the setting of this important and beautiful gateway street, which is currently deteriorating in appearance and battling to remain economically active.
37. The strategy to re-instate quality materials around the Bar can be adopted throughout the city centre, as described in the draft Public Space Strategy, July 2012. Wider aspirations would focus on road use, parking and pavements, and wayfinding from the city centre.

## 7. Footstreet new access management

38. An opportunity to address the impact of traffic and highways infrastructure on quality of place in the city centre. Focusing on better access controls and improved access for disabled residents and visitors we will address the key issues affecting movement around the city centre. Abuse, by non badge holders, of the green badge parking arrangements needs to be controlled. Our outdated disabled access arrangements need to be addressed providing improved movement around the centre and investment in easier access to services like shop mobility with reference to the 2011

Movement & Accessibility Framework. Improvement proposals will help to improve the quality of the environment for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, and boost the local economy in the same way as pedestrianisation of parts of the city centre did in 1988.

39. There is potential for environmental improvements strongly linked to the implementation of transport route and access priority changes. New access controlled measures at the entrance to the footstreets (including Spurriergate and High Ousegate junction), operated by staff in the Network Management Control Room, are now being explored alongside improvements identified through the LSTF and BBAF.

## 8. Wayfinding

40. Wayfinding is not signage. It projects the best image possible to all visitors, maximizes commercial objectives, and achieves positive visitor experience and memory. It involves visual communications, landmarks, lighting and landscape.
41. More effective physical and, especially, electronic/ digital wayfinding will be explored in order to provide benefit throughout the day and night, especially in terms of introducing peripheral areas of the city which do not get the same levels of footfall as the historic core. Gateway streets such as Micklegate, Goodramgate and Walmgate have a great deal of interest and variety, but have suffered physical deterioration through the economic decline, which has led to less investor confidence and interest, and more decline.
42. Better navigation and way-finding to and from key streets and high footfall places, allied with physical improvements to the street scene, will help to raise the profile of gateway streets and improve business activity and investor interest.

## 9. Other city centre projects

43. There will need to be funds allocated for complimentary projects in the city centre, in the same way as £200k of funding was approved by Cabinet in July this year. The emerging new York Public Space Manual will help to create consistency and high quality throughout the city centre. Paving upgrades, more and better seating and

relaxation areas in general, bins, and planting will all compliment the major schemes.

### **TOTAL £3M**

44. In addition to the £3M capital spend, £300k of revenue funding (ie. 10% of capital project funding) is considered to be in line with project design and management requirements.
45. It is anticipated that most of the projected spend will be in years 2 and 3 (2013/14 and 2014/15) with an estimated spend profile of £500k year 1, £1.3M year 2, £1.5M year 3.

### **Lighting**

46. Funding to carry out a lighting strategy for the city centre was identified and approved in the £200k Reinvigorate York Fund at Cabinet in July of this year. Experience in other successful cities, such as Durham and Sheffield, has shown that a well thought out lighting strategy can make a huge difference to the appearance, impact and enjoyment of cities. There will be benefits for the economy and cultural offer of York as well as for security, way-finding and well-being.
47. A number of key buildings were illuminated in the city centre in 2005, with some success, and the draft Public Space Strategy proposes that this be extended to other buildings, bridges, streets, alleyways and other spaces on completion of a lighting strategy for the city, to be undertaken this year. Funding for this comprehensive review of lighting will be subject of a separate bid for EIF funding.

### **Analysis – the benefits of investing in city centre public spaces**

48. Research into the economic, health, social well-being and safety benefits of recent investment in city centre public spaces such as Sheffield has been undertaken by the Major Development Projects and Initiatives (MDPI) team, with some key findings and conclusions set out in paragraphs 60-68 below. An urban design toolkit has also just been released by Transport for London which measures the value of improvements to streets, squares and other urban public spaces, and this will be assessed in terms of monitoring the benefits of each Reinvigorate York project.

### *Improving public open space for York residents*

49. Research has shown that a pride in your place increases the sense of wellbeing and promotes a desire to protect and promote that place. Improved investment in town centres brings increased footfall and retention benefits for business and indeed it is important that the business case is made for any public investment. However it is important to recognize that the primary users of open spaces in York should be the residents of York. Retail employment only accounts for a third of the people that work here and, although improvements to the tourist offer help increase prosperity, it is the residents of York and its hinterland and those who work in the city that will benefit most from an improved place. The aspirations of residents and how they interact with the space will be at the forefront of each project brief as the programme proceeds.

### *Providing the catalyst for private sector investment*

50. Improvements to city centre public spaces can act as the catalyst for private sector investment. Through raising the image and enhancing perceptions of the centre, high quality public space can be the trigger that influences the locational decisions of developers and investors and lead to increased levels of economic activity. The use of well designed pedestrianisation schemes can improve access, footfall and extend the prime retail and commercial areas of the city centre. This increases occupier demand, and therefore values, which can lead to redevelopment of secondary areas for important economic development projects – such as workspace and commercial accommodation, hotels, new retail areas or high quality residential.

### *Attracting higher value employment*

51. An important rationale for investment in high quality of place can be the need to diversify a local economy and attract a 'different type' of employment/ occupier. The City Council and its partners through the Economic Partnership have high aspirations to attract high value employment in the form of creative, digital, IT and other knowledge industries, as well as to increase its proportion of professional and financial services occupations – and the quality of amenities and public spaces is a vital criterion for such employers.

52. Competitive cities recognise that high quality of place is a given if investment is to be attracted and retained. York should not be focusing on 'back office' employment, which is largely drawn to low cost property solutions. Instead, it should look to provide a high quality environment that attracts high value employment within these high value and knowledge sectors – that take advantage of the extensive research & development and science assets based at our universities and colleges. This drive will help to address the local and regional economic objectives of raising GVA per head (productivity).

*Raising its international profile*

53. York already has an international brand, but this is currently associated with the visitor and leisure offer rather than York as a dynamic and vibrant destination for enterprise, opportunity and business. A high profile programme of improvements in the city centre will enhance the City's image as a fresh destination for visitors of all ages and backgrounds, but also as a destination for business and living for young professionals. This will help to provide valuable images and strong visual messages that will promote the City as a high quality, accessible and vibrant location with great public squares and an internationally renowned programme of cultural activity linked to the City's heritage.

*Improving City Centre amenity*

54. As a preference, people like to work, live in and visit quality places. York, whilst well known and regarded, arguably struggles to offer the visitor and user a quality experience that befits the international status of the City and its heritage context. Getting into the City is regarded as difficult by many people.
55. There is little green space and relaxation area within the city centre and fairly limited connectivity to and along the two rivers. Cars and lorries compete with pedestrians in accessing and moving around, and growth in the primary commercial core is constrained by highways. Whilst several areas, most notably the Shambles and Stonegate, are amongst the highest quality streets in this country or elsewhere, on closer inspection the remainder often fails to live up to the high standards that the City should expect. Investment to address these issues will therefore improve the attractiveness of the City to businesses and people – key if the City is to retain and grow its human capital.

### *Raising confidence in the City*

56. Investment in public spaces and streets can generate confidence from indigenous investors to invest in quality improvements to privately owned property in the city centre – starting a domino effect by creating the incentive for landlords and property owners to maintain and invest in their property. Commitment to a city centre vision will set out the ‘plan’ for the City which, together with the establishment of an effective partnership and the initial investment proposed by the City Council, will provide a clear statement to the private sector that the City is working together with them to create a quality city centre for the future.
57. Already, through the first phase of Reinvigorate York, commercial and public agencies have begun to make modest investments to improve the quality of public spaces, in many ways complimentary to the proposed expenditure reported here. Renovation of the Charles I coat of arms at Kings Manor, repairs to the Little Admiral Clock in Coney Street, plans to develop St. Martins Church, re-paint the Bile Bean wall in Lord Mayors Walk, and restore the star over the Olde Starre Inn in Stonegate are all underway now.

### *Improving connections*

58. Accessibility is key to generating and sustaining footfall and encouraging visitors. Good connections enable easy movement and accessibility, from home to work, from work to leisure and between areas of economic activity within a City Centre. Despite an age of electronic communication, human contact is still key and City economies function stronger where there is connectivity between businesses, clients and services. However, York city centre is fragmented in key places – such as the link from the rail station to the city centre, and across the core of the city centre itself. The city would present a more appealing prospect to the visitor, potential investor or resident if ease of access and movement was enhanced.

### *Improving rental values and yields*

59. Regeneration activity and enhancing the economic wealth of a place can often be restricted or delayed through the viability challenges associated with new development. Focused quality of place investments will have the potential to enhance the key indicators of value – rents and yields. This can make development

viable or, alternatively, enable a higher quality of product to be developed which is more appropriate to York's historic nature. Yield is a measure of risk and, by creating a higher quality of place in close proximity to development sites (or across the City as a whole), it is possible to reduce that assessment of risk to a developer/ investor, thereby increasing the opportunities for high quality development to take place.

### Case Study: Sheffield

60. Sheffield's strategic decision to invest in high quality public spaces began in the mid 90's and is still underway. It has now set a precedent and benchmark for quality, and analysis of headline economic statistics show that pre 1996 Sheffield's economy grew at 2.9% per annum, post 2000 at 6.08% per annum, overtaking the national averages for the first part of 2000.
61. A 2010/11 study focused on six particular economic benefit streams:-
  - Attracting business
  - Increasing land/ property values
  - Attracting visitors
  - Increasing tourism
  - Improving productivity
  - Enhancing image
62. The study looked at several key but contrasting public spaces in the city centre. It estimated the total number of net additional jobs attributable to the Peace Gardens public space investment as between 320 and 508. Rental uplift and yield showed a 40-60% increase, footfall increased by 20-44%, and there was a 7% additional expenditure per shopping and leisure visit. Key property market fundamentals show a 32% increase in prime office rental levels, coupled with a 2.5% yield improvement.
63. Obviously these results have been modified: not all of the improvements can be realistically contributable to investment in high quality public spaces, but it is seen as a significant factor.

### Case Study: The Cut, Southwark

64. The Transport for London study research looked at the links between public realm improvements and economic uplift. The study

found that the elements of streets that most clearly add value to property are personal security, lighting, quality of environment and maintenance.

65. For each measurable improvement in quality in any of these aspects in a street, the sale process of flats increased by 1.6% and shop rental values by 1.2%. The Cut was subject to a number of changes in 2008 at a cost of £3M, including widening and resurfacing footways, improved lighting and planting trees. As a result of these changes, and only valuing the four key elements that add most value (re. paragraph 64 above), around £9.5M had been added to the value of private property in the area.

#### Case Study: MVA Consultancy – 14 urban realm schemes

66. The schemes – including Brindley Place Birmingham, Devizes Market Place and Fakenham Town Centre amongst other smaller schemes - were completed after 2000. Flat sale records were analysed before and after, and then compared with the value of flats sold in other parts of the same towns which had not been subject to improvement. The growth in value covered a range, with as much as 28% additional growth recorded. More complete arrangement of street space in favour of pedestrians appeared to add more value than mostly cosmetic changes.
67. It seems that people who buy flats and rent shops do appreciate the benefits of improvement to public spaces, and that improving these spaces adds value to their assets. Based on discussion groups with developers and retailers, the study found that they acknowledged the value of public realm, particularly in branding and marketing as part of a lifestyle, and in attracting and keeping customers.
68. These studies, and many more which have been undertaken in recent years, suggest that funding partnerships may be possible where the public and private sectors both contribute to urban realm improvements in order to gain mutual benefits.

#### **Consultation**

69. The proposals identified have been discussed at the Reinvalidate York Steering Board by a wide group of Officers (Major Development Projects & Initiatives; Design, Conservation & Sustainable Development; Highways Network Management; Highways Maintenance; City Centre Management), together with the City Strategy, Community & Neighbourhood Services and



Leisure, Culture & Social Inclusion Cabinet Members and Sir Ron Cooke (Chair of Reinvigorate York).

70. The proposals will be developed further in consultation with the City Team in order to get the input of a range of public and private sector stakeholders and investors in the city.
71. It is proposed to undertake specific area consultation for each project if approved. This will include residents and shoppers as well as traders, landowners and others.

### **Council Plan Priorities**

72. Delivery of the proposals will help to achieve a number of the themes of the Council Plan, including :-
  - a. Create jobs and grow the economy – it is considered that the wider aims to improve the quality of York City Centre will contribute to the economic attractiveness of the city and boost investor confidence.
  - b. Get York Moving – improvements to streets and spaces will improve safety for pedestrian and cyclists, and help to create a better environment for people to consider using alternative modes of transport.
  - c. Protect vulnerable people – York’s streets and spaces need to work for everyone, and there are many significant issues that need to be resolved involving communities of interest as defined by the 2010 Disability Act. Higher quality paving, more considered repairs and re-bedding of surface materials, increases in seating and better quality seating, improved lighting, and a new approach to wayfinding will all help to improve physical and intellectual access to services and facilities for all. To facilitate these positive outcomes an Access and Mobility Audit of the city centre has been commissioned by the Council, funded through the EIF (Reinvigorate York £200k fund). The consultants, Centre for Accessible Environments, have commenced work and will report back at the beginning of September. This report will be critical to all Reinvigorate York work.
  - d. Protect the Environment – proposals will be delivered in accordance with the Council’s sustainable objectives, and

will enhance the public realm, heritage and townscape of the city centre which will support the sustainable growth of the city and coordinate with the vision and objectives of the Reinvigorate York initiative.

## **Governance**

73. The Reinvigorate York Board will provide the steer to officers in developing the brief for each of the suite of projects and will have an input into the design and specification also. Each of the 6 key space projects will then be presented to Cabinet as a fully designed and costed scheme for approval to proceed with implementation. The 4 minor areas of improvement can be sign off for implementation by the lead member with the agreement of the RIY board.
74. The project management and delivery performance of the project teams will be monitored and driven by the programme manager who will report progress to the RIY board and the major projects board within City and Environmental Services.

## **Implications**

75. The following implications have been identified:

- Financial Implications – The total EIF fund is £28.5m, of which £6.325m is allocated to date. The full details are shown in Annex 3. Table 6 of the annex summarises the allocations made to date. The proposed recommendation is to allocate £3,300,000 from the EIF fund for the 3 years 2012/13 to 2014/15. The estimated spend profile over the 3 years is £500k year 1, £1.3M year 2, and £1.5M year 3.

If approved this would take the total allocations from the EIF to £9.625m. The Gross cost of approved schemes, taking account of all external funding, would be £34.3M as shown in tables 3 and 5 of Annex 3.

It should be noted, as shown in Table 4, that available EIF funding in 2012/13 is £3.3M. Allocations approved, taking into account the £500,000 being asked for in this report, now total £3.916M. However, it is anticipated that there will be some slippage of spending into 2013/14 and, if this is not the case, the funding can be re-profiled to bring forward prudential borrowing from 2013/14

to 2014/15. Overall, there remains £18.9M of remaining EIF funding.

- Equalities – As with any proposals affecting change to public streets and spaces there are significant equalities issues which will, in part, be addressed through the emerging Access and Mobility Audit. Members are asked to note that the proposed projects will be informed by this audit as well as existing equalities and Communities Impact Assessments (CIA) for the emerging public space strategy and the review of York's footstreets. These assessments will be a key element of the feasibility study for each project and, in the meantime, projects proposed here will be assessed against existing evidence, and with reference to national guidance.

### **Risk Management**

76. Individual risk assessments will be undertaken as individual projects are identified.

### **Recommendation**

77. Members are requested to approve EIF investment of £3.3M in the Reinvigorate York programme, as set out in this report, subject to more detailed costings, feasibility work and updates on individual projects as they develop. The £3.3M budget is recommended to be initially allocated as follows:- £500,000 in 2012/13, £1.3M in 2013/14, and £1.5M in 2014/ 15.

Reason: To support the Council Plan priorities of creating jobs, growing the economy and investing in the city's economic future.

## **Contact Details**

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## **Background papers**

- Reinvigorate York, Cabinet Decision Session 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011.
- Reinvigorate York – Investing £200,000 in the City, Cabinet 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

## **Annexes**

- Annex 1 – Plans of proposed improvement areas
- Annex 2 – Project programme 2012 – 2015
- For EIF summary tables – See Appendix 2 to separate September Funding Decisions Report on this agenda.