



Councillor James Alexander  
Labour Leader of City of York Council  
Report to Full Council – July 2013

## **Employment Rates**

Last month York's unemployment rate fell again to 2763. This is the equivalent of 2.1% of the working age population. In Yorkshire and Humber the figure is 4.6%. In the country it is 3.7%. York's employment rate is outperforming both the region and the country.

The council prioritising jobs and growth is beginning to show a return.

## **Former Terry's site**

The former Terry's factory is a brownfield site which has been left to languish for a long period of time. It has now been purchased for the development of new homes. This represents a significant step forward in breathing new life into this site. The council must be flexible to see this site come to fruition.

## **Comprehensive Spending Review**

Councils will see a further 10% cut in funding on top of the 35% already imposed by Central Government. By the end of this Parliament the council will have had to make £70m of savings due to Government funding reductions mixed with increased costs and demands. The annual operational budget of the council is £128m per annum. The savings required equates to well over half of this.

The further funding reduction will inevitably have an impact on front line services which political parties opposite will oppose at the same time as supporting their parties' decision in Government.

The Government has also announced that £400m of the £2bn funding given to Local Enterprise Partnerships will come from councils such as York. Giving York taxpayers' money to unelected bodies to administer sets a dangerous and undemocratic precedent for the Government. Furthermore this means York will not receive the funds the government said we would receive to support the economy.

## **Inward Investment**

Around the time of the John Lewis planning application I asked the economic development team to contact Primark about setting up a store in York and I suggested the Piccadilly M&S store that would be vacated. The feedback was that Primark had wanted to come to York for some time and the site may fit their requirements. More recently it transpired the retail floor space was too small but a conversion of the surplus storage space to retail floor space would fit their needs. It has been announced in The Press that Primark is coming to York. I would like to give a further update about a new development for this retailer coming to York but the deadline for submission of this report prevents me from doing so. I will provide this update at Full Council.

## **Webcasting**

I am pleased the council webstreamed its first meeting. This is something I pushed for some time ago in opposition. However the administration at the time was not supportive. I am pleased that the trial will include full council meetings. This is an important step forward to open up democracy.

## **Park and Rides**

I am pleased to see progress being made on our manifesto pledge to provide new park and rides. This will free up road capacity for those who have no alternative but to use their car at the same time as providing more opportunities for people to use alternative, more sustainable transport to get in and out of the city. Park and Rides have been a major success since their introduction under Labour and increasing their coverage across the city falls again to Labour as the Party not only talking about tackling congestion, but taking action on it.

## **Police**

I worked a seven hour shift with the Police in the city centre during the night recently. I would like to pay tribute to the police officers who work hard to keep our streets safe. It is clear that body cameras help speed up convictions and reduce cost to the judiciary. I will be working with the newly appointed Cabinet Member for Crime and Stronger Communities and the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure all York's police officers have body cams. Not only do they free up police capacity and increase convictions, they also help with the safety of officers.

## **Local Plan**

I welcome comments from the Planning Minister at the recent Westminster Hall debate on York's draft Greenbelt. He made clear the Local Plan is a matter for York and that the Government will not intervene as Julian Sturdy MP has requested. He also highlighted York's homes crisis and the need for new homes.

A recent planning appeal upheld by the Planning Inspector made clear York did not have the five year land supply expected by the Government for new homes and increased land allocation for homes was needed. The Inspector made clear that if York did not have a Local Plan in place then planning decision making powers will be taken away from democratically elected councillors and given to unelected officials in London.

As I have stated on previous occasions, York needs a Local Plan and increased land for homes.

The appeal also showed that if York is to expect homes people can afford, this can only be achieved through increasing land supply.

## **Tourism Phone Application**

I am looking forward to the launch of this joint venture between the council and Appeartome, a York based technology company. The app will revolutionise the visitor experience to York and is a world technological first. I have been working with IT and the company for some time over the course of the development of the app. The council will receive an income stream from the sale of the app. Initially this will pay for our share of development costs, after which we can use this income stream to support tourism activities in York.

## **Local Government York North Yorkshire**

This year I will be chair of this organisation which encompasses all unitary, district and county Leaders in North Yorkshire. It also includes the Police and Crime Commissioner, Chair of the Police and Crime Panel and Leaders of our national parks.

I intend to use my year as Chair to promote jobs and growth across North Yorkshire and initiate shared services where appropriate.

## **CCTV**

Our CCTV network has been transferred to our dark fibre network and an expanded control room has been officially opened. We will soon be installing cameras on Coppergate and Lendal Bridge for enforcement of traffic restrictions. I will be working with relevant cabinet members to ensure we make use of further traffic enforcement and further criminal evidence gathering. I am in talks with other councils to expand this service to cover other authorities.

There may also be some opportunities to review our park and rides using the CCTV link up put in place.

## **Law College**

It is sad to see the Law College move to Leeds but it is clear given the scale of the University of Law's plans that this decision was likely. Yet the move also provides opportunities and I have every confidence that the site will be occupied in the near future, for whatever use that might be.

**Councillor James Alexander**  
**9<sup>th</sup> July, 2013**