

Executive

28 November 2019

Report of the Corporate Director Economy and Place
Portfolio of the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities

The York Narrative

Summary

1. This report presents the proposed York Narrative.
2. It has been developed following extensive consultation with Executive Members, city partners, young people and residents.
3. The York Narrative is a way of describing York, together with its surrounding neighbourhoods and communities. It aims to help partners and residents understand how we can better present ourselves to local, regional and national partners and prepare for future funding opportunities whilst also identifying the values the city cherishes to inform future policy making.

Recommendations

4. Executive is asked to:
 - 1) Agree to adopt the York Narrative on behalf of the city
Reason: to endorse implementation of the York Narrative

Background

1. The Leeds City Region (LCR) business pilot funded project to attract increased investment into the city by promoting our strengths and assets and developing a shared narrative was approved at Cllr Aspden's decision session on 6 November 2018
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=735&MId=10825&Ver=4>
2. This, and subsequent decision sessions, agreed the LCR funded project will cover the below activities:

- a. Consult with residents, young people, communities and stakeholders to inform how we best promote our strengths and assets
 - b. Develop a narrative that promotes an authentic and joined-up story about York
 - c. Develop guidance to help organisations across the city embed this narrative.
 - d. Engage partners throughout the development process.
 - e. Hold a cultural event that promotes the narrative as part of Mediale 2020.
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=736&MId=10887&Ver=4>
 - f. Deliver inclusive growth programmes
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=5610>
3. To build early advocacy, 28 city partners were recruited to help steer and develop the narrative project. A steering group provided communications expertise and challenge and a leadership group approved project stages.
 4. In February 2019, partners worked with CYC to commission
 - place branding experts Hemingway Design, Creative Tourist Consults and for the Love of Place
 - York St John University to provide project management and partner engagement support
 5. The project formally launched on 5 June 2019 with a media, social media and resident engagement campaign, aimed at encouraging residents, businesses and community groups to tell us how they 'talk about York'.
 6. Having secured funding for the project, the council role was to facilitate a process that gathered evidence from across the city that would inform the development of a joined up way to talk about York.

Consultation

7. A blend of consultation activities took place during July and September to develop and test the proposed narrative. Firstly, an online and location based consultation took place between 5 June to 9 July. 2,638 people completed the survey, of which 1,543 were residents. People also

provided c 2,500 comments on consultation boards at locations across the city, completed 80 mini-survey postcards or attended workshops and a masterclass. 48 stakeholders were interviewed and 22 small sector focus groups were held. The resident consultation was inclusive and actively reached out to communities who traditionally did not engage in council consultations.

8. Throughout September and October, we tested the proposed narrative with community groups, residents and groups of young people. In addition, we tested it via a filter workshop process with stakeholders and partners. This helped further refine and validate the narrative. In addition, the feedback from young people, community groups and residents helped inform our approach to implementation.
9. The perception baseline, validation process and feedback report is in **Annex B**. A full report of this research will be part of guidance provided to help organisations implement the narrative (see 22 below).
10. Cross party consultations were held to share the process and provide opportunity to input into the development of the narrative.
11. Analysis of the feedback has shown there is no significant difference between respondent's demographics or location. There is a slight difference between non-residents who have more positive associations about York, with residents having marginally less positive associations.
12. Regardless of age, location or relationship with York, the overwhelming dominate perception of York is that of a beautiful historic city.
13. There is a strong sense from residents and stakeholders that there is far more to York than its built heritage, and that the needs of our communities and neighbourhoods must be at the heart of how we describe York.
14. Overall there is warmth and loyalty from both residents and non-residents. People (particularly under 35s/non-residents) are open to the idea of visiting, relocating and studying here.

Analysis

15. With such a strong and shared perception about York, York clearly has a strong brand. Widely known, authentic and relevant, the challenge is that having such a dominant perception leaves little space for anything that

would support the ambitions of engaging residents in the whole city or attracting additional funding and inward investment.

16. As a result, instead of launching externally orientated campaigns, we recommend telling a different underlying narrative about a city. A story about how York reinvents itself - that throughout 2,000 years of change, York residents have prevailed and flourished.

Proposed narrative

17. The proposed narrative framework is in **Annex A**. The narrative is:

History isn't what describes York, history is what makes York the place it is today. The people of York built and continue to shape their place; a beautiful compact city where every person can have a voice, make an impact and lay the foundations for a prosperous future. York is a place where people and their stories matter; where an individual's everyday experiences are just as important as the city's world-class achievements.

18. The narrative is comprised of three values. These values are not slogans, rather they provide a framework to help describe York activities and events. The values are:
 - Making history everyday
 - Prioritising human experience
 - Pioneering with purpose
19. On 15 October 2019, the 28 partners who guided the development of the narrative confirmed their support adoption of the narrative within their own organisations.
20. The value of the narrative is not just the words but the degree to which it influences activity across the city.

Implementation

21. The council facilitated the research and development process to help the city identify those values and the narrative that best describes York. It is not the council's narrative, it belongs to the city.
22. To support implementation, guidance is being produced that will be available to partners and organisations across York, together with residents

and community groups. It will be tested with different groups to make sure it is fit for purpose.

23. Discussions are already taking place with, for example, York Central Board, York Human Rights City and Make It York to discuss how to best support the implementation of the narrative.

24. It is recommended there is no big bang launch. Instead, the narrative will become apparent in how we describe the activities taking place in York, and how we adapt or improve planned activities.

25. Over the next 18-24 months, Make It York will collate data about the impact the narrative has.

26. In addition, the Council will trial using the narrative as part of the Better decision making Tool process.

Options

18. Option 1 is to approve the narrative in Annex A in order that it is adopted.

19. Option 2 is to suggest amendments or additions.

Analysis

20. Option 1 is the acceptance that the process to develop the narrative, and narrative itself is reflective of the city, its residents and partners. This is the recommended option.

21. Option 2 identifies if there are any required changes, if the narrative is not felt to meet the city's requirements.

Implications

- **Financial** – The Leeds City Region (LCR) Business Rates Pool funded the City Narrative project. Full Council, through its emergency budget, reallocated £300k of LCR Business Rates Pool funding from the City Narrative project to support inclusive growth. No further financial commitments are anticipated.
- **Human Resources (HR)** - no impact
- **One Planet Council / Equalities** Equalities Impact Assessment (**Annex C**)

- **Legal** – no impact
- **Crime and Disorder** – no impact
- **Information Technology (IT)** – no impact
- **Property** – no impact

Risk Management

Risks at this stage include

- a. Related strategies will create their own story about York that may then undermine this project and each other. This risk includes the design and delivery of different capital projects. To mitigate the risk, we have engaged stakeholders and partners throughout to manage expectations and help define the narrative and support its implementation.
- b. This project is more than just marketing and communications. It is not just about telling the story differently, it is about our behaviours as a council, including decision making, planning and capital programme delivery. To support implementation we are producing guidance that will be available to partners, organisations, community groups, residents and the council to help guide approaches.
- c. To realise the outcomes of the project, the narrative will need to be championed by all key city influencers, with stakeholder engagement a key component. Partners have indicated their support for the narrative and will be supported to further implement it in their own activities.
- d. The possibility that the narrative doesn't reflect York – the purpose of the project is to synthesise the multiple different stories about York into one compelling joined-up authentic one. That it is instantly recognisable and understandable is because of the robustness of the process that led to it.

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Report
Approved

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Decision session : the project

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=735&MId=10825&Ver=4>

Decision session: cultural (Mediale) event

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=736&MId=10887&Ver=4>

Decision session : Inclusive growth programme

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=5610>

Annexes

Annex A – the narrative

Annex B – perception baseline, validation process and feedback

Annex C – Equalities Impact Assessment