

Leaders Report March 2019

This will be my final report and indeed the final Leader's report of this Administration. Looking back over the four years I believe we have delivered in many areas and although whilst we would always wish to do more, financial and other constraints do not always allow.

Brexit

There remains a large degree of uncertainty around the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. However, the Council is working with city partners to prepare for any eventual change in relationship. We also continue to work with national and regional partners to ensure that any challenges and opportunities are flagged and information is highlighted to the city's residents and businesses. Given the fluidity of the situation, the key will be to ensure that the Council and the wider city is agile in dealing with the UK's changing relationship with Europe.

LEP Review

Work continues to develop the proposed arrangements for a single new merged LEP to replace Leeds City Region and York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEPs. This is a real opportunity for a new organisation which represents a diverse geography and showcases our joint strengths. It is not easy – both existing LEPs have strong but different ways of working and finding a way through which meets all needs is a challenge. What is important is that we remain focussed on making sure the new LEP operates as a single organisation representing the diversity of our cities, rural, coastal areas and all communities in combination. That is the strength of the broader geography. As a member of the transition sub-group supporting this work, I'm confident we can find the right arrangements with some vision and compromise.

One Yorkshire

The council remains committed to seeking devolution for Yorkshire on the widest possible footprint. Two weeks ago we heard from the Secretary of State that One Yorkshire was not something which the Government would consider. There have been further conversations

around this – the Government’s preference is to consider smaller units for devolution rather than a full One Yorkshire footprint. The case and ambitions for One Yorkshire are strong – Yorkshire is a global brand which, if used effectively, can bolster the regional economy significantly. The reality for Yorkshire at this time, however, is that we are missing out on the levels of funding being seen in other devolved areas as a result of not having a deal. This cannot go on for much longer. We need a route forward, which might be interim arrangements to secure investment in the short-term, whilst we look at how we can capitalise on the strengths highlighted within the One Yorkshire proposals in the longer term. Any such arrangements need to work for everybody across Yorkshire and we’re committed to working together as Yorkshire Leaders to get to where we need to be.

YORK CENTRAL

The delivery of York Central is essential to the growth of York, through the provision of high quality office space it will support 6500 jobs and increase the regional economy by £1b. It will help to meet housing need in the city with the creation of up to 2500 homes of which 20% will be affordable. It will provide a high quality urban space, with a new park and extensive new cycle and pedestrian provision, together with unparalleled public transport connectivity right next to the railway station. Though the site has been earmarked for regeneration for many years, previous attempts to deliver the scheme have failed and we are now poised to seize this once in a lifetime opportunity to make this development a reality and to ensure that the development also meets the broader social, economic and environmental needs of the city.

The council has been instrumental in breaking the deadlock of decades bringing forward a public sector partnership of landowners, securing £144m of external grants and council investment to open up the site, ensuring that the scheme will deliver benefits to the people of York and will continue to be shaped by extensive public engagement.

Huge progress has been made over the last year and during March this will come to fruition when we will find out if we have secured nearly £100m of external funding, the outline scheme will go before planning committee and we will sign a partnership agreement. Subject to those

decisions we will then proceed into delivery with the council taking forward the delivery of the road and bridge infrastructure to finally open up this site which is a third of the size of the city centre. In June we will submit a reserved matters planning application for the enabling infrastructure and procure a construction contractor in order to commence construction work by the end of the year.

This is the biggest single development the city has ever seen and it will bring huge benefits but it will inevitably bring change and it will have an impact. We have an opportunity to seize the day and to make this a success for generations to come but this is all time critical. The HIF and WYCA funding are both time dependent and the EZ borrowing that will the scheme to be built relies upon commencement this year. Any delay will reduce the amount of funding available and could even threaten the availability of that funding. The Local Plan assumes that York Central will deliver up to 2500 much needed homes and up to 87,693 sq m of employment land. Without York Central the local plan is at risk and if this were to happen then once again this city would not be able to secure its own destiny and plan for its own future.

LOCAL PLAN

The Local Plan was submitted for examination on 25th May 2018. The Council has been appointed two Inspectors, Simon Berkeley and Andrew McCormack to undertake the examination. The Inspectors wrote to the Council on 24th July 2018 setting out their initial observations in relation to the Plan. Key issues raised were in relation to housing need, green belt and infrastructure delivery. The Council responded to the Inspectors in detail on 13th November 2018 following the release of revised household projections by Office for National Statistics (ONS) in September 2018 and advised that since the new national evidence on population growth showed a marked downward trend in the forecast growth for York that the Council intended to commission an update to the OAN to look at any potential implications of the new evidence with the suggestion to Inspectors that they should consider allowing early hearings on this matter specifically. The letter also confirmed the Council's approach to greenbelt and the delineation of greenbelt boundaries and confirmed that we would produce an

addendum providing the additional clarification that the Inspectors have requested.

The Inspectors wrote back to the Council on 14th December confirming that the York Local Plan would be examined under transitional arrangements applying the 2012 NPPF, acknowledging the provision of additional evidence and agreeing to a phased approach to hearing sessions, with the first phase dealing with Duty to Co-operate, legal matters, OAN and Greenbelt principle.

The Council has now received the housing needs update from consultants GL Hearn which was issued to PINS on 29th January 2019 and published on the York Local Plan examination webpage (www.york.gov.uk/localplanexamination). This was reported to Local Plan Working Group and Executive on 27th February and 7th March respectively. As our Local Plan was submitted to the Planning inspectorate before 24th January 2019 it will be examined under transitional arrangements applying NPPF 2012 (submitted in May 2018). This means that the calculation of the Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAN) must be based on the methodology for calculating housing need as set out in NPPF 2012 and the associated National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). This requires City of York Council to use the most up to date household projections.

The submitted Local Plan's housing supply includes sufficient allocations to provide 867 dwellings per annum over the period 2017 to 2038. The current and most up to date OAN is 790 dwellings per annum; therefore it is considered that the submitted plans housing supply can be robustly demonstrated to meet the revised OAN. The proposed housing supply in the submitted Plan will provide the required flexibility in order to be able to demonstrate to the Inspector that the Plan can respond to unforeseen circumstances over the duration of the Plan period. In addition the submitted Plan proposes to create a green belt boundary for York which will endure beyond the end of the Plan period, a requirement of the NPPF 2012 against which the plan will be examined.

The recent report to LPWG and Executive also provided updates on the Habitat Regulations Assessment process and the implications for the submitted Plan following the completion of a visitor survey for protected sites as requested by Natural England. There is a legal requirement for all Local Plans to be subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment. The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle to protected areas and plans or projects can only be permitted having ascertained that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the site in question. Following consideration of the visitor survey as part of an updated HRA and a meeting with Natural England Officers are recommending to Members in this report that the Strensall Barracks sites ST35 and H59 are removed from the Plan so that it remains 'sound' and legally compliant. The proposed modifications to the Plan have now been agreed by Executive. The modifications schedule and updated HRA will now be provided to the Planning Inspectorate who will then decide on next steps for the examination. It is possible that the proposed modifications may require further consultation if this is formally requested by the Inspectorate. We have not had a formal request from the Inspectors to date although they have indicated that this may be necessary to ensure that all interested parties can make their views known. If a modifications consultation is requested by the Inspectors it will follow the procedural guidance as set out by PINS.

Castle Piccadilly

The Castle Gateway project is moving forward and planning applications for a new multi storey car park on St Georges field and residential scheme on Castle Mills will be made in May which will enable the Castle car park to close. This will then create a new riverside walk way, a bridge over the Foss, a great new open space for the people of York and provide a fitting setting for Clifford's Tower and the Castle Museum. In the summer there will be further public engagement to involve people in creating a design brief for the second phase of work to bring this neglected part of the city back to life.

Finally I would like to thank all Officers who I have worked with for their dedication and hard work. It has been an honour to serve the City as a Councillor, Lord Mayor and Leader, and I wish those standing in the next election all the luck they deserve.

