

Report of the Executive Member for Economy and Transport

It has been an extremely busy time for the Economy and Transport Teams since the election last May. The new administration has brought fresh ideas and energy to the council along with clear vision and strong leadership. We face challenging times and difficult decisions. I should like to take this opportunity to thank all the officers in the Economy and Transport Teams for their hard work, dedication and fantastic support which has resulted in real progress since Labour took office in May this year.

So what have we achieved so far...

Economy

We reviewed the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan to ensure alignment to a new Council Plan that reflects the priorities electors voted for in the May elections. Good progress has been made with this fund to date and the decisions made at the [October Executive Meeting](#) will maximise our ability to spend our allocation by March 2025.

We continue to work closely with North Yorkshire Council and York & North Yorkshire LEP colleagues on the creation of a York & North Yorkshire Economic Framework, ahead of creation of the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) in 2024 so that we are prepared to make the most of the funding that becomes available.

We held our first meeting of the reinvigorated Economic Partnership Board, moving away from this being an information sharing meeting to one clearly focused on task & finish activities. This helps the administration to continue to make good progress in delivery of the Economic Strategy. Key areas of focus highlighted to the Economic Partnership Board for task and finish groups to work on are:

York as a global city

- CYC has a reinvigorated inward investment team
- New sector-based approach to inward investment
- Renewed focus on UNESCO City of Media Arts status
- Huge potential through Devolution for investment in key sectors
- New Tourism Strategy coming soon
- York Central and key developments progressing

A Greener Economy

- York's Green Economy Report launched

- £300k invested in free decarbonisation support package for businesses
- Investment coming in green skills through UKSPF
- York Green Business Forum established

A Thriving Workforce

- Local Skills Improvement Plan agreed
- UKSPF investment in skills
- Supported employment forum launched
- Free skill bootcamps now available in key sectors
- Free mental health and wellbeing support to businesses
- Focus on construction skills and commitment to Construction Village concept

Thriving Businesses

- UKSPF invested in start-up, social enterprise, innovation and business growth
- New sector-based approach to business support
- Greater integration with LEP and North Yorkshire offers
- New sector leads established for Bioeconomy, Rail, Creative and Professional Services, Tourism, Retail

An Economy Powered by Good Business

- Good Business Charter Marketing & Communications Plan
- York Community Fund established
- VCSE sector supported with UKSPF investment
- Economic Partnership launched
- CYC commits to Inclusive Equal Rights UK, including employment pledge

Inward Investment, Business Growth and Regeneration

We have restructured the Inward Investment and Business Growth service area to streamline and focus activity on the promotion of the city and simplifying access to business support.

We recently hosted successful business support events around Women in Business and Recruitment & Retention which were held on the back of successful series of events with Google focusing on skills for business

earlier in the year – part of a commitment to delivering a year-round business events calendar in collaboration with partners

There has been a joint application to Visit England with North Yorkshire Council and Make it York to establish a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for York and North Yorkshire.

We continue to support and encourage the growth and development of our fabulous creative industries, for example, by refocussing on York's designation as a UNESCO City of Media Arts through events such as [Reignite](#) and working closely with businesses and organisations active in the creative media arts.

We have launched a UKSPF Business Support Programmes focussing on decarbonisation, small business start-up support, community focused ventures and innovation. We have hosted our twin city of Dijon on a business focused visit to University of York Institute for Safe Autonomy and we continue to work with a major rail operator and other partners who are looking to establish an innovation hub within the City.

'Our City Centre' Vision

This administration has revamped the Vision for the City Centre, with a focus on Accessibility and Sustainability, which was largely missing from the Vision of the previous administration. Residents, businesses, stakeholders and other partners' involvement will be critical to the successful implementation of the Vision. We have shared it widely with all of the organisations that attended and the hugely successful launch of the Council Plan 'One City, for all'. Implementation of the Vision is also a crucial task and finish group of the Economic Partnership and partners will be key to successful delivery.

Castle Gateway

We will set out a clear way forward after a halt and lengthy period of inactivity and uncertainty under the previous administration. The re-purposing of Castle car park is at the heart of our ambition to create a new city space which will benefit all with:

- retained Blue Badge parking to improve accessibility
- improved sustainable travel linkages
- the creation of a multi-multifunctional space for people which could include, for example
 - green havens that embrace the river and supports wellbeing

- play areas that are attractive to families and visitor and family picnic areas
- porous surfaces for sustainable urban drainage
- space to appreciate our wonderful heritage assets.

We will retain Spark through an extension to their lease while the ambition to deliver affordable housing on the site is progressed. Spark has been a significant venue for a demographic that is underserved in York, and it is highly valued by those residents and the Council. When the times comes for it to move, we hope to keep such a facility in the city to continue to serve that demographic as well as providing start up and incubator space for our thriving small businesses.

On the Castle Mills site we continue with plans to deliver wheeling, walking and cycle links to and across the new Foss Bridge with West Yorkshire Combined Authority funding.

We will not be building a new Multi-Storey Car Park on St Georges Field as this is a 20th Century answer to 21st Century problems. The irony that this backward-looking and economically unsound scheme was pursued at great cost to the Council by the old Liberal Democrat/Green administration has not been lost on electors. Instead, we aim to deliver an improved surface level car park on the site with better wheeling, walking and cycling links and retaining the coach drop off facility.

At Acomb Front Street we are committed to phase 2 works which will try to undo some of the damage inflicted on this area by the old Liberal Democrat administration during phase 1 of the works. We will work closely with businesses and residents to create a space that matches their ambitions. To enable this, we will look to adopt the unadopted areas of Front Street and talks are underway for the reintroduction of a revamped market, which proved so popular previously.

We remain fully engaged with York Central and this reinvigorated and engaged Leadership from the City Council has been greatly appreciated by the Partnership. In spite of the difficulties inherent in such a large project, significant progress has been made on the delivery of the access infrastructure which is now very visible on site. We anticipate exciting future developments are just around the corner, such as the designation of the master developer and planning applications for significant infrastructure and buildings on the site.

Transport

The Local Transport Plan has been transformed from a talking shop under the old administration to a vital time-bound consultation about the how we can all safely, sustainably and accessibly move around our city without polluting the air that we all breathe. It contains the bold, visionary and joined up choices that we promised we would deliver for residents in our election manifesto. Now it will be up to the city to decide how we take this forward to create an integrated transport system that achieves the key congestion and climate targets that were agreed under the previous administration through cross party working.

Highways

This financial year the government gave us £3.3m for road maintenance, which is nowhere near the amount needed, so we more than doubled it to £8.5m by adding over £5m from the Council budget.

In spite of the challenges we face, through increased costs and labour shortages, City of York Council is on track to deliver 100% of all of its £8.5m highways schemes for this year. This includes reactive repairs such as potholes as well as more proactive maintenance such as the large patch resurfacing, slurry sealing, surface dressing and footway repairs.

So far we have delivered:

- 6 of the 13 footway projects
- All 4 surface dressing and all 4 slurry sealing projects
- 24 of the 50 carriageway repairs and large patches

I pay tribute to the hard work of all those involved delivering these schemes on time and to budget. They are providing an essential service for the people of our city.

We await confirmation from the Government of further funding to tackle York's road repairs backlog and hope it is forthcoming sooner rather than later as the City of York Council has a proven track record of delivering these types of projects.

We fully appreciate that the backlog and scheduling of roadworks we inherited from the old Liberal Democrat administration has caused significant disruption and frustration for our residents, especially when combined with works by utility companies. We apologise for this and

assure residents that we are doing all we can to sequence the works to minimise the impact on all road users. However, such works inevitably cause disruption and there is a considerable amount of works that still need to be undertaken, such as the station frontage project and essential inspection work on Lendal Bridge. Once again, we apologise for the impact this will have and we will sequence works to the best of our ability, but we do need to get on with them. The sooner we can get them completed the better.

In September we launched the 4-month trial to support families and encourage them to choose sustainable transport. Up to 3 children accompanied by a fare-paying adult can travel for free, and anyone aged from 5 to 16 pays no more than £1 for a single fare when travelling unaccompanied by an adult on any bus journey which starts and ends within the City of York boundary.

We have shown that as an administration we are willing to deal with difficult issues. Whether that is addressing unacceptable levels of air pollution in Gillygate, tackling the backlog of road works or making our transport system fit for the 21st Century, this Labour Council is determined to make transport in York the international exemplar it used to be.