

1 There have been 5 meetings of the Executive since the last normal Council meeting in
2 January.

3 **1) Annual audit letter**

4 The annual audit letter, produced by the District Auditor to give an independent view of
5 Council performance, has been received and is generally very positive. Some key quotes
6 from it are:

7 **Key Quotes from District Audit letter to York Council, March 2007**

- 8 • “Our reviews, and those of other inspectorates, have noted services improvements
9 across a wide range of areas”.
- 10 • “You have sustained progress in addressing local priorities through the York Pride
11 initiative which has led to improvements in the environment”,
- 12 • You have responded positively to recent job losses by setting up an independent
13 review .. to produce an overview of the City’s employment and economic prospects. In
14 addition your Science City initiative continues to achieve positive outcomes .. in the
15 form of increased business start ups.
- 16 • “Increased participation in the healthy schools scheme, and other health promoting
17 activities, has contributed to a general trend of improvement the health of local people”

18 Despite our sound performance we need to ensure that the limited areas of under
19 performance are addressed. As some of the data used by the DA for his letter dates back to
20 April 2005 the following information was been obtained which updates the situation on our
21 key “Safe City” initiative

22 *The Audit letter states that “actions to make York a safer city have been successful in
23 2005/06 in reducing crime, but car crime increased significantly”. This does not really do
24 justice to the improvements that have been made, not just in 2005/06, but also from
25 2003/04 (when the Community Safety Plan started).*

<i>Offences</i>	<i>2003/04 baseline</i>	<i>2006/07 forecast</i>	<i>% Reduction</i>
<i>Vehicle theft (incl. attempts)</i>	<i>1066</i>	<i>653</i>	<i>-38%</i>
<i>Theft from a vehicle (incl. attempts)</i>	<i>3258</i>	<i>2307</i>	<i>-29%</i>
<i>Vehicle interference</i>	<i>544</i>	<i>493</i>	<i>-10%</i>
<i>Domestic burglary (incl. attempts)</i>	<i>2346</i>	<i>1083</i>	<i>-53%</i>
<i>Theft or unauthorised taking of a cycle</i>	<i>1854</i>	<i>1463</i>	<i>-21%</i>
<i>Theft from person</i>	<i>795</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>-50%</i>
<i>Criminal damage (excl. 59)</i>	<i>5379</i>	<i>4176</i>	<i>-23%</i>
<i>Common assault (incl. on a PC)</i>	<i>1488</i>	<i>755</i>	<i>-50%</i>
<i>Woundings (serious and other)</i>	<i>1018</i>	<i>1839</i>	<i>79%</i>
<i>Robbery of personal property</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>-20%</i>
<i>Total of selected offences</i>	<i>17948</i>	<i>13328</i>	<i>-25.75%</i>

26 York has reduced crime by nearly 26%, which already exceeds our 2007/08 target of 24%
 27 (which represents the end of the Community Safety Plan period). The report also ignores
 28 the change in citizen perception on community safety which demonstrates that the overall
 29 reduction in crime incidents have made an impact where it matters most.

30 The comment about car crime increasing significantly is also rather misleading and a bit
 31 selective. There are three categories in this crime area – ‘theft of vehicles’, ‘theft from
 32 vehicles’ and ‘vehicle interference’. Only theft from vehicles showed an increase between
 33 2004/05 and 2005/06. This was largely due to a vast increase in the number of Satellite
 34 Navigations systems being stolen from vehicles – something that has been mirrored across
 35 the UK. However, this increase should really be looked at in relation to the past 3 years to
 36 gather a true picture of improvement. (see table below).

Vehicle crime type	2003/04 baseline	2005/06 performance	2006/07 forecast	% change on 2003/04 baseline	% change on 2005/06
Theft of	1066	970	653	-38%	-32%
Theft from	3258	2083	2307	-29%	+11%
Interference	544	770	493	-10%	-36%
Total	4868	3825	3453	-29%	-10%

37 2) Comparative Council Tax levels

38 We have now received confirmation of how the York Council Tax level compares with the
 39 national average. In 06/07 York residents paid **£148** less than the national average for local
 40 public services. Despite increasing demand for services in 07/08 York residents will enjoy
 41 good quality services at a cost which is **£150** less than is paid, on average, by residents in
 42 other parts of the country.

<i>Unitaries</i>	2006/07		2007/08	
Highest	1,267.41	<i>Rutland</i>	1,313.04	<i>Rutland</i>
York	939.77	<i>2nd lowest</i>	982.06	<i>2nd lowest</i>
Lowest	919.44	<i>Bracknell Forest</i>	964.89	<i>Bracknell Forest</i>
Average	1,052.23		1,093.06	

43

<i>All 352 Councils</i>	2006/07		007/08	
Highest	1,278.83	Gateshead	1,324.80	Ipswich
York	939.77	14th lowest	982.06	14th lowest
Lowest	359.63	Wandsworth	377.25	Wandsworth

Average	1,087.87		1,131.98	
----------------	-----------------	--	-----------------	--

44 **3) Future of the City Archives Service: Progress Update (2:05pm)**

45 The Executive considered the tenders for the improvement of the City's archives service.
 46 Tenderers were required to show how they would meet the vision for the Archives. They
 47 were required to submit 4 method statements dealing with the operational plan; the quality
 48 of the premises to be provided; innovative technologies and how they would contribute to
 49 the York Gateway.
 50 Unfortunately none of the tenders were affordable within the Councils limited income.
 51 Consequently officers have been asked to re-examine the specification for the archives
 52 service and report back to the Executive detailing the options for continuing to provide a
 53 quality, affordable archives service within the City. They will also reappraise any new
 54 opportunities that may now be available to either continue to provide the service "in house"
 55 or with alternative York partners.

56 **4) City of York's Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 Capital Settlement**

57 The Executive received a report on the settlement for the second Local Transport Plan that
 58 the Government announced in December 06. We were delighted at the "excellent" rating
 59 that the LTP received and pleased that, as a result, we have received an extra £900,000
 60 over the 5 years of the plan. However, we were very disappointed that the change to a
 61 formulaic funding regime during the preparation period of the plan led to an overall loss of
 62 funding and that this will reduce the work we will be able to undertake to tackle the transport
 63 needs of the City.

64 **5) Quality Bus Controls**

65 The Executive received a report which set out the options available to local authorities to
 66 improve the quality of local bus services, the current legislative and legal framework for
 67 partnership working with bus operators to improve the reliability of bus services and the
 68 Government's recently announced proposals for strengthening Quality Partnerships.
 69 The report makes it clear that Quality Bus Contracts could only be used where there are
 70 failing bus services. With bus patronage up 45% in 5 years that is certainly not the case in
 71 York.
 72 Despite this tool being available the first Contract in the country is only now being signed
 73 and, in fact, has been overtaken by the Road Transport Bill. The Bill does promise some
 74 more usable measures but at this time the final contents of the Bill are by no means certain.
 75 The Council, will of course, make full use of any measures that could improve the provision
 76 of public transport in the City at the earliest opportunity.
 77 In view of media comment it should perhaps be made clear that the Council has no powers
 78 to control fare levels on commercial services in the City. Even if new legislation is passed,
 79 then it is highly likely that any control on bus fare levels would involve a subsidy
 80 arrangement with the bus companies – funding for which could only be found by reducing
 81 other public service standards in the City.

82 **6) Park and Ride Bus Contract Options**

83 The Executive looked at options for the procurement of the Park and Ride bus services in
84 the future,

85 The Park and Ride contract is due to be re-tendered and the report not only recommended
86 the process that should be used but also the options that could see significant
87 enhancements to the current service. Although it is anticipated that we can increase the
88 financial return to the authority, money is not the only reward that we should be seeking.

89 Environmental improvements in the form of (minimum) Euro 4 compliant engines and
90 modern vehicles are a pre-requisite as are enhancements for passengers should include
91 the following:-

92 Improved quality of service

93 Route improvements to make use of the Foss basin infrastructure and
94 introduce cross city routes

95 Improved information for passengers to include real time information at P & R
96 sites, bus stops and on directional signs and web based capacity information
97 for the car parks

98 Enhanced facilities at P & R sites and city centre bus stop improvements

99 Introduction of Metro Card use together with improved interconnectivity with
100 other bus services

101 Better bus priority measures to improve reliability

102 Increased capacity at Askham Bar

103 The Executive approved a tendering option whereby the Council would still receive a licence
104 fee but where there would also be an element of revenue sharing dependent on increase
105 patronage. It will therefore be in both parties interest to increase the patronage by ensuring
106 that the service provided meets the needs of both existing and potential customers.

107 **7) Government's Proposals for the Post Office Network**

108 The Executive considered the government consultation document on the future of the Post
109 Office network

110 There are 36 Post Offices in York: 26 are considered Urban and 10 Rural. There is no
111 indication in the government's consultation about what sort of impact their proposed criteria
112 would have on York's Post Office network. It is clear, therefore, that local residents and sub-
113 postmasters will have to put up with a further period of uncertainty about the future of their
114 post office.

115 The proposed *Access Criteria* for Post Offices set out in the consultation document seems
116 to be based upon their decision that 2,500 post offices *need* to be closed. As such, the
117 Access Criteria being consulted upon appears to be arbitrary. The requirement for 95% of
118 the population in Urban areas to be within 1 mile of a Post Office and 95% of the population
119 in Rural areas to be within 3 miles is a lower standard than that set out in the Regional
120 Spatial Strategy for new developments. This states that new housing should be built within
121 10 minutes walk (about 600-1000m) of local services in urban areas and 20 minutes (1200-
122 2000m) in rural areas.

123 The government consultation appears to have taken little notice of the economic impact on
124 local communities of post office closures. A *New Economic Foundation* study in 2006
125 showed that for every £10 earned by a post office, generated £16.20 for the local economy

126 and that the closure of a single post office loses £270,000 from the local economy. The
127 closure of a post office has a significant impact on nearby local businesses and amenities.

128 Over half of people in rural areas use their post offices to access other services and 78% of
129 sub-postmasters run an associated business. These other businesses would clearly be
130 threatened by the removal of their post office activity and its associated custom. There is no
131 indication that the proposed *Outreach* services would do anything to support other local
132 businesses or amenities in the way post offices do. Indeed, the *Outreach* services in rural
133 areas could represent a significant reduction in post office services.

134 In Urban areas, there is little indication of what the social impact a post office closure would
135 have on deprived communities in York. The Post Office Card Account must be retained
136 beyond 2010 as this not only represents the largest source of income for post offices, but
137 also provides people, particularly in the more deprived areas, access to their benefits in
138 their local community.

139 More generally, the £1.7 billion that the government announced as part of the plans for the
140 post office network will largely be spent on retaining the current level of subsidy, paying for
141 the closure of 2500 post offices and absorbing ongoing losses of the Post Office network.
142 Little will be left for real investment for the future of the post office. It is not clear how the
143 proposals set out in the consultation document will do anything other than result in yet more
144 post office closures.

145 The consultation document portrays the current losses of the network as nothing to do with
146 Government policy. However, it is clear that the Government has consistently taken
147 business away from the Post Office- pensions, road tax, TV licenses and passports. These
148 have cost the network £168 million in a single year- more than the Post Office's operating
149 loss in 2006 of £111 million.

150 These issues have now been highlighted to the government

151 **8) Concessionary Travel Scheme for Elderly and Disabled Persons –** 152 **Implications of Appeal by First York**

153 The Executive was advised of the outcome of an appeal by First York, to the Department for
154 Transport for additional reimbursement payments in respect of bus travel concessions, and
155 considered the likely implications of the appeal decision for the Travel Concession Scheme
156 in 2006/07 and 2007/08.

157 The result of this appeal highlighted the fact that this Council received insufficient funding to
158 implement free bus travel for the elderly and disabled persons. The formula for calculating
159 our share of the money available is biased against us and yet again we have to pick up the
160 difference. First appealed in every area that it runs services and all the appeals were
161 granted. It is almost certain that other authorities are in a similar situation too us and will
162 have trouble finding the extra money that they must pay. The LGA must be a key player in
163 this and we will be writing to ask them to campaign for a fairer allocation formula that
164 recognises the actual number of people eligible to claim rather than basing it on an arbitrary
165 measure.

166 **9) Other issues**

167 The Executive has received and agreed proposals on several scrutiny reports over the last
168 few weeks including those on Sustainable development and Confidentiality together with a
169 review of the floods panel recommendations.

170 The Executive approved the adoption of a high level child protection policy for the Council,
171 adopted the Children and Young People's Plan 2007 – 2010, agreed a strategy for the
172 transfer of the Connexions service to the council, agreed the participation of the City of York
173 in a sub-regional housing partnership and governance framework, reviewed raceday traffic
174 arrangements and considered an update on the waste PFI business case

175 The Executive also gave consideration to a Notice of Motion on the Primary Care Trust
176 which has been submitted, via the Executive, under the new Constitutional arrangements

177 Steve Galloway