

## Report from Cllr Keith Aspden, Executive Member for Economic Development and Community Engagement

### Local area approach to financial inclusion

1. 4CommunityGrowth is a local area-based financial inclusion initiative, supported with £250,000 at this year's Budget Council. This project is informed by a number of local models of good practice including the Kingsway West Area Project and the Tang Hall Big Local.
2. The project will allocate grants and commission work over 2 years through a multi-agency Local Action Group. This will maximise opportunities for local networking and for local residents and stakeholders to shape the delivery programme. Activities and opportunities could include:
  - benefit take-up campaigns
  - personal development and wellbeing support
  - employability workshops
  - volunteering and work experience opportunities
  - community engagement and capacity building events.

### Review of Play Policy and Playground Investment

3. In February I received a report detailing the allocation of £170,000 in capital funding to invest in York's playgrounds. This broke down into £17,000 for ten locations in eight different wards around York.
4. The 5 key principles in the policy are that play opportunities will:
  - meet a clearly identified need
  - be developed through inclusive involvement and participation that empowers and encourages the community to take a lead
  - be based on the right of the child to access inclusive, quality and locally based play opportunities
  - promote and recognise the benefits of play and its impact on health and development of the child
  - be reflective of best practice.

### Ward working

5. We are continuing to make improvements to our ward working processes. This includes a new system for highways projects to help councillors make informed choices, improvements to the presentation of ward profile data, and a new monitoring form for ward grants.

6. I have highlighted some data summarising some key aspects of ward working:
- 228 ward grants have been approved to voluntary and community groups to date
  - 46 Ward Committee meetings/events have been held to date, attended by over 1,100 residents
  - £603,000 has been allocated to ongoing schemes to date, not including future plans.

### Spotlight on Communities

7. In January I opened a 'Spotlight on Communities' event exploring challenges and approaches on a theme of retaining a neighbourhood focus as resources shrink. York has a lot to showcase, with a devolved budgeting process through our Ward Committee system and extensive support for community engagement and voluntary activity.
8. Feedback from the event was very positive. A short write-up and all of the presentations from the event can be accessed at <http://localneighbourhood.org/archives/2082>

### Armed Forces Community Covenant

9. As York's Armed Forces Champion, I chair quarterly meetings of the York Armed Forces Covenant Forum. The meetings are attended by representatives from a range of services and charities. The Forum collectively work to implement their action plan that aims to support veterans, serving personnel and families under themes such as housing, employment, health, and commemoration. The Forum are currently working on plans for an Armed Forces Day celebration in June 2017 and have commissioned a piece of work involving the armed forces and local communities.
10. The Council is also collaborating with regional partners to lead on a bid to the national Covenant Fund. The proposed project will substantially improve awareness and delivery of the Covenant in North Yorkshire and York through integrated training, research, and information sharing. The outcome of the bid is expected in March 2017.

### Mansion House and Full Council meetings

11. The Mansion House refurbishment is back underway. This follows a short delay after the previous building contractors sadly went into

administration. Painting has begun underneath the scaffolding and inside works including conservation of the state room ceiling and restoration of the kitchens are moving apace. I look forward to the Mansion House reopening in the summer.

12. The decision to move ahead with the Guildhall project means that an alternative venue needs to be found for Council meetings while the building work takes place. Officers in democratic services have identified a range of options and will be working with a cross party group to explore them in more detail. We will still be meeting in the Guildhall though until the Autumn.

#### Economic Strategy 2016-2020, Job Fairs and employment statistics

13. Following the launch of the Strategy in July 2016, we are now in the process of gathering the updates for the objectives and actions in the Delivery Plan, such as with York Business Week.
14. The most recent statistics show that the total of Jobseekers Allowance and other out of work claimants has fallen by 7% since February 2016. However, there has been a small increase in claimants between January and February 2017.
15. This demonstrates the importance of continuing work to support the local economy and help for those looking for work and in low-paid or part-time roles. We are continuing to fund city wide Job Fairs, working towards being a more business friendly council and will work with partners including the Business Improvement District and Make It York to support a healthy local economy.

#### York Business Improvement District (BID)

16. The BID is now heading towards its first anniversary. There have been a number of successful projects, including:
  - Winter lights – a major success, with at least 10,000 related interactions on social media and plenty of positive press coverage
  - A rapid response street cleaning team, Future Cleaning Services, has now been established for the streets within the BID levy area, building on the cleansing efforts provided by the Council
  - The Street Rangers have begun work on a rough sleeping initiative, signposting rough sleepers to charities able to support them with food and shelter. The Rangers have also been instrumental in monitoring criminal activity and anti-social behaviour in the city centre
  - Sponsoring the 22<sup>nd</sup> York Residents Festival in January.

17. As of February 2017, 96% of the BID levy had been paid, exceeding predications of non collection by 2%, and amounting to over £820,000 for the benefit of the City.

#### York Skills Plan 2017-2020 and apprenticeships

18. We are developing a second all-age Skills Plan for York. The Plan focuses on how the Council and partners will work together to develop, retain, and attract talent in York, and ensure we have a prosperous city for all. The Skills Plan will set out 5 essential 'to-dos':

- support the transition of all young people from learning to earning
- connect more adults to jobs and career progression
- grow the apprenticeship offer
- make better use of higher education talent, resources, and learning
- tackle skills shortages.

19. On the issue of apprenticeships specifically, the Council-led York Apprenticeship Hub has continued to work closely with employers, training providers, schools, and LEPs to raise awareness and develop opportunities. York is now the 6<sup>th</sup>-highest ranked local authority in the UK for growth in apprenticeships.

20. To conclude I would like to thank council officers working across my portfolio area for their ongoing hard work since my last report. If members have any questions on the content of this report or would like further information on other issues then please email me on: [cldr.kaspden@york.gov.uk](mailto:cldr.kaspden@york.gov.uk)

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