

**Decision Session – Executive Member for
Economic Development & Community
Engagement (Deputy Leader)**

22 March 2019

Report of the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee

**Economic Health of York City Centre Scrutiny Review Final Report –
Cover Report**

Summary

1. This cover report presents the Executive Member for Economic Development and Community Engagement with the Final Report of the Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee's scrutiny review into the Economic Health of York City Centre and asks the Executive member to consider the recommendations arising from the review.
2. In considering the recommendations the Executive Member is asked to take into account the comments of the Head of Economic Growth set out in paragraphs 10-17 in the report.

Recommendations

3. Having considered the Economic Health of York City Centre Scrutiny Review Final Report at Appendix 1 the Executive Member is asked to consider the recommendations as shown in paragraph 8, below

Background

4. In June 2018 the Committee welcomed the Executive Member for Economic Development and Community Engagement to its meeting and also received a presentation from CYC Head of Economic Growth which updated Members on the Economic Strategy 2016-23. During the meeting Members expressed concerns at the number of empty shops in the city centre, particularly a cluster of empty shops on Coney Street, but accepted that addressing this problem was complicated.

5. The Committee Chair subsequently had a meeting with the Head of Economic Growth and the Assistant Director for Transport, Highways and Environment and agreed it would be useful to undertake a full Committee review of the city centre economy, the immediate problems it is facing and what measures could be taken to resolve them.
6. In July 2018 the Committee considered a scoping report on the city centre economy and considered it was a topic worthy of further investigation. Members agreed to undertake a full committee scrutiny review with the following remit:

Remit

Aim:

To understand the economic health of York city centre and where the Council can influence the city centre economy.

Objectives:

- i. To examine all the available evidence about York city centre as a retail location and how this has changed in recent years;
- ii. Consider the factors that influence the city centre economy and what role the Council has to play;
- iii. Understand the global trends that underpin changes in retail and the city centre environments and how these might affect York;
- iv. Identify the Council's priorities with regard to the city centre economy.

Consultation

7. Over a series of meetings the E&P Scrutiny Committee was guided by CYC's Head of Economic Growth and consulted with representatives from Make It York, York Business Improvement District, Indie York, York Retail Forum and York Food Festival. The information gathered led to the Committee agreeing the following recommendations, which were endorsed by the Economy and Place Policy Development Committee at its meeting on 29 January 2019.

Review Recommendations

8. That the Council:
 - i. Fully supports the work and ambitions of Indie York in helping further develop and grow the independent business sector in the city and that the Council makes a grant of £10,000 to Indie York to help progress this work;
 - ii. Considers making a bid to the £675 million Future High Streets Fund to secure funding to help York respond and adapt to changes facing city centres.
 - iii. Prepares a long-term strategy to make its high streets and the city centre fit for the future, taking into account relevant aspects of the Grimsey report and the view of all key stakeholders.
 - iv. Develops an easy but comprehensive and consistent guide to help businesses access relevant information around Council policies effecting businesses, such as planning and licensing issues and alike.
 - v. Examines ways of extending the city's traditional festivals venue in Parliament Street to open up other areas to visitors, particularly across the river into Micklegate, and reduce pedestrian congestion in parts of the city centre at peak hours.
 - vi. Works with Indie York and traders to develop a city-wide loyalty scheme to make it easier for businesses to reward customers with an attractive discount offer for shopping locally while encouraging business growth and customer retention across a city-wide customer engagement platform.
 - vii. Incentivises ways to further encourage more people to use Park and Ride and work with bus operators to extend the operating hours of Park and Ride to help reduce vehicle congestion in the city.
9. The Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee also reaffirmed the recommendations made by Economy and Place Policy Development Committee following a scrutiny review into the Impact of the Arts and Culture Sectors on the Economy of York which were agreed by Executive on 25 January 2018, namely:

- a. The Council should work with BID to explore all means available of achieving improvements to the public realm in the city, particularly Parliament Street;
- b. The Council should seek ways of protecting and utilising the city's stock of historic buildings to attract more growing business, rather than increasing residential use, by encouraging imaginative approaches to redevelopment through the Local Plan and master-planning frameworks, and through its Asset Management Strategy and the future development of its commercial portfolio.
- c. That Make It York concentrates its focus on higher quality events and festivals in the city centre to protect the York festival brand and maximise their GVA.
- d. That Make It York works with BID and other interested parties e.g. York Civic Trust, to devise a comprehensive 21st century system of way-finding within the city using all available methods and technologies.

Analysis

10. The Head of Economic Growth wishes to make the following comments in response to the recommendations:
11. Since the review recommendations were approved by the E&P Scrutiny Committee in early January 2019 York Business Improvement District has agreed to make a grant of £10,000 to Indie York, setting objectives around the sustainability of the organisation. There is money in the current approved budget to make an additional CYC grant to Indie York.
12. There are currently around 17 separate traders groups and associations active in York, each focussed on making independent businesses more sustainable in their local area. An option could be to seek to make provision in the 2020/21 revenue budget for a grant fund to support independent traders groups, such as Indie York and others. This would respond to recommendations (i) and (vi).
13. In regard to recommendation (iii), at the 2019/20 budget, the Council has approved £100k for a My City Centre consultation with all key stakeholders.
14. A bid is currently being developed with key stakeholders for submission to the Future High Street Fund (recommendation (ii), which will

complement the work being funded through the My City Centre consultation.

15. Recommendations (iv) and (v) are for Make It York to deliver and could be included in the revised Service Level Agreement when that is next considered (later in 2019).
16. In relation to recommendation (vii) First York have taken a decision to extend the running time for Park and Ride services to Askham Bar, Designer Outlet, Monks Cross and Rawcliffe Bar. See <https://www.firstgroup.com/york/routes-and-maps/york-park-ride/late-night-park-ride-services> - buses run until after 22.30 for the first three, and 21.30 for Rawcliffe Bar.
17. The Economy and Place Scrutiny Committee were to consider an update on the implementation of the recommendations from the scrutiny review into the Impact of the Arts and Culture Sectors on the Economy of York at its meeting on 19 March. In relation to the recommendations at paragraph 9, above, this shows:

Recommendation	Implementation as of March 2019
a. The Council should work with BID to explore all means available of achieving improvements to the public realm in the city, particularly Parliament Street;	The Council budget approved in February 2019 allocated £100k –to invest in a ‘My City Centre’ consultation be held with key stakeholders (including residents, businesses, cycle/pedestrian groups and groups that represent people who have special access requirements) on the wider issues of accessibility, safety and traffic management in the city centre as recommended by Executive in September 2018 as part of the report on City Centre Access report.
b. The Council should seek ways of protecting and utilising the city’s stock of historic buildings to attract more growing business, rather than increasing residential use, by encouraging imaginative approaches to redevelopment through the Local Plan and	The Draft Local Plan recognises the critical importance of York City Centre as the economic, social and cultural heart of the area. It aims to strengthen the role of the city centre through, among other, things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring development sustains, enhances and adds values to

<p>master-planning frameworks, and through its Asset Management Strategy and the future development of its commercial portfolio.</p>	<p>York's culture;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing an improved high quality affordable office space offer for small enterprises and start-ups in the arts, creative, digital media and related industries; • protecting and enhancing its unique historic and cultural assets; • protecting and enhancing its existing office provision
<p>c. That Make It York concentrates its focus on higher quality events and festivals in the city centre to protect the York festival brand and maximise their GVA.</p>	<p>Objectives in the Make It York Service Level Agreement Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive the development and implementation of an events strategy in consultation with the culture and events sectors and the Business Improvement District to ensure that York has a vibrant, all-year-round programme • Create a high-profile calendar of events ensuring that partners such as the BID are enabled to contribute to the full • Programme high quality city centre festivals, activities and events • Promote the events calendar through all appropriate means including through highly visible city-centre information
<p>d. That Make It York works with BID and other interested parties e.g. York Civic Trust, to devise a comprehensive 21st century system of way-finding within the city using all available methods and technologies.</p>	<p>The Council budget approved in February 2019 allocated the match funding contribution from the Council so that York Business Improvement District can deliver the way finding project following the successful trial in St Helen's Square.</p>

Conclusion

18. The review recommendations at paragraphs 8 and 9 give cross-party support to strategies that have been or are being developed by City of York Council.

Options

19. Having considered the final report at Appendix 1 the Executive Member may chose to approve and/or amend, or reject the recommendations arising from the review.

Council Plan

20. This report is linked to the Prosperous City for All and A Council That Listens to Residents priorities of the Council Plan.

Risks and Implications

21. The risks and implications arising from the review recommendation are outlined in the final report at Appendix 1.

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Appendix 1 – Economic Health of York City Centre Scrutiny Review Final Report