
Meeting	Economic Development and Transport Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	14 November 2016
Present	Councillors Cuthbertson (items 4 to 8), D'Agorne (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Cullwick, Gates, Looker, D Myers and K Myers
Apologies	Councillor Warters

25. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests that they might have in respect of the business on the agenda. No additional interests were declared.

26. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development and Transport Policy and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 7 September 2016 be approved as a correct record and then signed by the Chair.

27. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

28. Make it York Update Report

Members considered a report that provided an update on the progress being made by Make it York (MIY). The Managing Director of Make it York was in attendance and detailed the work that had taken place, as outlined in the written report.

At the request of Members, an update was given on the following:

- The impact on trade in Coppergate during the closure of the Jorvik Viking Centre.
- The funding that was being sought for Mediale, including an application to the Arts Council, and the partnership arrangements that were in place.
- The use of the “York Means Business” as a tag line. Members suggested that there was a need to ensure that the website links to this website were still working effectively.
- The arrangements that would be in place for the farmers’ market next year.
- The forthcoming Venturefest.

Discussion took place regarding the factors that impacted on York’s ability to attract high value jobs to the city. It was noted that cities such as Leeds already had Grade A office accommodation in place but, until developments such as York Central were progressed, there were limitations as to what York could offer in this respect. Officers were asked if action could be taken to address the issue of the conversion of some office accommodation in the city to hotels and whether the council could be more proactive in this regard. Officers stated that, in terms of job creation, hotel accommodation could be preferable to the conversion of office space to apartments. Market forces usually dictated the use of the buildings but, if the council were to be more proactive, consideration would have to be given to the commercial risks involved. Members asked about the evidence of demand for Grade A office accommodation. Officers stated that a paper had been prepared which had been based on information including inward investment enquiries and on the businesses in the city which were looking to expand. A number of independent reports had also been written and there would be a report focussed on York Central. Although it was sometimes more difficult to demonstrate demand when there was a lack of supply, there was a lot of confidence in the market. Work was ongoing to support four existing businesses in the city who were looking to expand but were finding it difficult to do so.

Officers were asked about the number of festivals that were held in the city and whether it would be better to concentrate the funding on fewer festivals. They stated that the feedback from festivals had become more positive and that efforts were being

made to ensure that activities were taking place around the city and not solely in the city centre. Members suggested that consideration could be given to extending festivals such as Illuminating York as a way of contributing to the night-time economy, particularly as partnerships had been developed with lighting companies.

The Managing Director of Make it York was thanked for his report and his attendance at the meeting.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To ensure that Members are aware of the progress of Make it York.

29. Update Report on Universal Credit

Members considered a report which followed on from a paper which had been presented to the committee on 28 January 2015. The report provided an update on the progress made by the Department for Work and Pensions since then to implement Universal Credit nationally.

Officers gave details of the roll-out of Universal Credit and informed Members that the Department for Work and Pensions had now confirmed that York should go live with a full service for all new claimants (not including pensioners) in July 2017. Details were also given of the arrangements for transferring existing Housing Benefit customers.

Members were informed that local authorities would continue to administer Council Tax Support (CTS). Officers stated that the council had seen year on year reductions in its benefit administration grant from the Department for Work and Pensions although the caseload had not reduced accordingly.

Referring to Annex B of the report, officers were questioned about the lessons that had been learned from local authorities such as Harrogate, which had implemented full Universal Credit in June 2016. They stated that real difficulties were being experienced, including a backlog of work as the changes were being put in place. Officers hoped to make a visit to Harrogate Borough Council in the New Year to find out more about the issues that had emerged.

Members commented on the problems that may arise because the Universal Credit was paid in the form of a single household payment. Officers confirmed that this issue had been raised with the Department for Work and Pensions.

Officers were asked about the role of Credit Unions in supporting claimants who experienced difficulties as a result of the introduction of the new arrangements. Officers stated that they understood that South Yorkshire Credit Union had set up a budgetary account to assist claimants. Members were informed that officers continued to liaise with the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Members agreed that it would be beneficial for them to receive a further update report after the council had gone live with a full service for all new claimants as it would be better placed to assess its impact.

Resolved: (i) That it be noted that Universal Support – Local Delivery was successfully implemented from February 2015.

(ii) That an updated report be presented to the committee in late 2017 to assess how Universal Credit has been implemented in York and related implications.

Reasons: (i) To acknowledge the support provided to early adopters of Universal Credit by the Council and its partners.

(ii) To keep the committee informed about the roll out of universal credit in York.

30. Update Report on Major Projects in York

Members considered a report which provided an overview and update on the major projects currently being progressed in the city. This included major transport initiatives.

At the request of Members, an update was given on the following issues:

- The Southern Gateway project – Members noted that a report was due to be presented to the Executive early in

2017 and they agreed that they would wish to be kept updated on progress.

- The Outer Ring Road (A1237) – details were given of the proposals to increase the capacity of seven roundabouts and of the proposed funding arrangements.
- York Central – officers explained the two main elements of the key transport requirements, which were the delivery of a new access route into the site and improvements to the transport interchange at the front of the station.
- Digital Services (CRM) – Members noted that there would be a soft rollout of the new system and that Members had been invited to take part in piloting the new arrangements.

Members commented on the reputational damage that could be caused to the Council if projects such as York Central were not delivered successfully. Officers were asked if an authority the size of York had the necessary capacity and expertise to deliver. Officers stated that, where necessary, the Council brought in expertise to enhance the capacity, as had been the case with the Guildhall Project and with large transport projects.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To ensure that the committee is kept updated on major projects, including transport initiatives, in the city.

31. Work Plan 2016-17

Members gave consideration to the committee's work plan for 2016-17.

Members noted that it was proposed to hold a presentation on Modal Shift in February 2017. This would inform Members' decisions as to whether to proceed with a scrutiny review on this issue.

Resolved: That the work plan be approved subject to the following additions:

- Update on the Southern Gateway project (meeting of 18 January 2017)
- Modal Shift – consideration as to whether to proceed with a scrutiny review (meeting of March 2017)

- Update on implementation of Universal Credit (meeting late 2017)

Reason: To ensure that the committee has a planned programme of work in place.

Councillor Cuthbertson, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.05 pm].