



Council

24 March 2022

Report of the Deputy Leader of the Council

Ukraine Crisis:

The response from the city to the refugee crisis, Russian attack and war crimes has been fantastic. As a council, we moved quickly to fly the flag, liaise with support organisations, review contracts with Russian companies and share advice on what residents can do to help support the people of Ukraine.

On 1st March, the government announced an expansion to the UK's Ukrainian Humanitarian Route, which will increase the number of people from Ukraine who are eligible to come to the UK to be reunited with their families, and helplines to support people through the Ukrainian Humanitarian Route.

Data from the 2021 census suggests that there are 50 people of Ukrainian birth living in York and the likelihood is that if immediate family members come from Ukraine, they will be accommodated by families. At the same time, the council is ready to support City of Sanctuary to provide a locally based Ukraine support group for Ukrainians in York.

Beyond this, Migration Yorkshire have advised that funding for local authorities to support refugees is unlikely. Instead, it would be for communities and families to sponsor refugees.

This is a fast-moving situation with the possibility of further significant changes to come. The council is working closely with Migration Yorkshire to offer support in any way possible. We will share more information as and when available.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend councillors and our local MP for keeping up pressure for government action to accept that women and children refugees are not 'a security risk' and should be able to

enter the country quickly, rather than spending days in Calais or Lille waiting for a visa. This reality is in stark contrast to the implications of the Nationality and Borders Bill, which threatens to criminalise asylum seekers, as well as residents trying to provide them with humanitarian support.

Adopting Core Strategies in 2022

The council and city partners are co-designing a 10 year plan that will be informed by the three strategies currently being developed covering climate change, economic growth and health and wellbeing.

To reduce complexity and help residents understand the interdependencies between the strategies and 10 year plan, the consultation to shape these strategies is being run in parallel

Resident, business, partner and stakeholder engagement is planned for Spring/ Summer with targeted resident focus groups throughout April/May

The strategies will then be updated following feedback and reported to Executive prior to recommending to Full Council to adopt the strategies on behalf of the city in the summer.

The draft Climate Change and Economic Strategies have been prepared following extensive resident and stakeholder engagement, with supporting information discussed at Scrutiny on different occasions and are now ready for further consultation with residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders..

Consultation process:

The resident's attitudinal survey (Our Big Conversation) has shaped the strategies with more targeted focus groups to explore strategic themes taking place throughout April.

The Climate Change strategy consultation included a series of sector-specific roundtables, covering for example buildings/constructive, energy, transport, housing.

The development of the Climate Change Strategy has been considered by Scrutiny in October 2021, January and March 2022. It

will also be discussed in Scrutiny in April 2022, and CSCM Scrutiny in May 2022.

The strategies themselves will be subject to a refine and engage process throughout April-June – as outlined in papers due to come forward to Executive shortly. These will help to inform work on the Local Transport Plan.

Local Transport Plan:

Some key elements of our emerging LTP4, in which adoption has been delayed by the impact of Covid, are emerging through some of the work currently underway in developing the Bus Service Improvement Plan, which will shape future bus services in the city.

I am committed to build on our scoping report of June 2020 for a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to form an important element that will extend our focus on cycle routes to key walking routes – something which many more have become aware of since the first lockdown. This includes issues such as boosting attractiveness and safety of walking and cycling routes into and out of the city centre or local centres, consideration of signal timings and design for pedestrian crossings, alteration or removal of outdated barriers etc. Our team of trainers also continue, almost unnoticed, to provide pedestrian and bikeability training in most of our schools, helping to equip our young people with the skills and lifestyle to reduce health problems in the future

To achieve a 70% reduction in carbon emissions from transport by 2030, we must draw on new approaches, for example, some of which can be seen in the excellent Transport Strategy for York report launched last month by York Civic Trust. We can take advantage from electric buses, e-scooters and e-bikes, as well as active travel for school, college, leisure and work purposes.

Progress is being made in the design of new, high quality cycle routes funded through the government's 'active travel programme' schemes, which are to be implemented during 2022.

Flooding:

Following the impact of storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin last month, a significant amount of work has taken place to clean up affected parts of the city after the rivers dropped to a safe level. While initial predictions showed a worrying record height might be reached, in practice it was closer to the 4.5m we are coming to expect each February. We are working with the Environment Agency to try to stress the challenge that frequent over-cautious predictions can present for residents who may be forced to evacuate their homes.

During the course of February half-term, York remained busy despite the impact of flooding and during this period, our teams removed pumps, sandbag barriers, flood gates and boards, following all defences holding against the rising river levels. Cleaning of riverside roads, paths and car parks then followed, with inspections for damage and hazards to these areas.

York is no stranger flooding and as ever, I am grateful to our staff, volunteers and partners for their excellent work in keeping the city safe and open.

Great British Railways:

Like the Leader and many others, I am pleased to see that work is taking place with partners to put York forward to become the home of the newly established Great British Railways.

Colleagues will know York's proud historical connection with the railways, dating back to the mid-19th century. York's contribution to the integrated rail network was huge, with the work of people such as George Hudson and George Leeman. Today, with many staff and operators in the city, York remains at the forefront of rail innovation and therefore, the perfect location for the HQ of GBR.

Now that the submission of interest has been approved, I look forward to council's continued work, in partnership with residents, businesses and partners, to really put forward York's undeniably strong case.

Extension of TIER e-scooter trial:

The TIER e-scooter hire scheme has been extended until Nov 2022 and I very much hope that its success will continue provide sustainable travel

options for local trips by an increasing proportion of York population, helping us to cut congestion and pollution and promote healthy active lifestyles.

York has participated in the Department for Transport micro-mobility trial since September 2020 to monitor and collect information regarding the use of e-scooters across the city to inform the creation of new national guidelines. The service has been used by over 25,000 residents thus far, with 6,000 current active users making around 20,000 trips a month.

Women in Transport Hub:

I welcome the creation of a new northern base for the national Women in Transport organisation here in York, thanks to a successful bid by the council. Women in Transport campaigns for and supports women in the transport sector where only 20% of workers are currently female. The new Yorkshire branch will mean face-to-face meetings, training and networking for women in transport industries across the region.

This is indeed excellent news for York and is a testament to the work we've been doing in transport, from the zero emission bus fleet to the progress being made in active travel.

Transport schemes progress

Work has started on relocating utilities that run over Queen St bridge as the first step on implementing the station frontage project. Work continues on the York Central site including works for the new spine road. Final detailed design work is underway for the Transforming Cities Fund project for Tadcaster Rd due to start later this year (providing new crossings and segregated cycle lanes) in conjunction with the highway maintenance programme. Following the prioritisation of Active Travel Fund schemes at my Decision Session last month design work is underway to enable the highest priority schemes to start to be delivered (A19 North from Rawcliffe to Bootham, cycle route alongside the A1237 to Manor School, city centre route from Navigation Rd to the Minster etc. Work is currently underway to install the signalised crossing from Bootham Park to St Marys as part of the Station/ Scarborough Bridge – Hospital off road cycle route. The new ramp up from St Marys Lane will be constructed as soon as utilities works are complete to move them from under the path of the ramp. The cycle lane on Coppergate has

been upgraded with better quality segregation and clearer road markings. A decision on extending the Coppergate one way arrangement was due to be made on Mar 22nd which I can update at the meeting.

Energy Efficiency Grants:

The council is offering grants to lower-income households in colder homes to improve their energy efficiency, and the application window is due to close at the end of this month.

The home upgrade grants are for loft and cavity wall insulation, PV solar panels and air source heat pumps, and can be claimed by homeowners, private tenants and landowners to lower their fuel bills, improve the standard of housing and to increase residents' comfort. To be eligible, applicants' annual household income must be £30,000 or less, and their homes must have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of D, E, F or G. On application

This funding will help lower income households who may be struggling to meet energy bills and keep their homes comfortably warm. Free energy efficiency measures will mean less energy use and therefore lower bills, whilst also helping to reduce carbon emissions.

This funding allows us to help people to invest in their homes and reduce energy costs for present and future generations of residents. Given current global events, we will continue to lobby the Government for more consistent and longer-term funding, whilst working to upskill contractors to do the work needed to deliver these improvements.

Helping tackle food poverty:

Funding for a new post has been approved to help support and improve the coordination of grassroots food projects in the city.

As colleagues will know, volunteer-run projects across the city bring together access to food for those most in need, with the re-purposing of in-date surplus supermarket food that would otherwise be wasted. However, despite this excellent work, it has been recognised that with

improved support and coordination, these networks could do even more to support people in need.

At a decision session last month, it was agreed that a new Community Involvement Officer will be funded to work to establish a lasting food network. Learning from similar schemes in place in other cities, and working alongside such organisations as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the work will seek to support food security in York. This will aim to link together direct access to food with financial advice and healthy eating initiatives as well as helping to tackle social isolation. As part of this work, continued funding for the city's Welfare Benefits Unit and digital inclusion work has also been agreed.

This is much-needed and timely extra support for the city's advice network to assist some of the city's most vulnerable residents in financial difficulty. Work to support food security in the city is also critical given the imminent ending of much of the government's financial support schemes and the increasing costs of living.

Taxi Driver Recruitment Campaign:

The council has secured Government funding to help prevent violence against women and girls and to recruit more licensed taxi drivers for the city. The funding includes £200 worth of free training each for the first 50 applicants, and this window close before the end of the month.

The funding has been made available to ensure enough licensed taxi services are available in the city. This comes as numbers of drivers have dropped during the pandemic and following concerns have been raised about safe travel being available for those who need it.

York's licensed taxi drivers make an important contribution to the city by supporting people to make safe travel choices. Among the £200 worth of free training we have offered ahead of the government's deadline, there are also incentives including grants of up to £3,000 to buy hybrid taxis and funding to support running costs of fully electric taxis.