
Shadow Executive

25th March 2009

Report of the Director of City Strategy

CITY CENTRE EXPERIENCE

Summary

1. The Shadow Executive has requested a briefing report on innovative thinking to establish what kind of a city centre experience we want people to have, taking account of potential for funding from Yorkshire Forward for the rejuvenation and regeneration of city centre areas. This report sets out progress to date.

Background

2. Members will be aware that the York City Centre Partnership (YCCP) was launched in October 2005 and was a public/private partnership company limited by guarantee. The company had been supported by Yorkshire Forward, the City of York Council, York Business Pride, Land Securities, Marks and Spencer and other companies. Its aims were to enhance the economic vitality and viability of the City Centre for the benefit of all who live, work, invest in or visit the Centre. A primary objective of the company was to consult and research the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) in the City Centre of York. A BID is a partnership arrangement through which the local authority and the local business community agree to take forward practical schemes to benefit that business community; it is funded through a compulsory levy linked to the level of business rates by those who operate commercially within the predetermined boundaries of the BID's effective area. The company sought to explore with city centre businesses the concept of a Business Improvement District for the foot-streets. Significant research was undertaken, the end result of which was the decision taken at the YCCP Board meeting in November 2007 that it was too early to take the concept further at the present time. The overall high quality of most of the built environment and the services necessary to maintain it in this state, the level of marketing and promotion and the broad appeal of the city were felt sufficiently good enough to preclude the need for a BID to address such issues (unlike many other towns and cities that have recently created BIDs). Nor was there a single substantial project promising a substantial return on investment that a collective business levy could contribute to via a BID, to guarantee its successful completion.
3. The costs of providing a Chief Executive to the City Centre Partnership would be borne largely by a grant awarded by Yorkshire Forward, related to making progress with the BID. This enabled the Company to appoint a Chief Executive for a fixed term of 3 years, which finished in September 2008. In

the absence of further funding being available, the Company also decided to cease trading, pending a review of partnership arrangements for the City Centre.

4. Since the establishment of the Company and following the recent Government Spending Review and the publication of a Sub-National Review of Economic Development, the Government is now planning to introduce legislation for a scheme for supplementary business rates. The Government's proposals include the introduction of a power for local authorities to raise and retain local supplements on the national business rate, subject to the revenue raised only being used for spending on economic development, a national upper limit of 2p in the pound and an exemption for properties liable for business rates with a rateable value of £50,000 or less.
5. In terms of developing an overall vision and strategy for the City Centre, the City Centre Area Action Plan will provide the first comprehensive review in over 40 years since the Esher report of 1968. The Future York Group Report, June 2007, included a key recommendation that the Council prepare a Masterplan to guide development and investment decisions, and promote investment: "we see the historic city centre, representing the international image of York and also its economic powerhouse, as the priority for such a masterplan".
6. The York City Centre AAP is the ideal process from which to deliver a City Centre Masterplan for York. The AAP will provide a 20 year vision, strategy and policies to build on its current strengths and address key weaknesses. The AAP will provide a robust grounding within the York LDF, conformity with national and regional planning objectives and continuity with the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy, as well as having statutory status once adopted. Key elements of the City Centre AAP will be:
 - Policies - a suite of policies and allocations to guide future development.
 - A Spatial Masterplan - this will articulate the spatial vision and objectives for the city centre - focusing on public realm improvements, transport and accessibility proposals, and projects and initiatives for the main 'action areas' within the city centre, including regeneration of the peripheral areas.
7. The intention is to develop a long-term strategy for the city centre. Quick fixes rarely work; what is needed is a sustained and durable commitment to transform York's urban realm. A willingness to make a long-term commitment is essential if the AAP is to deliver a successful Spatial Masterplan. The proposed format is to produce three parallel documents: one linked to the Issues and Options consultation and providing reasons for selecting and discounting options as well as explaining the evidence base; a second document containing the Policy Framework for the city centre; and a third in the format of a spatial master plan with site-specific proposals.
8. The third document, the Spatial Masterplan, is key to presenting and illustrating the ideas and proposals to improve the city centre. It will aim to engage the public more enthusiastically by focusing on a public realm strategy. Suggested improvements to the city centre spaces and links have

received interest and support through public consultation, and these can be identified, prioritised and phased over the plan period. Through this work, early wins can be identified and secured, and the importance of the city centre's public realm can be demonstrated. By identifying a number of preferred projects ('Favourites') and swiftly moving through to place-checking and design options, the profile for the work of York will be raised, and attention will be drawn to this first review of York city centre since the Esher Report of 1968.

9. The wider policy framework will remain the foundation for these projects, and other projects will be added and coordinated as the plan is monitored and reviewed. The linkages between areas of the city centre are extremely important, and these will also be subject to review and design/ accessibility analysis.
10. Projects will need to attract funding from a number of public and private sources. Yorkshire Forward has already committed resources towards the first stages of public realm audit and masterplanning, and a number of CYC funding sources are available. A copy of the initial proposals for engaging with Yorkshire Forward is appended to this report. In addition, private funding can be attracted through partnership investment and legal (Section 106) contributions. Lottery funding and other sources will also be pursued. One specific issue raised by the Shadow Executive concerns the provision of a permanent power supply underneath Parliament Street which could be accessed the length and breadth of the street for festivals and markets, to limit the high costs of the current system. Investigations have been undertaken to consider the most appropriate solution: this would be the provision of 10 "pop up" style connection units at various locations along Parliament Street. The likely cost of these would be £42,500 for purchase in total, with the cost of installation being more than the cost of purchase. This would need to be incorporated into any programme of public realm improvement for Parliament Street. By way of comparison, the City Centre team currently spend in the region of £15,000 per annum for electrical provision for our own events, with additional charges paid by third parties for their own events.
11. Key project areas identified as part of the initial work on the City Centre Action Plan so far include:-
 - Newgate Market
 - Parliament Street/ St. Sampson's Square
 - Castle/ Piccadilly
 - St. Leonard's/ Museum Gardens to NRM/ York Station (re. Cultural Quarter)
 - Ouse riverside area/ rear of Coney Street
 - Pavement (All Saints Church to Stonebow, including junction with Piccadilly)
 - Gateway Streets (Walmgate, Micklegate, Gillygate, Fossgate, Goodramgate, Stonebow, others ?..)

Next steps for the City Centre Area Action Plan

Jan 09 – Feb 09
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete the review of Issues & Options consultation findings and identify preferred options/ justify deletion of any options.• Identify and begin to prioritise key projects in the city centre.• Commission evidence base documents to support the AAP, with input from Yorkshire Forward. These key documents may include Public Realm and Open Space Quality Audit, Analysis of Key Views, City Centre Accessibility Masterplan (incorporating the Footstreets Review), and Ouse walkway Delivery Study.• Also crucial to the production of the Preferred Options document will be the findings of a number of other evidence base documents, including: Central Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal, Retail Study, Employment Land Review and the Open Space Study.
March – May 09
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report to Without Walls Board in March with summary of consultation findings so far, recommendations on involvement of Board, and next steps.• Report to the LDF Working Group in May with recommendations on which options should be the Preferred Options - through an analysis of the consultation findings, the conclusions of the Sustainability Statement and any emerging evidence.• Begin drafting Preferred Options (inputting new evidence as it evolves).
June 09 – August 09
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produce revised / summarised and graphically illustrated Spatial Masterplan draft.• Ongoing involvement of stakeholders in the production of the Preferred Options document.• Ongoing liaison with the Cultural Quarter Scrutiny Committee.• Ongoing negotiations with potential developers of the Castle Piccadilly site.• Ongoing consideration of the relationship with the York Northwest AAP.• Ongoing Sustainability Appraisal of options.• Ongoing review of Soundness issues.• Ongoing review of delivery issues / funding sources.

- Review of potential allocations, capacity issues etc.
- Report to LDF Working Group with Preferred Options report, Sustainability Statement and Consultation strategy and material.

September 09 – October 09

Undertake a public consultation on the Preferred Options

Options and Analysis

12. None – this is a briefing report for information.

Consultation

13. Initial consultation has taken place with the Without Walls Local Strategic Partnership. The timetable above outlines the process for further consultation. There is no set date for the Preferred Options consultation but we intend to consult again widely in September 2009 in order to keep within the projected LDF timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme. For public realm proposals to be consulted on as part of this process we will need to have the broad concept and principles with sketch illustrations agreed by Summer 2009. The publication and consultation of the Submission AAP is timetabled for February 2010. The document will be submitted in May 2010, with Public Examination in June 2010. The aim is to have the AAP adopted by the Council in December 2010.
14. Initial consultation has also taken place with the Retailers Forum and the Retail Strategy Group. This will continue in line with the above timetable.

Implications

15. There are no financial, legal or other implications from this briefing report.

Recommendation

16. That the Shadow Executive comments on the above report.

Reason: To help shape the effectiveness of future action.

Contact Details

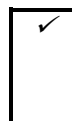
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Report Approved



Date 16 March 2009

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Annex – York City Centre: Public Realm and Spatial Masterplan