

TOWARD A YORK ECONOMIC VISION

Summary

1. This report notes the final publication of Towards a York Economic Vision. It was reported to the Executive on 19th October 2010, who referred it to the LDF Working Group for further consideration. This report considers the next steps in terms of public consultation and how it will be considered to inform key strategies such as the Local Development Framework and Sustainable Community Strategy. Copies of the Economic Vision document have been sent out to all Members of the Council. There will also be a presentation to the Working Group by the report authors to outline the key elements of the approach and to share their ideas on how it can start to be delivered.
2. Towards an Economic Vision was funded by Yorkshire Forward and prepared by Professor Alan Simpson and his team following public engagement with key stakeholders in the city. Overall it presents a very good strategic fit with the long-term aspirations of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), especially the Thriving City, City of Culture and Sustainable City themes. It is believed that the ideas and propositions coming from the report will help York to step up its game in terms of a focus on quality of place as a driver of economic competitiveness.
3. A number of clear proposals, next steps and actions are set out in the Vision document (see, for example, 'The City Rivers – Citywide', page 51) and, whilst it is not intended as a detailed Delivery Plan, it is acknowledged that this will be a key next step in order to test the desirability and potential for various proposals and projects to come forward in a coordinated way. Annex 1 of this report (York New City Beautiful – Towards a Delivery Plan) sets out for some of the key projects in the Vision document, how key next steps and actions identified in that document are being progressed and where further work is required. It is included as an example to show how we will consider each proposal in developing a full Action Plan for delivery. This will be brought back to members following public consultation and further analysis of the feasibility, funding and partnerships required for delivery.
4. Some of the ideas and proposals are already underway and relate to existing CYC work streams. Others are at an advanced planning stage and now must be subject to more detailed work and analysis in order to appreciate how they might fit and be embedded within the wider ambitions of

the LDF Core Strategy and City Centre Area Action Plan, SCS, LTP and other CYC strategies - and also how they might be initiated, prioritised and funded. The Action Plan will be brought back to Members in order to identify and agree priorities based on the Corporate Strategy themes and aims, funding availability, feasibility and opportunity, partnership and wider public support through consultation.

5. The SCS is currently being reviewed and refreshed, and there is a great opportunity to consider and reflect this vision work within that. It will identify the key issues and actions that the city needs to focus on, collectively, to ensure the continued success of York at a time of national economic downturn. This wider engagement is crucial as it is clear that many proposals will require a partnership approach and commitment from key organisations and interests in the city to deliver.
6. It is recommended that, following consideration by the LDF Working Group, the ideas set out in the vision are tested with residents and key stakeholders in the city, prior to developing a practical action and delivery plan to take the initiatives forward. A draft consultation framework, setting out proposals for consulting the wider York community, is attached at Annex 2 of this report.

Background

7. The original proposal to undertake an Economic Masterplan for the city for the delivery of major projects came out of recommendations contained in the Future York Group report, which was that the City of York Council should prepare a Masterplan, reflecting the Future York vision, to guide development and investment decisions and to promote development in York.
8. The proposal was reported to Executive in November 2009, where it was agreed to establish a York Renaissance Team and to create a York Regeneration Academy to provide a programme of training and development in place-making for existing staff and the new team, to be funded by Yorkshire Forward. The attached Executive Summary, together with the full report, represents the first part of this work – the upfront Economic Vision.
9. The York Economic Partnership is established as the strategic thematic partnership with responsibility for the objectives set out for “Thriving City” and to consider how best to take forward the recommendations of the Future York Group. Economic conditions have changed since the Future York Group report and the Centre for Cities report on York has provided a further insight into the prospects for a prosperous local economy. Towards an Economic Vision is an important strategy for the Economic Partnership to consider.
10. There are an unprecedented number of major projects underway or in the pipeline in York, which will shape the city for generations to come. These include the expansion of the University of York, major city centre mixed use schemes such as Hungate and Castle Piccadilly, the York Central and British Sugar sites and an Area Action Plan for the City Centre that will seek to regenerate gateway streets and enhance York’s economic

competitiveness through improving the quality of the public realm and accessibility.

11. The City is likely to grow and change significantly in the forthcoming years, and it is important to ensure that new developments leave a positive legacy in terms of both economic impact and high standards of design. Agreement for renaissance funding from Yorkshire Forward towards the end of last year focused on three distinct but related elements:
 - an economic visioning exercise, funded by Yorkshire Forward. This work has been led by Alan Simpson with support from an expert panel including an economist, cultural planner and transport specialist;
 - the creation of a York Renaissance Team consisting of 6 additional posts for 3 years, with part funding for one post by English Heritage and the remainder of funding for these posts to be provided by Yorkshire Forward. Recent Development Agency budget cuts mean that there will be 3 year funding for only two of the six posts. Additional staff support from within Yorkshire Forward has been offered to keep the momentum on the York Renaissance project going; and
 - the development of a Regeneration Academy in York, funded by Yorkshire Forward. It will be run by Integreat Yorkshire who run Regeneration Academies in other parts of the region such as Bradford. A tender brief has been produced and it is anticipated that CYC cross-directorate workshop events, centred around the key themes of the economic vision, will run throughout January, February and March 2011.

Purpose

12. The purpose of Towards an Economic Vision is to examine the economic potential of the city and consider how the various major projects, current and proposed, can be pulled together into a coherent strategy that will provide greater certainty for future investment. The work has a strong focus on the delivery of major developments, ensuring these take account of York's attractiveness and heritage, as well as maximise their economic, social and environmental potential.
13. The work is also helping to inform future work with the preparation of the Local Development Framework, particularly in relation to the Core Strategy, City Centre Area Action Plan and the key development sites in the city such as York Central. The LDF will set the land use and planning framework for planning future developments in the City; the Economic Vision will help the delivery of major projects through its economic rationale and by giving a physical expression to the policies and proposals set out in the LDF.

Proposals

14. The Economic Vision acknowledges that York is an attractive place to live, to study, and to work and says that this has, in part, fuelled recent growth.

However, it also says that it has a constrained transport infrastructure network, constricted movement, street clutter and disorder, lack of quality spaces and green infrastructure, and it largely turns its back on its two rivers. Fractured connections limit the effectiveness of the undoubted city assets, including the railway station (the main city gateway) and the University of York. This has occurred slowly, almost imperceptibly, over decades and this study makes a strong economic and cultural case for this change to be arrested now.

Quality of place and economic competitiveness

15. Quality of place is key to economic competitiveness because it influences where people choose to live and work. The Economic Vision notes that private sector business, together with the Universities, will drive growth in York and the clear message is that a successful and competitive York will be one that can retain and attract high quality human capital - those individuals comprising the skilled and talented knowledge pool that can drive the local economy. This human capital is not attracted by the power of higher wages alone. Quality of place and the rich diversity of activity are factors that affect personal and business location decisions.

Competing with others

16. The City is competing with smart new city centre investments in places such as Hull, Leeds and further afield in Manchester and Newcastle Upon Tyne, but also faces competition from its own 'out of town locations'. Whilst the City Centre has a lively and diverse range of activities, including some of the most attractive small, niche retailing environments in the country, the physical fabric within which it sits presents challenging movement and accessibility issues. Investment to improve this, together with facilitating new development proposals at Castle Piccadilly and Hungate which will bring additional retail and commercial floorspace into the City Centre, is important to encourage a greater proportion of the City's residents to spend time in their City.

Access and movement

17. Addressing accessibility and movement in and around the City Centre has been identified by local businesses as a fundamental issue to resolve. Making the City more 'business friendly' will increase demand and therefore private sector confidence. Facilitating this and achieving greater levels of private sector employment as result, is a key principle for the vision.

Partnership working

18. The City could, the report suggests, maintain a higher level of economic competitiveness through embracing its neighbours and extending its range of partners (broadening its relationships with institutions such as its universities and the private sector, closer collaboration with neighbouring authorities). Engagement with neighbouring areas through the Local Enterprise Partnership model, particularly the roman heritage to the north and the coastal areas to the east, also provides an opportunity to sit York at

the heart of a wider cultural experience. It is also clear that many of the proposals set out in the Vision document could not be implemented without the partnership support of other organisations and interests in the city. As such it needs to be received as the City's Plan, and not just a Council Plan, and will therefore need to be championed by others across the city.

Streets, park and public spaces

19. The Economic Vision reflects the Council's commitment to improve the distinctiveness, vitality and sustainability of York. It puts forward a long-term plan which can be delivered over the next 20-30 years as funding and investment are secured.
20. To achieve these principles the Vision reasons that a key task over the next 20 or 30 years will be to create high quality squares, public spaces and development opportunities which will provide long-term focus for high quality external investment. The report looks to encourage more vibrant and diverse public life within the streets, spaces, parks and strays of the city and along the riversides and walls to create new opportunities for social interaction, creativity and play. This will benefit local people, give confidence at a time of economic downturn, and stimulate economic investment and business growth.

High quality development opportunities

21. Specifically, the report imagines economic opportunities in York through a series of key themes, namely the City as Park, The City Walls, the Rivers, and Parks, Streets and Squares. The opportunities for York are graphically illustrated throughout the document, together with persuasive economic, movement (sustainable modes of transport) and cultural rationales.
22. The important role that this vision plays is to identify those interventions across the City that cumulatively reduce the risk to the private sector of investing in York - by providing high quality development opportunities, set within a high quality urban environment, in a City where there are high levels of skills and a growing innovation and knowledge sector. Set within the context of a world heritage location, with strategic accessibility, these interventions will assist in reducing the risk of the York location to high value businesses, therefore enhancing yield and supporting the prospects for private sector investment and employment growth.

Working with the private sector

23. Many inspiring and challenging ideas are set out in the vision, and a robust action and delivery plan will be developed to accompany the recommended interventions and priorities for the city. The City Council, together with the new Renaissance Team and Yorkshire Forward, will further develop the ideas through existing strategies – namely the LDF Core Strategy, LTP3 and City Centre Area Action Plan. Without Walls and the relevant thematic partnerships that sit under it will also be considering the Vision as part of the review of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Gaining wider partnership 'buy-in' will be critical in implementing the Vision.

Next steps

24. The study includes dozens of key recommendations and proposed interventions (both short and long-term), as well as wider strategic opportunities to develop through existing CYC strategies. It presents a long term vision but recognises that further work will be required to be undertaken by the City of York Council, working in partnership with others, to develop a delivery plan to take forward these recommendations.
25. A number of studies and projects which align with and complement recommendations in Towards and Economic Vision are already progressing, or have been completed, including :-
 - City Centre Area Action Plan - Preferred Options consultation planned for early summer 2011
 - Historic Core Character Appraisal – to be completed by April 2011
 - City Centre Movement & Accessibility Framework, to be completed by February 2011
 - Parliament Street toilet block redesign and public realm improvements
 - Library Square transport and public realm improvements – to be completed as part of this year’s transport capital programme
 - Foss Basin Study, Planning Statement - completed
 - Footstreets extension, Fossgate – now being progressed as an outcome of the Footstreets Review
 - Study of York City Walls - Conservation & Access, PLB
 - Barbican Planning Statement – completed
 - Newgate Market Scrutiny Committee – review completed summer 2010
 - Stonebow House Planning Statement – underway
 - People Changing Places placecheck programme, BEAM – completed in 2010
 - Planning Briefs for Castle Piccadilly, Hungate, Terry’s, Nestle, Germany Beck, Derwenthorpe.
 - Work on a Development Framework for York Central is underway - to be completed by summer 2011
 - A commitment to preparing a Green Infrastructure SPD which will pick up many of the ideas around ‘The City as Park’ in the Visioning document.
26. These initiatives will provide impetus and short-term delivery. Funding opportunities – both public and, more importantly, private sector – will be

identified and followed up in the delivery plan in order to prioritise and progress other projects. Whilst the Vision sets out a clear rationale for development and intervention it does not provide all the answers on action, funding and timing.

27. Officers have begun to consider what action is required to progress key proposals. Annex 1 of this report identifies proposals which are already underway and where further work is required. A report will be brought back to members, following public consultation on the Vision, which will consider feasibility, funding and the partnerships required for delivery of the proposals in the Vision. We will then, in a Delivery Plan, set out key projects to take forward through the LDF, LTP, SCS or through specific project or funding bids, and also identify the partners required to deliver these.
28. Given the current funding climate there will be a strong emphasis on identifying affordable, easily achievable and deliverable early wins. However it is also important to have a longer term vision to work towards of which individual schemes will merely be 'a first step' towards that vision. For example extending the footstreets to include Fossgate is a project that can be delivered with limited capital outlay. Officers are currently identifying a list of such projects where there is clear support and a prospect of early delivery.

Sustainable Community Strategy

29. The Without Walls annual conference took place on 30th September this year. It was designed to further develop and refine the Sustainable Community Strategy and give Partnership members the opportunity to contribute views on the most pressing challenges that Without Walls would focus on in the city over the next 3-5 years. There were in excess of 70 delegates at the event, representing the public, private voluntary and community sectors.
30. Following feedback at and since the conference it would appear that city partners agree that the key issues that York needs to address are :
 - Environmental sustainability (including public realm, use of existing assets, and need to de-congest the city);
 - Economic Prosperity (including the role of culture and creative industries to attract investment and grow the economy, and the overall positioning of York in the international market place);
 - Responding to the needs of a changing population (including health and social care needs, community safety and community development).
31. There is a strong fit between the SCS key issues and the Economic Vision proposals. Toward an Economic Vision was presented to the Without Walls Board on 24th November, and the Board plans to meet again in February 2011 in order to consider suggested changes to the vision, strategic ambitions and key short term challenges. This appears to be an ideal opportunity to review the two important documents together and agree how

to go forward with the overall vision and short, medium and long-term strategies.

Local Development Framework

32. The Council's Executive agreed to refer the vision document to the LDF Working Group because of its importance for the LDF Core Strategy and City Centre Area Action Plan. The vision has been developed in line with the aims and objectives of both the LDF Core Strategy and the City Centre Area Action Plan, and these documents are now taking on board the outcomes of this work. Strong themes running through the LDF documents – and backed up by the Economic Vision - include supporting economic success through a sustainable spatial strategy, tackling road congestion, addressing quality of place issues through a focus on quality of design and enhancing streets and public spaces, and a strong focus on green infrastructure, nature conservation and open spaces which fits well with the City as Park strand of the Vision.
33. Taking this work a step forward the York Renaissance Team has put in place a work programme to focus on delivering economic impact and promoting high design standards on key sites in the city. Again, the economic vision is a key starting and reference point in shaping and influencing this work programme.

Consultation

34. It is envisaged that, following consideration by the Local Development Framework Working Group, early consultation on the vision with the York community is facilitated to gauge ownership of the key aspects set out.
35. The Economic Vision represents an opening, not a final offer to the community. Significant consultation has already taken place to date. Professor Simpson and his team of expert advisors have met with numerous groups, organisations and individuals over the last 12 months or so. A weekend of discussion and debate about the work was held in March of this year, and all of this consultation has fed very much into the work of the team and has influenced and inspired their thinking for the study.
36. Following presentation to the Council's Executive Committee the Vision was presented to the Without Walls strategic partnership on 24th November. Whilst ideally these presentations would have taken place after this working group meeting, it was thought that the next timetabled round of stakeholder meetings – in three months' time – would be too far away from the publication of the document.
37. A proposed framework for public consultation is attached to this report at Annex 2. It suggests a number of events during January and February 2011, centred around a public meeting and Ward Committee meetings. Summaries of the vision would be set out in the YourCity and YourWard publications, and feedback encouraged. There is already the facility to send in comments to the CYC website, and this will be built on in order to ensure comprehensive coverage and understanding of public support/ objection.

38. It is proposed that a report back on the key messages and outcomes of the consultation be brought back to Members following public consultation, along with an Action Plan setting out how key projects and initiatives can be taken forward.

Corporate Priorities

39. The actions in this report clearly and directly support the Sustainable City and Thriving City elements of the Sustainable Community Strategy, as well as the Council's Corporate Strategy, and also relate well and support the other key elements of the strategy - City of Culture, Healthy City, Learning City, Safer City and Inclusive City.

Implications

Finance

40. The costs associated with undertaking and publishing the York Economic Vision – as well as the salary and on costs for the York Renaissance Team - are being fully funded by Yorkshire Forward and English Heritage. There are some associated costs in relation to providing accommodation and associated costs for the staff, which are being borne by the Council. These will need to be funded from existing budgets.
41. Costs of public consultation will come from Yorkshire Forward funding, with some support from existing CYC budget allocations. Staffing will be from within CYC teams.

Human Resources (HR)

42. The council is responsible for the employment of the 2 new posts created within the York Renaissance Team on a 3 year fixed term basis.

Equalities

43. This initiative will seek to address equalities issues, particularly through examining the potential for accessibility improvements in the city centre and through major developments.

Legal

44. The funding arrangements between Yorkshire Forward and the City of York Council have been set out in a contract.

Crime and Disorder

45. This initiative will seek to address crime and disorder issues through consideration of crime prevention through good quality of design in the city centre and major developments.

Information Technology (IT)

46. There are no strategic IT implications.

Property

47. There are no direct property implications, although the outcome from the work of the York Economic Vision and Renaissance Team may enhance the Council's commercial portfolio.

Risk management

48. The purpose of this initiative is to seek to provide greater certainty to the development industry with the planning of major developments within the City, which will enhance the future local economy. This programme will therefore look at risks regarding all aspects associated with the viability of major developments in the city.

Recommendations

49. That the Local Development Framework Working Group gives some initial comments on 'Towards an Economic Vision' and recommends that the Executive approves it for further stakeholder and wider public consultation as set out in Annex 2.

Reason: To enable proper public consultation on the Economic Vision which seeks to support future investment in the City, encourage high standards of design and give a focus on the importance of quality of place to economic competitiveness.

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Wards Affected: ALL

All

For further information please contact the author of the report.

Annexes:

Annex 1: Towards a Delivery Plan, December 2010

Annex 2: Toward a York Economic Vision – Consultation Framework, November 2010