

**Councillor Dave Merrett**  
**Labour Cabinet Member for City Strategy**

**Report to Economic & City  
Development Overview & Scrutiny  
Committee (ECDOSC) – September 2011**

I have written this report taking into account the remit of ECDOSC. I am happy to answer any questions on this report or any questions relevant to areas in my portfolio that fall within the remit of this Committee.

**Getting York Moving**

This is a key policy objective for this administration. The challenge is enormous, with major congestion and air quality issues facing the City. The three main focuses are on extending Park & Ride, transforming local bus services, and seeking to persuade people to switch to walking, cycling and public transport for more of their journeys so as to reduce traffic and congestion.

On the first, the Access York phase 1 bid to develop new Park & Ride sites, and associated highway and bus priorities was completed and submitted on schedule. The final bid was for two, rather than three sites in the light of the Government's and Transport Minister's (who we met to discuss this) guidance and advice to bidder's to reduce the scope and costs of the initial bids. We will look to see how we can deliver the third site separately in due course.

In terms of improving public transport, I have met a number of operators individually and outlined our vision for an integrated high quality local bus service to the existing Quality Bus partnership. Officers have been undertaking the necessary back ground work and having more detailed discussions with operators in terms of taking this forward over the next few years. Good progress is being made on an initial simple cross York multi-operator ticket. Short term there have been some challenges arising from the inherited budget cuts and social bus network support tenders, which I'd pay tribute to Andrew Bradley and bus operators in seeking to resolve. However there are some issues which need further work and change which will be brought back to my next but one decision session. One issue is the absence of any public consultation process on proposed bus changes and for customer feedback. Absence of consultation was raised at a recent QPB meeting and I gained a positive response from operators.

In terms of the third area, York did extremely well to get its full LSDF bid for £4.67 million for the next three and a half years, one of only two former cycling cities to get an award, and one of the few to get the full amount. The minister was extremely congratulatory, and specifically recognised York's pre-eminent efforts in this area under successive administrations and cross party commitment. The success of the bid, supplemented by the Labour commitment to rolling out complementary 20mph schemes in residential areas should give us a real opportunity to enhance the attractiveness and undertake the necessary marketing to persuade more residents to switch to walking, cycling and public transport for more of their journeys.

### **Ambitious about Jobs & the Economy & Protecting the Environment**

The Local Development framework is the cornerstone of delivering development for the cities economy, housing for its residents both present and future, community facilities and green space to provide a good quality of life, and policies to ensure York's glorious built and green heritages and the setting of the City are all protected and enhanced. Getting the LDF in place is now even more pressing and crucial with the Government's massive proposed changes to the national Planning system and guidance, and the proposed default position of approving all new sustainable development in the absence of an up to date local plan. York is incredibly vulnerable if this guidance is implemented as of next April and no provision is made for a transitional period to allow us to go through the adoption process and get a plan in place. That was why Labour was right to quickly sort out the wholly inadequate housing allowances in the previous administration's draft LDF, leave aside the moral imperative of doing more to address the severe housing affordability problem.

Discussions are going on with developers in terms of bringing both new employment and housing sites to make the plans a reality, and reflecting the significantly less demanding S106 housing requirement policy now in place.

### **City Centre**

Linked to both the above objectives, and the re-invigorate York agenda the Council Leader flagged in his report to you, is the progress being made on developing the City Centre Action Plan for the LDF. The City Centre Conservation Area appraisal has been published for consultation and responses are now being examined, and the City centre Access

study will be published shortly too. Work with Sir Ron Cooke in terms of developing a new public realm strategy is underway as is work on honouring our commitments to extending the footstreet area and hours.

### **Air Quality**

I have had meetings with air quality team and they are working hard on revising the draft low emission strategy and identifying the measures that will turn the tide of deteriorating air quality and set us on course to eliminate the poor air quality hotspots both in and around the city centre, but increasingly in suburban locations too. An integrated approach with the transport work will be essential, and with operators of the heavier polluting vehicle fleets.

### **Tackling Climate Change**

The Without Walls strategy on climate change which we have been helping them to develop is about to be published. My colleague, Tracy Simpson-Laing is taking forward the new solar PV schemes for a significant number of Council house properties, and a matching initiative has now been launched for private householders in 4 wards, and landlord properties are also being looked at - I discussed taking this forward with the York Private Landlord Association chair recently. Other opportunities on Council buildings are being examined.

I'm pleased to be taking forward so many exciting initiatives and helping this administration deliver Labour's manifesto promises to take York forward,

**Dave Merrett**