

## **Improving Evening Culture Scrutiny Review – Final Report**

### **Purpose of Report**

1. This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations arising from the Improving Evening Culture Scrutiny Review, in support of the corporate scrutiny review into York's night time economy.

### **Background to Review**

2. In early June 2013 the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee received a briefing report on "improving the quality of the heritage and arts offer in the city provided by the Head of Culture, Tourism and City Centre. It suggested the proposed topic would support the Council's aim to continue working with its partners to ensure the city attracts more cultural tourists by supporting improvements in the quality of the heritage and arts offer in the city.
3. The committee were informed that given the Council's budget restrictions any improvements to the heritage and arts offer in the city would have to be delivered in partnership with other creative and cultural organisations across the city. They also learnt that the Council was already working actively with its partners to flesh out a new high level tourism strategy for the city, which included the creation of a cultural tourism programme. And, that an application for the necessary funding for the programme was in the process of being drawn up for submission to Visit England/Arts Council England in July 2013.
4. In light of that information, the committee agreed to postpone their consideration of the suggested scrutiny topic until the second half of the municipal year when the outcome of the funding application would be known.
5. Subsequently, at a meeting of CSMC on 24 June 2013, members agreed a corporate scrutiny theme for this municipal year around the city's night-

time economy, noting its connection to a number of the Council's current key priorities in its Council Plan 2011-2015.

6. CSMC agreed it would be possible for each overview & scrutiny committee to identify an appropriate night time economy related topic which would support their individual terms of reference. They tasked each committee with completing its night time economy review in time for the presentation of their review final report to the meeting of CSMC in March 2014. In turn, CSMC agreed they would collate the findings and recommendations arising from each review and present them to Cabinet by the end of the municipal year.
7. In July 2013 the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed their proposed topic on improving the quality of the heritage and arts offer in the city would be appropriate as their contribution to the night time economy themed corporate review. The Committee therefore set up this Task Group to carry out the review on their behalf, and agreed the following aim and objectives for the review:

Aim:

To identify an improved cultural offer up to 8pm in order to extend the tourist day and encourage more tourists to stay for longer or overnight, with a particular emphasis on families.

Objectives:

- i) Identify best practice internationally and nationally
- ii) Investigate barriers to increasing the availability of York's existing family based cultural and entertainment offer
- iii) Identify other new cultural and entertainment activities suitable for York and investigate the possibility of their introduction in York
- iv) Investigate how best to signpost tourist activities, and encourage those providers to work with accommodation providers to jointly promote their offer.

## **Background to Tourism in York**

### 8. Tourism in York

York was one of the first inland English cities to embrace tourism as a response to the decline of its traditional industries. From the outset it saw its assets as being the built heritage of the city. In 1968 York became a Conservation Area, recognising the value of the built environment to its

visitor economy. In 2007 York was awarded the title of European Tourism City of the Year by European Cities Marketing and it has repeatedly won awards as a favoured destination for visitors. Although the focus has remained on heritage, the city has consistently sought to introduce innovative ways for the tourist to engage, for example through an emphasis on live steam at the National Railway Museum and presenting the history of Viking York through the revolutionary ride at the Yorvik Centre. Despite its compactness York is ranked 6th amongst English towns and cities for all trip purposes by domestic visitors, ahead of much larger business centres such as Leeds, Liverpool and Newcastle and well ahead of other heritage towns and cities (Visit England 2011).

9. Trends in tourism in York have been tracked through an Annual Visitor Survey since 1995. The latest summary (2011/12) shows that York has a relatively high proportion of repeat visitors (78%) and a wide range of age groups. York appears to have particularly strong appeal to family parties (37%) and about one in four visitor parties included children (27%). The largest proportion of visitors to York is visiting from within Yorkshire (24%) but there are significant numbers from the North West (10%), East Midlands (6%) and North East (6%). York has a strong appeal for international visitors at 17%, which is higher than the Yorkshire average (12%). Key overseas markets include the USA, Australia, China, Ireland, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Norway and Spain.
10. While progress has been made over the past two decades, so that tourism is now a highly significant element of York's economy at about 14% of gross value added and 21% of employment, some indicators suggest that income from tourism may have reached its zenith and that it could decline while numbers continue to increase, becoming less sustainable and valuable to visitor and resident alike. International comparative research demonstrates that the development of a visitor economy which exhibits the same sort of structure as York will eventually slow down, and this point could well have been reached in the past few years.
11. Therefore it is the view of Visit York that to realise its ambitions, the city must now choose whether to carry on doing more of the same, which will mean competing for a declining share of the market, or innovating and making better use of its principal assets.
12. To get the tourism offer right York must tackle three challenges: what the city has to offer, the manner in which it is offered and the support

provided by its transport, communication and accommodation infrastructure.

13. External perceptions also need to be addressed. By comparison with other cities, York could make itself more welcoming, both by improving communication with visitors, and by encouraging more engagement with the city's residents and employees.
14. Most significantly, visitors report that York does less than it could to show off its strengths in the cultural and creative sector. Despite the national coverage of successful events like the Hockney exhibition at York Art Gallery in 2011, or the York 2012 Mystery Plays, this does not persist in the media or carry over into wider perception of what the city is about. While visitors are pleased to discover the energy in cultural and creative organisations this is currently poorly integrated into the welcome afforded to visitors, especially if they are in the city for the first time.
15. York's Current Cultural Offer  
York's historic setting and contemporary vitality provide the riches of a truly cultural city. The streets surrounding York Minster, King's Manor and St William's College have been a place of historians, of archaeological and religious study, of choristers, of book publishing, of scholarly endeavour - for hundreds of years.
16. Today, York is full of bookshops, antique dealers and little independent art galleries. Its cultural offerings range from Mystery Plays performed on the streets, to challenging drama, world music and innovative venues and showcases for new artists of all kinds.
17. The National Centre for Early Music on Walmgate is a place of musical study, research, performance and innovation. Concerts feature folk, jazz, 20th century and world music. Early music was its creator, however, as it was established to provide a base for Britain's premier festival of early music every year. Events and festivals reflect the cultural nature of York. The University of York Concert Series, the Music Live Festival every May, York Minster services, concerts and medieval music, a thriving jazz and folk scene all make York a perfect place for music lovers.
18. York's museums and galleries (The Yorkshire Museum, York Castle Museum and City Art Gallery) display the wealth of historical and artistic treasures that belong to the city, from Roman times through Anglo-Saxon and Viking eras to the Middle Ages – the Wars of the Roses, the Civil

War – and on to York’s genteel Georgian days. The Art Gallery is remarkable for its collection of important European paintings spanning seven centuries, with works by Bellotto, Reynolds, Lowry and York-born William Etty, whose statue stands outside the gallery. York St Mary’s church, now York’s leading contemporary art space in Coppergate displays solo exhibitions by contemporary artists and sculptures, and is a lovely place to stop by.

19. There is also York’s Chocolate Museum providing an entertaining and informative guided tour through the history of York’s most famous chocolate-making families and their finest creations, York Dungeon, a thrill-filled fun journey through 2000 years of York’s most horrible history, and the Yorvik Viking Centre the site of one of the most famous and astounding discoveries of modern archaeology, where visitors can journey through the reconstruction of Viking-Age streets, as they would have been 1000 years ago.
20. The Theatre Royal and Fairfax House are symbols of York’s prominence as a cultural centre in Georgian times. And whilst Fairfax House has become one of the best preserved Georgian townhouses in Britain and a wonderful museum piece, the Theatre Royal is as busy today as it was in the days when Georgians such as the Fairfax family came from London to entertain and be entertained in fashionable York. The packed programmes at the Theatre Royal and the Grand Opera House range from grand opera and classical ballet to Stomp and Soul Explosion.
21. At City Screen York, arthouse, independent and quality mainstream films are screened, and the Basement Bar hosts diverse music, poetry, and comedy events.
22. The city centre itself is honeycombed by a maze of hidden alleyways, all with colourful stories. These Snickelways enable you to travel back in time through some of York’s most picturesque backwaters and further explored on one of the many Ghost Walks. The city walls and river also provides a picturesque backdrop to those that like to walk and there are boat trips available to take you further afield.
23. Definition of Cultural Tourists  
Cultural tourists are often described as falling into one of three groups - ‘casual, accidental, or purposive’. The York Annual Visitor Survey suggests that 17% can be described as purposive cultural tourists who come to York specifically because of its cultural offer.

24. Beyond the 17% who specifically mention cultural activities there are many more in the casual and accidental categories who, given some practical interventions, would not only engage with culture on their current visit, they would become regular, loyal visitors to York, expecting to experience outstanding contemporary culture in unique, historic surroundings. They may start out as leisure or business visitors, and be in York for a celebration or a conference, but their casual encounter may prompt a future visit with a cultural experience in mind.
25. There has been an upward trend in average length of stay to about three nights but this needs supporting by a more diverse and better connected range of activities of higher quality once the major attractions close for the day. The plan is to arrive at a 'sweet spot' where a greater proportion of high-spending international and domestic visitors stay for three nights or more to take in a mix of contemporary culture and heritage based activities as well as the perennial favourite of strolling the streets of the city and, of course, eating and drinking well.

## **Consultation**

### 26. Residents Survey

In support of the night-time economy corporate scrutiny theme an online survey was undertaken in late 2013 focussing on 'York after 5'. The survey included a number of generic questions to support all of the reviews, and a number of questions specific to each of the individual scrutiny reviews (except the health review as the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out its own survey). Specifically in support of this review, the survey questions relating to:

- Social and cultural activities/event that would encourage visits to the city centre after 5pm – see responses to Qu.3
- Concerns around taking children into the city centre after 5pm – see responses to Qu.9-12

The full 'York after 5' survey and its responses were presented to Corporate & Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 10 March 2014. The Learning & Culture Task Group also carried out a brief survey of York's music venues and music promoters – see paragraph 42 below.

## Information Gathered

### 27. York's New Tourism Strategy

As part of their work on the review, the Task Group considered an Interim Strategy Document produced by the Council and its partners to enable the city to make greater progress in attracting and supporting high value investment to the city, and supporting the growth of the visitor economy, all underpinned by a more efficient and effective approach to marketing and profiling of the city's offer – see Annex A. The aim of the strategy is to double the value of tourism to York over the next ten years, representing £1bn of economic activity and a further 2000 jobs. This proposal represents a major element of the re-visioning of York as a visitor destination, capitalising on the authenticity, originality and vibrancy to be found in the city's contemporary cultural sector.

### 28. The Interim Strategy Document takes account of a number of issues/factors i.e.:

- York does less than it could to show off its strengths in the cultural and creative sector.
- Statistics show York appears to have a particularly strong appeal to family parties (37%) and about one in four visitor parties include children (27%).
- A fresh approach to presenting culture would attract younger visitors who currently complain of 'nothing to do after 5pm' (whilst it is not easy to generalise about the age groups predominating amongst cultural tourists in York there is evidence of this view)
- Only about 4% of staying visitors mention a specific festival or event, suggesting that there is room to extend the offer to encourage more overnight stays.
- One of the suggested actions identified is to 'Grow the evening offer, e.g. initiate a 'First Fridays' concept as the initial step in encouraging new entertainment choices'

### 29. Development of the new Tourism Strategy continues and the full Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny committee will have an opportunity to consider the final draft strategy prior to its completion.

### 30. New Marketing Organisation (NewCo)

In late February 2014, the Task Group received information on the proposals for a new city marketing organisation being developed to build on the way York is promoted as a visitor destination and business location. A report setting out the specific productivity challenges the city

faces went to Cabinet in November 2013, recommending the development of a number of new approaches to attracting investment. One of which was a new approach to delivering marketing, culture, tourism and business development for the city. The Task Group considered the detailed aim and outcomes for this new approach – see Annex B.

31. The Task Group also received detailed information on a Consortium evolved from the city's cultural partnership forum, York @ Large which had come together to address the issues detailed in paragraphs 28 above.

32. York Consortium

The Consortium is made up of the following members:

- Visit York
- York Museums Trust
- English Heritage Yorkshire and the Humber
- National Railway Museum
- York Minster
- The National Centre for Early Music
- Screen Yorkshire
- Aesthetica Magazine
- One & Other Magazine
- University of York
- Science City York
- Pilot Theatre York
- The Rowntree Society
- Riding Lights Theatre Co.
- York @ Large
- York Archaeological Trust
- York St John University
- National Trust Yorkshire
- York Civic Trust
- York Theatre Royal
- City of York Council

33. In an effort to contribute to the aims of Visit York's new Tourism Strategy, the Consortium has agreed a number of objectives designed to increase:

- The proportion of cultural tourists from the current level to 25% by 2017, as measured by the Annual Visitor Survey, with associated increases in per capita expenditure.
- The GVA attributable to tourism, as measured by the Regional Econometric Model, by an amount greater than the predicted trend, which is currently 2.5% per annum over the period.

34. The key focus of the Consortium is to successfully deliver its 'Refresh York' project. In January 2014, the Task Group considered the Consortium's application for Visit England/Arts Council funding in the



amount of £331,500. If successful the plan was to run the project from March 2014 to February 2017.

35. As part of the project the Consortium planned to introduce and widely promote 'York Red Letter Nights' as a cultural package. The programme for which would consist of thirty commissioned events taking place at regular intervals around the year. A Creative Producer (employed by the Theatre Royal) would work with Consortium members to devise, manage and deliver the programme – for further information on 'York Red Letter Nights' see Annex C.
36. The criteria for each commissioned event would support the overall project aims, which were to:
  - Rebalance 'heritage York' to include 'creative York'
  - Improve the coordination and coherence of York's 'cultural offer'
  - Offer 'family friendly' activity in the right time and the right place
  - Show off the 'hidden potential' of contemporary culture
  - Be 'welcoming' for visitors.
37. In February 2014, the Task Group learnt that the application for the necessary funding had proved unsuccessful. Recognising that the project would help to increase York's family friendly cultural and entertainment offer, the Task Group agreed to meet with Consortium members in late February 2014 to find out what elements of the bid each individual organisation might still be in a position to work towards / introduce in an effort to help achieve the aims listed above. The feedback from that meeting is shown in the analysis section below – see paragraphs 60-65 below.
38. Objective (i) – Best Practice  
The Head of Visit York provided information from the following Heritage cities detailing their efforts to improve their early evening economy:
  - Bath – A similar situation in Bath and an issue that Visit Bath, and are keen to address. The later opening hours of the Roman Baths (9pm in July and August, Mon-Sun - owned by Bath City Council) helps during the summer months, as do the later opening times for shops in Southgate (which is a shopping area with one management company which can stipulate their opening hours). However, across other areas of the city, the patchy opening hours by independent shops, makes it difficult to promote a consistent message. There is

going to be a slight relaxing of allowing tables and chairs outside some cafes which might also help.

- Lincoln - Similar issues in Lincoln. They have late night shopping throughout the year on a Thursday but not all shops take part. They are trying an 'Alive After 5' campaign to get offers & deals on a Thursday to add to the retail offer & have included parking deals <http://www.visitlincoln.com/about-lincoln/thursdays>

Feedback from retailers is they will not stay open unless they see the footfall but the city can not get the shoppers to come as there are not enough shops open. They need to think of other incentives to visit during these times.

- Durham – city centre quiet from 5pm, livens up again after 7pm. The exception that proved the rule was Lindisfarne Gospels which had exhibition opening hours were until 9pm. But it took until about half way through the 12 week run for the Café opposite the exhibition to open until 6pm instead of 5pm, and towards the very end managed to encourage them stay open until 6.30pm.
- Carlisle - Exactly the same as York. Despite efforts to work with the retailers there is no enthusiasm (apart from Christmas) to remain open into the early evening. Not tried any other initiatives but would be interested in the experiences of other cities.
- Chester - No initiatives as yet but looking into this area. Any activity being led by retail views rather than other sectors.
- Oxford – Nothing spectacular happening early evening. They have a number of walking tour operators running tours at that time and into the evening. Plus being Oxford a lot of evensong at College chapels.

39. Objective (ii) – Barriers to increasing the availability of York's existing family based cultural and entertainment offer

The latest visitor survey shows that the average spend of a visitor party with children is less than that of a party without children so purely in economic impact terms family groups appear less valuable to the city's economy. However there are lots of arguments why families should be targeted.

40. Whilst Visit York's Visitor Survey does not specifically cover the early evening period, it does ask about evenings (from 5pm) in general. The responses to the questions in the 2012/3 visitor survey relating to the evening experience show that:
- 54% of visitors eat out/go for a drink after 5pm
  - 4% attend a cultural performance (includes daytime and evening)
  - For 1% of their visitors, the main purpose of their trip is an evening meal and for a further 1% the main purpose is the cultural performance
  - Average spend per person per day on food and drink after 5pm = £6.86, although 49% of visitors spent nothing (so average for just those who did spend on food and drink in the evening was £13.45)
  - Average spend per person per day on evening entertainment = 91p, although 82% spent nothing (so average for just those who did spend on evening entertainment was £5.06)
41. In contrast, findings from the resident's survey suggest the barriers may be more product based i.e. a lack of activity/retail/ attractions etc. in the 5-8pm window, and the perception of York as a pub/drinking centre.
42. The Task Group agreed they would also like to gather information from Music Promoters and Music Venues across the city to identify what barriers they perceive, and therefore agreed a number of questions for circulation. Those questions and anonymised responses are shown at Annex D
43. Objective (iii) - New cultural and entertainment activities suitable for York and the possibility of their introduction in York  
The cultural and entertainment activities current available in York are detailed above in paragraphs 15-22.
44. It is the view of Visit York that the city needs a new concept which will attract a significant number of visitors and be of equal interest to locals. Clearly the right new concept would need to be identified, but that is only part of what will be required. Others in the Leisure and Culture sector and other commercial sectors would need to be involved, and kept fully informed throughout the planning stage and the event running. Visit York would be happy to facilitate those conversations and it is their view that any new event would need to take place regularly over a longer period of time (perhaps once a month throughout the year rather than in one week of the year) to help build up a guaranteed influx of visitors which all providers could benefit from. The knock on effects from this approach

can be evidenced from initiatives in the USA and elsewhere. For example, it has been shown that retailers swiftly respond by arranging for later closing times.

45. Objective (iv) – Signposting tourist activities and encouraging joint promotion by their providers and accommodation providers

Visit York produces an annual events calendar detailing the activities provided by their members. The printed version highlights the main events but the online version is constantly being updated to include all new events/activities as arranged throughout the year – this can be viewed at:

<http://www.visityork.org/seeanddo/thedms.aspx?dms=12&groupid=1&events=1&pvieflag=E&=townid&msg=2014+Events#!page=1>

46. Visit York also encourages cross-selling between their members. Lots of partnerships have been and are now in place for ticketing with hotels and between attractions e.g. York Boat and Open top buses, Joint Museum Trust entry etc. The most important partnership is the York Pass attraction card that Visit York operates and is a 'buy up front' entry card. This entitles entry to over 30 attractions. A number of hotels package this into their stay rates and B&Bs and Guest Houses earn a commission by selling it to their guests. They also host events at the various museums when a new exhibition is about to open, to which hoteliers etc are invited. This is seen as a positive way of networking and building relationships, and encourages those invited to promote the exhibition to their clientele.

## **Analysis**

47. Objective (i) – The Task Group noted the information provided by a number of other heritage cities – see paragraph 38 above. In regard to the later opening times for shops in the Southgate area of Bath, the Task Group recognised the similarity to York's Coppergate for which a late night opening pilot has been recommended by Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

48. They also agreed that the feedback from those cities suggested they were facing the same issues as York. In fact the Task Group was unable to identify anywhere that has successfully tackled the teatime lull between 5-8pm leading to tangible improvements to their early evening economy, either through an improved cultural offer or extended retail offer. The evidence suggests only isolated pockets of success resulting from one off events (as in York), rather than any structured long term

city-wide approach. The Task Group agreed that to achieve city-wide success in York, a partnership approach is required as no one organisation can achieve it alone.

49. Anecdotal evidence from other countries suggests that alternative uses for existing cultural/creative venues may be the way forward. For example, in Prague the National Gallery closes at 5pm and re-opens at 5.15pm for early evening classical music concerts. The Task Group agreed that some of the heritage venues in York may be suitable for alternative cultural use after their close of normal business and that this would be one way of helping to bridge the gap between 5-8pm.
50. Objective (ii) - From the evidence provided by music venues and promoters (shown in Annex D), the Task Group noted that many of the venues were prevented from offering early evening events as it was not possible to carry out sound checks earlier in the day without disturbing nearby premises. They also recognised the need in York for more free marketing opportunities and a single, comprehensive listings service or publication, which many other cities already have. The Task Group agreed this would benefit not only music providers and venues but also the independent event organisers working in the city and the smaller creative organisations. The Task Group also agreed the city centre lacks a focal point where residents and visitors can find information on what's on each day, agreeing that Visit York does not necessarily hold information on everything that is happening, particularly events and activities provided by smaller / independent organisations. They agreed the city would benefit from a number of high quality managed poster boards, strategically placed throughout the city centre. These should be sensibly and sensitively placed in line with planning and heritage guidance.
51. Finally, the Task Group agreed that improving the networking between organisations of all sizes would likely lead to more collaboration, and events being run in tandem. A recent example of this was the Viking Festival and Victorian exhibitions during February half term. Given a more collaborative approach, it may have been possible for others to link in and run associated events/ activities. This approach would help to generate the critical mass needed and the footfall that retailers and transport providers are looking for to extend their services. Ideally this would happen outside of those times in the year when visitor numbers are traditionally high i.e. school/bank holidays, in order to reap the benefits throughout the year.

52. Objective (iii) – The Task group considered the ideas for new cultural and entertainment activities for York raised by members of the public via the consultation survey carried out in support of the whole Night Time Economy corporate scrutiny review – see survey findings at Annex A - in particular Appendices 2 & 3. They also considered the new concept idea suggested by Visit York – see paragraph 44.
53. They agreed that a coordinated and cohesive approach by leisure and culture providers, transport providers and retailers would benefit all as this has proved successful in the past e.g. for the Mystery Plays the city's Park and Ride service made changes to allow for later departures from the city. The same happened for Illuminate York, additional buses were provided, the park and ride service ran for longer and a number of city centre shops remained open for longer.
54. The Task Group agreed with Visit York's view that a new concept was required, and that it should be run over a number of weeks (rather than on consecutive nights) as this would help create a precedent for visitors and locals to stay in the city centre in the early evening, one evening a week. They agreed that once the event had run its course, if other attractions and shops chose to remain open in the early evening on the same evening each week (possibly a Friday to encourage visitors to start their weekend visits to York earlier) they would continue to generate the required footfall to maintain the necessary increase in income to make extended opening hours viable which in turn, the transport providers could continue to benefit from.
55. In addition, the Task Group agreed they would like to see festivals and markets being extended into the early evening (till 8pm), with buskers and street entertainers being encouraged to perform during that time. They would also like to see city centre open spaces such as Newgate Market, Kings Square, Minster Piazza etc, being used in the early evening for open air performances (music, theatre etc), but recognised the issue of funding would need addressing for some of the providers.
56. They agreed that further investigation was required to see whether the larger cultural organisations e.g. the Art Gallery, could offer up their venues for use by other smaller/independent entertainment providers outside of their normal opening hours (see paragraph 49 above). They also agreed a good place to start would be to run a pilot to extend the opening times of Museums etc in conjunction with the Coppergate pilot being recommended by the Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee. However they recognised it would need to run for a

substantive time and be properly promoted, in order to be successful. The Task Group suggested the pilot should be run on a Friday evening in the first instance (in line with the Coppergate pilot), in order to try to extend the weekend visitors stay.

57. Overall the Committee agreed it was not just about identifying new cultural and entertainment activities. It was more about better collaboration between existing providers and better promotion/marketing.
58. New Marketing Organisation (NewCo) – The Task Group recognised the clear relationship between the cultural offer in York and the visitor and business economy and agreed that improvements in one should lead to improvements in all. Having queried how NewCo would be funded and how the Council could commission work, they agreed that the NewCo could help deliver this and noted the plan for it to supersede Visit York and encompass the Council's Cultural Team and elements of the Business Development Team.
59. The Task Group noted that the introduction of NewCo would build on the way York is promoted as a visitor destination and business location which will lead to improvements in marketing and promotion of the city's cultural events and activities, which they agreed was necessary (see paragraph 63 below). They also suggested that NewCo should have a sub-strategy for helping to develop smaller festivals and supporting independent promoters to ensure they can progress new ideas, including providing and/or signposting possible funding for promotion/marketing (see issues highlighted in paragraph 50 above). The Task Group agreed that the Council should consider commissioning a Co-ordinator to carry out this role within NewCo, along the lines of the Co-ordinator role within York Consortium's plans (see paragraph 64 below). This could also include looking at how to address the other issues identified by this review e.g. how to fund/manage open-air performances in city centre open spaces.
60. Meeting with York Consortium - In late February 2014 the Task Group met with the Executive Group from the York Consortium. The Task Group noted its member's willingness to proceed with their plans regardless of their unsuccessful bid, and was pleased to hear that the Consortium had been encouraged by the Arts Council to apply for alternative funding. The Task Group acknowledged the need for any future funding to be matched and noted there was no reason why this would not be possible bearing in mind the Consortium's original bid identified those organisations willing to contribute.

61. At the meeting all acknowledged that York residents perceive a disparity between investment for the benefit of tourists and investment for their benefit. Consortium Members confirmed that part of their purpose was to assist in creating a positive shift in residents' mind set, to encourage them to take ownership of what the city has to offer, and become more active citizens in the culture of the city e.g. participating in the Mystery Plays.
62. The Task Group noted Consortium Members views that:
- Theatre goes delay coming into town until after 6pm when the city centre car parks become free of charge to residents, which prevents them from coming into the centre in sufficient time to eat before attending the theatre - this limits revenue for restaurants and cafes.
  - Attendees at high end performances at City Screen often feel uncomfortable coming out of City Screen into the melee from surrounding bars - this can affect their decision to attend.
63. Whilst the Task Group agreed that increasing the number of events and activities would over time encourage more visitors to come and more residents to participate, a lack of awareness of what was already on offer was also a key factor. Consortium Members agreed more could be done to improve marketing and promotion, particularly to enable smaller/ independent providers to better market the events and activities they offer.
64. The Task Group were interested to hear about the Consortiums plans for a Co-ordinator role, managed by those organisations which have a stake in the Consortium. They noted that the purpose of the Co-ordinator would be to see the possible connections between the consortium members, and encourage them to work together to identify innovative ways to collaborate and extend their current offer.
65. Overall, it was agreed that the Consortium members had a significant part to play in a holistic approach to improving the city's evening economy, but without improvements to other contributing factors e.g. an extended Park & Ride Service, cheaper/free car parking for all from 5pm onwards, extended retail hours and an improved perception regarding anti-social behaviour in the city centre at night, it would not be possible to achieve the improvements sought in the city's early evening economy. The Task Group agreed that a leap of faith may be required by some organisations and that some short term losses may be incurred, but that



these could be overcome in time, and in the longer term the economy would grow, benefitting all.

## **Review Conclusions**

66. Overall the Task Group concluded that:

- To achieve improvements in the city centre early evening economy a partnership approach will be required between cultural and entertainment providers, retailers and transport providers, as no one organisation can achieve it alone.
- Increasing the number of events and activities would over time encourage more visitors to come and more residents to participate.
- Better collaboration between existing providers of all sizes is required to increase the number of events being run in tandem, to help generate the critical mass needed and the footfall that retailers and transport providers are looking for to extend their services
- There is a lack of awareness of what is already on offer. Therefore better promotion/marketing is needed e.g.:
  - There is a need in York for more free marketing opportunities and a single, comprehensive listings service or publication
  - the city centre lacks a focal point where residents and visitors can find information on what's on each day
- Some of the heritage and larger cultural venues in York may be suitable for alternative cultural use after their close of normal business which would be one way of helping to bridge the gap between 5-8pm
- a new concept is required, to be run over a number of weeks rather than on consecutive nights in order to create a precedent for visitors and locals to stay in the city centre in the early evening

## **Review Recommendations**

67. At a meeting on March 2014, based on the review conclusions above and with the intention of encouraging more visitors and residents, including families, to visit the City during the evening particularly, the

Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to make the following recommendations for CSMC's consideration:

68. To encourage more visitors to visit the city, and more residents to participate, Cabinet to:
  - i. Encourage York's larger heritage and cultural venues to offer up their spaces for use by York's other smaller independent entertainment providers (and by those based elsewhere in the country), outside of their normal opening hours.
  - ii. Recommend cultural organisations in the city run a cultural pilot in conjunction with the Coppergate retail pilot being recommended by others.
  - iii. Extend the running times for Festivals and markets to cover the early evening lull up to 8pm, and encourage Buskers and street entertainers to perform throughout that extended period.
  - iv. Investigate the use of the city centre's open spaces for open air performances during the early evening period.
  - v. In an effort to breakdown barriers to families, particularly those resident, coming into the city during the early evening and continue the provision of a popular activity for young people, Cabinet to encourage relevant parties to support the revival of 'dry' discos for young teenagers, whilst recognising and addressing the reasons for their demise, in particular the issue of safety outside venues.
69. To encourage a more joined up collaborative approach to cultural provision in York, the new city marketing organisation's specification to include:
  - vi. A sub-strategy for helping to develop smaller festivals and supporting independent promoters to assist them in progressing new ideas, including providing and/or signposting possible funding for promotion/marketing.
  - vii. The resources for encouraging all heritage, cultural and creative providers to work collaboratively and share information.
70. To improve awareness of York's existing offer and any future offer:

- viii. A number of high quality managed poster boards be introduced and strategically and sensitively placed throughout the city centre, in line with planning and heritage guidance.
  - ix. A comprehensive listings service or publication be introduced.
71. The Task Group recognise that it may be possible to achieve draft Recommendations (i) – (iv) & (vi) – (viii) through the new city marketing organisation (NewCo) which is currently being developed to ensure a more collaborative approach to cultural provision in York. This would require the above strategies to be incorporated into NewCo's draft specification which is due to be presented for Cabinet approval in May 2014. However as NewCo's specification is not yet available; CSMC may wish to consider NewCo's draft specification in order to confirm whether this is the appropriate implementation route.
72. In regard to recommendation (ix), Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee acknowledge this may be achieved via Reinvigorate York, as part of its wayfinding strategy and as part of a collaborative effort to improve awareness. However they would like Cabinet to consider how best to progress this should Reinvigorate York choose not to take this forward.

### **Council Plan 2011-15**

73. The review supports the 'create jobs and grow the economy' priority within the Council Plan 2011-15, in that a successful York will have an enhanced reputation as a respected European and international city, with a visitor economy recognised for its high quality, bringing financial benefits to the city and its residents.

### **Implications & Risk Management**

74. **Financial** – In agreeing its recommendations, the Scrutiny Committee were mindful of the emerging role of NewCo. If The majority of its recommendations were to become part of NewCo's strategic role, NewCo would have to determine what level of financial support would be required for the relevant recommendations, should Corporate & Scrutiny Management Committee and ultimately, Cabinet, support those recommendations. Indeed, NewCo would also have to determine whether these could be met within its level of funding and report back accordingly. It should be noted, however, that an anticipated saving of

£220k has been earmarked against current budgetary levels, as a result of the creation of NewCo.

75. **Legal** – At this stage, there are no legal implications associated with the implementation of these recommendations, which would largely be for NewCo to address and consider. Any legal implications associated with the creation of NewCo have been addressed elsewhere and are not for consideration as part of this review.
76. **HR** – There are no known HR implications associated with the recommendations arising from this review.
77. **Other** – There are no other known implications associated with the recommendations arising from this review
78. **Risks** – The recommendations arising from this review are designed to improve awareness of York’s current cultural and entertainment offer, and to increase that offer in the future, in order to encourage residents to participate more and to extend the tourist day and encourage more tourists to stay for longer or overnight, in line with the remit set for this review.

### **Report Recommendations**

79. Having considered the information within this report, the Corporate & Scrutiny Management Committee are recommended to take account of the findings from this review as part of their ongoing work to conclude the corporate scrutiny review on York’s Night Time Economy.

Reason: To ensure compliance with scrutiny procedures and protocols, and enable the final report from the ongoing corporate scrutiny review of York’s Night Time Economy to be completed, ready for presentation to Cabinet in May 2014.

### **Contact Details**

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**Report Approved**



**Date** 20 March 2014

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** N/A

**Wards Affected:**

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers:** N/A

**Annexes:**

**Annex A** – Interim Strategy Document

**Annex B** – Information on proposals for a New Marketing Organisation

**Annex C** – Indicative Approach to York Red Letter Nights

**Annex D** – Information Gathered from Music Promoters and Music Venues

**Abbreviations:**

CSMC - Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee

NewCo - New Marketing Organisation