



Yorkshire and Humber Business Plan 2021/22

Executive Summary

Introduction

There has never been a more important time to collaborate, and utilise the strength of our united voice across the region to create more impetus and ensure local government has the tools, resources and freedoms it needs to help our places recover from the coronavirus pandemic and protect the most vulnerable in our communities. We are living through a period of national adjustment and continued uncertainty, dealing with the aftershocks of the pandemic so far and planning how to manage living with coronavirus for the foreseeable future. The development of a new relationship with the EU and addressing the after-effects of ten years of public sector austerity continue to present stark challenges, but as a region we are in a strong position to take these opportunities, re-energise our partnerships and use our individual strengths and assets to meet these challenges collectively.

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There is a long and successful history of partnership working at the Yorkshire and Humber level, and through the Yorkshire Leaders Board and Yorkshire and Humber Chief Executives group we have the opportunity to commit to further collaboration and a shared work profile that will play a critical role in delivering solutions; identifying and developing the policies that will help our places, lobbying government, and coming to collective agreement on the things we can effect in our places to bring about change that will enable our businesses and communities to thrive in future years.

Irrespective of the geography of sub-regional devolution deals it's clear that, with their financial commitment, government supports our ambitions for wider collaboration across local government boundaries at the Yorkshire wide level. This is the time for a renewed relationship with the Government and wider partners. Through our structures we can be a key influencer for future Government policy development, consultation and innovation.

We know that done well, this type of partnership across local authorities, and our partners, will allow our region to influence policy development that allows problems to be solved at scale. This will support us to shape our places, empower our leaders (in their role as chief custodians of place) to provide the opportunities and income to drive growth, and break down the divide felt by many communities and places.

With this in mind, our united region has set out a plan for the forthcoming twelve months on what it wants to achieve. This is an overarching strategy, setting out our key principles for working together, our priorities and objectives, and our key partners – and will develop detailed plans for our priorities that allow us to deliver sustainable change across our region.

Our challenges and opportunities

We face many challenges over the next 12 months as we move into a new stage of managing the health pandemic that has dominated our world for the last 18 months; the huge pressures on our health and social care system, financial sustainability challenges for our sector, the economic challenges of recession, an erosion of public trust in authority, driven by divisive narratives; and the uncertainty surrounding previous government commitments, brought about by a complete change in the world we operate within.

The UK economy was already teetering on the brink of a recession before the full impact of the coronavirus pandemic was felt, and in the current context of economic re-opening despite the continuing spread of variants, many of our surviving businesses are experiencing issues with viability and staffing whilst people continue to be vulnerable to the public health risk. The UK is also adapting to a life outside the European Union, with the full impacts of agreed policy positions as yet unclear.

There has always been inequality within and across our places, which has been deepened further by the twin challenges of the pandemic and a changing relationship with the European Union. The government has set a very clear focus on 'levelling up' regions across the UK, with a stated aim of setting out policy interventions to improve livelihoods and opportunity in all our places. In this environment, the response of local government alongside our key partners is more vital than it has ever been and there is a real opportunity to help reshape national policy.

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The pandemic has also given us the opportunity to think differently about how we work and what we provide, and has galvanised partnership working – not just between councils, but within our local places partners have stepped up to work together to protect our places from the worst of the impacts. We must capitalise on this opportunity. Our region is also host to a vast array of assets: natural, cultural, businesses, physical assets, and – of course – our people. There is a wealth of opportunity in working together to release the potential of our collective assets.

The wider business plan sets out in more detail the challenges we face and the opportunities that will present themselves over the next 12 months.

Our priorities

Based on the current context, challenges and opportunities, the Board will continue to focus on the six priority areas identified in the 2020/21 Business Plan, with the addition of one extra priority – levelling up. These are explored in the business plan in more detail, and presented in summary below:

- ✓ **Flooding.** Implementation of the collaborative work programme around flood management and mitigation, protecting our communities and businesses against future flood events.
- ✓ **Levelling up.** Define what levelling up means for the Yorkshire and Humber region, what action we can take across our sectors locally, and how we can work with government, to ensure the region brings in real and additional government investment.
- ✓ **Local Government Finance.** Develop a clear understanding of what the Yorkshire and Humber region needs in terms of funding, taking individual need and areas of conflict into account, using the collective power of a shared voice to highlight our common issues.
- ✓ **Post EU Exit transition.** Work towards a place-based approach to inclusive growth, ensuring the opportunities of the post EU environment are considered and addressed for our businesses and communities alongside the twin challenge of the coronavirus pandemic, and opportunities to shape Government policy are seized with a collaborative and strong voice.
- ✓ **Tourism, hospitality and culture.** Restore and rebuild the hospitality, leisure and tourism offer in our places; furthering collaborative working and co-ordination of resource around tourism and culture, using our assets to capitalise on a thriving visitor economy and ensuring this reflects the diverse needs of the region.
- ✓ **Transport and infrastructure.** Identify the strategic transport and infrastructure priorities to help secure investment linked to the needs of communities for improved social and economic outcomes.
- ✓ **Zero carbon/climate change.** Work together to achieve ambitious carbon reduction targets, using our influence to ensure everyone from individuals to large business is committed to reducing their own footprint. Make significant progress by 2030 with the aim of being overall net carbon zero by 2038.

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There are also a number of other areas where our councils will continue to collaborate, which are set out in the wider plan.

A number of cross-cutting themes run throughout a number of these priorities and will be considered where appropriate, or may be subject to collective lobbying if specific issues arise. These are:

- ✓ **Business support and innovation.** Many businesses have and will need to innovate and adapt to survive in the current climate. Learning from innovation during the pandemic should be capitalised on and shared.
- ✓ **Skills.** Consider what can be done nationally regarding the skills programme. Local government is in a strong position to lead skills and employment initiatives in our local areas, but there are mechanisms that government can put in place to help make this easier and more successful.
- ✓ **Finances.** While finance is an overarching priority, each priority area will likely identify specific funding issues which need some form of lobbying on or would benefit from joint action to secure and deliver better outcomes for our places.

What we hope to achieve

With our programme of work we hope to achieve the following over the next year:

- ✓ **Supporting the most vulnerable** sectors and communities in the aftermath of the pandemic.
- ✓ **Securing the finances** needed to allow councils to protect and invest in businesses and communities during the current economic downturn.
- ✓ **Yorkshire and Humber authorities make a significant contribution** to achieving the Government's carbon reduction ambitions and working towards a green recovery.
- ✓ **Yorkshire and Humber authorities make a significant contribution** to defining and achieving the Government's levelling up ambitions.
- ✓ **The region seizes the economic opportunities** from new trading arrangements, contributing to a positive economic shift following the UK's exit from EU arrangements.
- ✓ **Enhanced capacity to drive forward** activity and manage relationships across stakeholders.
- ✓ **Strengthened and recognised channels** of engagement between local and national government.
- ✓ **Increased flows of information and intelligence** between local and national government, making a positive and/or innovative contribution to policy development and implementation.
- ✓ **The Board is recognised as a credible expert voice** and is a 'go to' consultee for Ministers and officials.
- ✓ **There is increased public confidence** in local and national politics.

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// **...securing the finances needed to allow councils to protect and invest in businesses and communities..."**
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How will we deliver this?

All 22 Yorkshire and Humber local authorities are currently members of the Yorkshire Leaders Board, alongside the Mayors and Combined Authorities of South and West Yorkshire.

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Chief Executives from the 22 authorities also come together to identify and tackle the strategic issues facing councils across the Yorkshire and Humber area, focusing on capability and capacity issues, sharing good practice and using their collective voice to lever influence at an officer level. They run a lead Chief Executive model for identified priorities.

Where identified as adding value, a series of panels and networks around the key priority areas are established to share experience and work collaboratively by thematic area. These networks are supported by officer groups with expertise in these same priority areas.

To enable this all to work, there is a programme management function, funded by member contributions. The head of programme management is the Chair of the Chief Executives group.



Yorkshire Leaders Board
The voice of our region

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