

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CORE SERVICES TO CABINET ON 26 JULY 2017

THINK YORKSHIRE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the establishment of a new think tank for Yorkshire, Think Yorkshire, and to consider if the Council wishes to express its support for this new body.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Council become a founding supporter of Think Yorkshire and agree to pay the annual fee of £500 for membership;**
- 2.2 **That the Leader of the Council or their nominee be authorised to represent the Council at the Think Yorkshire General Assembly or any similar body, if established, and to cast the Council's vote for membership of the Board; and**
- 2.3 **That the relevant officers of the Council be authorised to contribute to the work programme of the Think Yorkshire, as appropriate.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council has received correspondence on proposals to establish a new think tank, known as Think Yorkshire, to focus on the economic and social needs of the region. The intention is that the think tank will undertake research, consult widely and produce reports that will provide practical policy ideas to feed into local, regional and national government. This will inform and encourage policy making and boost Yorkshire's place in the North, across the UK and worldwide. The Council has been asked to support this venture.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 Think Yorkshire's stated aims and objectives are:-
 - To provide an analysis of the state of Yorkshire across a wide spectrum of policy areas such as business, productivity, employment, education and skills, health, housing the rural economy and the arts;
 - To identify the challenges that policy makers need to address and assess at what level they are best addressed – locally, regionally, pan-northern or from central government;

- To provide practical evidence based ideas and solutions to these challenges using understanding of the region's academics, business, civic society, politicians, local government, third sector organisations and others;
- To establish how best Yorkshire can be part of a stronger northern voice and can integrate with a Northern Powerhouse;
- To have a role that is distinct from other organisations in the region but will complement and build upon the work of other regional organisations, the Parliamentary Group for Yorkshire and the Humber and policy development within local authorities, combined authorities, mayoral offices, pan-northern bodies and central government;
- To be strictly non-party political.

4.2 Think Yorkshire will operate by undertaking detailed research and collecting the evidence to prepare reports and briefings to support policy making in Yorkshire and at national level. It will hold events to highlight and discuss the challenges facing the region and commission-type enquiries into issues, taking evidence and producing reports. It will inform and contribute to media reporting of the region, contributing to print, broadcast and on-line media, and encourage policy makers to give serious consideration to the policies produced through briefing local MPs, peers, councillors and others. This work will be done by Think Yorkshire itself or by commissioning research, including from supporting local authorities.

4.3 Think Yorkshire has already identified initial suggested projects as follows:-

- What is the “influence deficit” Yorkshire currently has compared with devolved bodies and other major regions and how should this be addressed;
- What is the state of literacy and numeracy across Yorkshire and the employability of school leavers and what needs to be done to improve this; and
- What is the state of public health in Yorkshire and how can this be improved to prevent people needing to access the NHS, and what is the impact on employees.

4.4 The aims, objectives and concerns of Think Yorkshire are broadly consistent with what the Council is seeking to achieve, and it is therefore considered that there is merit in the Council expressing its support for Think Yorkshire at this time.

5. DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE

5.1 Think Yorkshire has established a Shadow Board with the aim of bringing the organisation into existence. Members of the Shadow Board include Professor Brian Cantor (Vice Chancellor of Bradford University), Natalie Sykes (Regional Director of Institute of Directors), Martin Hathaway (Managing Director of Mid-Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce), Pat Coyle (Director of Marketing and Client Relations at Rollits LLP), Councillor Ryan Stephenson (Leeds City Council), Lord Wallis of Saltaire, Lord Haskins of Skidby (Chair of Humber LEP) and Bill Adams (Regional Secretary of Yorkshire and the Humber TUC). The Shadow Board will be replaced with a Board elected by supporters, expected to be some time in the early Autumn 2017.

5.2 It is intended that Think Yorkshire will become a not for profit company with supporters, an Elected Board of Directors, and an Advisory Board to reflect sectors and geography. It is possible that this will involve some form of General Assembly. Supporters of Think Yorkshire include:-

- The region's business organisations including Chambers of Commerce and the Institute of Directors;
- Individual companies and professional firms;
- Many of the region's MPs and Members of the House of Lords of all parties;
- Local authorities;
- Universities;
- The TUC.

5.3 In the event that Cabinet agrees to support Think Yorkshire, there is merit in identifying a representative to attend meetings of any General Assembly or similar body, if one is established, and make arrangements for voting on matters such as the composition of the Board. It is recommended that this should be the Leader of the Council or their nominee. In addition, there is an expectation that Think Yorkshire will seek to establish advisory boards or officer working groups, and it is recommended that relevant officers should be authorised to attend or otherwise contribute to these where appropriate.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Supporters pay an annual fee to Think Yorkshire of £500. This can be contained within the provision for corporate subscriptions.

7. EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 It is possible that the Council will be invited to contribute to the work of Think Yorkshire, perhaps through the advisory boards or officer working groups. However, it seems unlikely that this will be a requirement of membership and the contribution made could be proportionate to the interests that the Council has in the issues under consideration.

8. APPENDICES

None.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Letter received from Think Yorkshire dated 24th May, 2017, available for inspection in the Core Services Directorate, Telephone (01226) 773421, and on the Think Yorkshire website at www.thinkyorkshire.org.

Officer Contact: Ian Turner **Telephone No:** 773421 **Date:** 26 June 2017

Financial Implications/Consultation

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*(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer
where no financial implications)*