



# WNDC Board Report

## Report by Chief Executive

Paper Reference: 2010-05-05-01

Agenda Item: 5

6 July 2010

**Subject:** Chief Executive's Report

**Advice:** That the Board:

1. **Note** the progress WNDC has made regarding the growth and regeneration of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.
2. **Note** the work WNDC has been undertaking to engage and communicate with our key stakeholders.

**Summary:**

- An overview of the progress WNDC has made on a number of fronts, working with partners to deliver jobs, homes and investment in Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.
- An introduction to the reports from the Chief Operating Officer/Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Regeneration and Development, Director of Planning Services and Head of Finance & Resources

## **1. Working with Government**

- 1.1 Following the announcement of a new Ministerial team at our sponsor department, the Minister responsible for WNDP has been confirmed. Andrew Stunell OBE, is the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the department. He is the Member of Parliament for Hazel Grove and was part of the Liberal Democrat negotiating team responsible for helping to form the new coalition government. We have invited the Minister to visit the area and see some of the essential regeneration projects we are currently delivering across Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.
- 1.2 The government announced the emergency budget on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, highlighting a number of savings in the public sector to help reduce the national budget deficit. This includes a 25% reduction in spending for many government departments over the next four years. WNDP has previously recognized the imperative to deliver more for less in difficult economic circumstances. As a result of our lean efficiency programme, we are achieving revenue savings of 25% in 2010/11 alone. We are also using limited public funding to secure significant additional private sector investment in the area.

## **2. Progress through Partnership**

- 2.1 Since the last board meeting, WNDP and our partners have been recognised with a number of industry awards. On 14<sup>th</sup> June, the Corporation collected two Green Apple Awards for the Built Environment at a ceremony at the Tower of London. They were for the iCon centre for sustainable construction, as well as the zero carbon Sainsbury's distribution centre at Pineham, for which we were the planning authority. The Green Apple Awards, presented by The Green Organisation, are part of an annual international campaign to recognise, reward and promote environmental best practice around the world.
- 2.2 We were also delighted that The University of Northampton won the Times Higher Education 'Outstanding Estates Team' Award. This accolade was in recognition of their campus improvement and property expansion activities, including the Portfolio Innovation Centre and the iCon; both of which have been delivered in partnership with WNDP.

2.3 Significant progress continues to be made on key regeneration projects across our Urban Development Area. It was pleasing to see the official launch of the Northampton Market Square lighting scheme in June. It will make an important contribution to the wider regeneration of the town. In Daventry, the impressive timber frame of the iCon is almost complete and is making a real impression on the local skyline. In Towcester, the Moat Lane regeneration project continues to move forward and the procurement process has begun for a development partner.

### **3. Working with the Community**

3.1 On Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June, Upton Lodge Farm House played host to a corporate social responsibility day by Northampton-based firm Johnson Diversey. Around 40 employees from the firm helped clean up the walled garden at the former farm house, which is being renovated by WNDC, the YMCA and the Homes and Communities Agency. When complete, it will provide accommodation, support and advice to local disadvantaged young people. The project is progressing well and is due to open this summer.

3.2 The Stronger Communities Fund has been a major success story for the area, awarding funding to not-for-profit and voluntary groups across our three Districts. The funding panel met on 18 June and approved funding for 12 projects totalling £114,798.

3.3 As part of our efforts to engage with the local business community, WNDC has joined Northamptonshire Chamber's Business Alliance Group. The Business Alliance Group is a senior-level group of organisations set up to help shape the future of business in Northamptonshire. By being members of the Business Alliance, we hope to build an even closer relationship with the local business community and enable them to directly benefit from the delivery of new jobs, homes and investment in the area

3.4 Funding secured by WNDC is starting to benefit local communities across the west of Northamptonshire. In the past 12 months alone, WNDC has secured £18 million in developer contributions to infrastructure, through section 106 agreements related to planning permissions. Following the signing of an agreement with Northamptonshire County Council, WNDC has started to transfer funding to the local authority so it can invest the money in vital services to support new development, including transport, education and community facilities. Around £700,000 has been transferred to date.

#### **4. Communications**

- 4.1 A number of WNDC's initiatives have been making an impact at a national level. On 8<sup>th</sup> June the Corporation held a national launch of its innovative Manual for Design Codes in London. Aiming to provide clarity, advice and consistency in the formulation of Design Codes, the manual is one of the first of its kind in the UK. It received a positive reception at the launch and has attracted significant coverage in the technical media.
- 4.2 Construction Futures has also been receiving a considerable amount of positive coverage in leading industry publications, including Planning Magazine. The ground breaking scheme is gradually becoming established as a model of best practice for other planning authorities across the UK. On 17<sup>th</sup> June, the Corporation took part in a 'Westminster Briefing' where we delivered a presentation about the scheme to a range of relevant professionals from the public sector.
- 4.3 At a local level, the launch of the Market Square lighting scheme was well received by the local press, radio and television. The iCon continues to be the subject of significant public interest and following its green apple award, an event was held at the construction site to enable local media and stakeholders to see the building's progress at first hand.

#### **5. Planning Services**

- 5.1 The Director of Planning Services will provide a full overview of WNDC's planning activity since the last board meeting. He will also be seeking board approval for WNDC's Sustainability Manual which provides guidance for anyone involved in the preparation, determination and implementation of planning applications. It will help ensure that new development is sustainable, sympathetic to the natural environment and contributes to the global battle against climate change.

#### **6. Regeneration and Development**

- 6.1 WNDC has achieved a number of significant milestones relating to our key regeneration schemes in Northampton, Daventry and Towcester. The Director of Regeneration and Development will provide a comprehensive update.

## **7. Finance and Resources**

7.1 On 25<sup>th</sup> June the Audit & Risk Committee received the final draft of the WNDC Annual Report & Accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010. At the meeting the National Audit Office presented an unqualified Audit report to the Committee which enables the Comptroller and Auditor General to sign the Accounts, as per the requirements of HM Treasury. , The Accounts are due to be laid before Parliament on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2010 The report of the Head of Finance & Resources provides more detail together with those other general financial matters which are reported on a monthly basis.