



# WNDC Board Report

## Report by Chief Executive

Paper Reference: 2010-06-05-01

Agenda Item: 5

21 September 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.

## **1. Working with Government**

- 1.1 WNDC is hosting a visit from our sponsor Minister Andrew Stunell OBE MP, (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State – Communities and Local Government) on the 28<sup>th</sup> September. We will be taking the Minister on a tour of our key regeneration projects including Castle Station, Northampton Waterside and Avon Nunn Mills. The Minister will then be visiting the Guildhall to meet jointly with WNDC and its local authority partners to discuss the regeneration and development of West Northamptonshire, with a particular emphasis upon Northampton and its town centre.
- 1.2 This follows a visit from Bob Neill MP (also a Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at CLG) to Northampton earlier this month. The Minister came to WNDC's offices and was very positive about the Corporation's efforts to deliver new jobs, homes and investment in partnership with the local authorities of West Northamptonshire. The Minister reiterated the outcome of WNDC's quinquennial review, supporting the Corporation as it continues its 10 year delivery programme while starting a measured transition to being a local authority led delivery vehicle.

## **2. Progress through Partnership**

- 2.1 WNDC's key projects are designed to revive town centres, improve business infrastructure and support local communities across West Northamptonshire. There has been strong progress on a number of these initiatives over recent months. In Northampton, the first phase of the Becket's Park Marina has been completed, and WNDC has granted planning permission for the final phase – an on site facilities building. On the western side of the town, the Sandy Lane Improvement North, which was part funded by WNDC, is nearing completion and is due to be completed in October.
- 2.2 The iCon in Daventry continues to make excellent progress and the distinctive timber frame of the building is now complete. The landmark building will 'top out' in November, which will be marked by an official ceremony. In Towcester, the Moat Lane regeneration project continues to move forward. Planning approval was granted on 15 September and the procurement process for a development partner is running according to schedule.
- 2.3 WNDC has been working closely with local partners to secure additional investment for the area. In August the government gave approval for WNDC to invest £2.3 million in vital

junction improvements between Northampton's London Road and Ransome Road. The work will boost capacity and improve safety at the junction, while unlocking new development at the Ransome Rd site. This project, which will see up to 850 new houses delivered on this important brownfield site, is the culmination of a number of years of effort by the HCA to prepare this site for its release to the developer market. WNDC granted planning permission, subject to a S106 agreement, on 14 September.

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

- 3.1 The transformation of Upton Lodge Farm House in Northampton from a rundown, derelict building to a first class community facility has now been completed. The scheme will offer a fresh start in life to local disadvantaged and homeless young people, providing them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to lead successful lives. The YMCA will run the centre, which has been funded by West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).
- 3.2 Construction Futures continues to be a major success story for the area and has attracted interest from developers outside our urban development area, who would like to use the programme to provide skills training for young people on their projects. A Business Plan is being developed to establish Construction Futures as separate entity that can be marketed to both the public and private sector. This will enable the scheme to benefit young people interested in pursuing both trade skills and professional training in the construction sector, throughout the country.

### **4. Customer Focus**

- 4.1 Consultation has been completed on a Code of Practice to guide how WNDC engages with the local authorities in its area of operation. The Code covers all three tiers of the local authority structure from County to Parish and establishes a set of key principles that will guide and govern how we engage with our primary customers.
- 4.2 During late August and early September, WNDC's Chairman and I attended South Northamptonshire Council Business Planning Group and a meeting of Northampton Borough Council's Cabinet. We presented an overview of WNDC's forthcoming delivery

plans, as well as the progress we have made to date. These meetings are part of wider programme of engagement with local authorities at all levels, ensuring that we remain aligned with their key priorities, and that we continue to deliver projects which support the visions of our local authority partners.

## **5. Communications**

- 5.1 WNDC has now launched its refreshed corporate website. As well as providing a more contemporary, easy to navigate website, it is over 50% cheaper to operate than our previous site.
- 5.2 The Corporation continues to work closely with the local, national and specialist media to help raise awareness and encourage participation in our key initiatives. In August an event was held to celebrate the completion of Upton Lodge Farm House, resulting in positive coverage in the local media, including an extensive report on BBC Look East in which potential residents of the community centre were interviewed. Other stories of local interest included progress on the iCon, Moat Lane, Becket's Park marina and the government's decision to approve WNDC's £2.3m investment on the London Road Junction works.
- 5.3 The Corporation has been striving to clarify the future role of the organisation, working with key partners, including Northampton Borough Council to issue joint statements about the forthcoming transfer of our planning powers, so enabling the Corporation to focus on major schemes over coming years.