



# WNDC Board Report

## Report by Chief Executive

Paper Reference: 2010-08-05-01

Agenda Item: 5

7 December 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.

## **1. Working with Government**

- 1.1 WNDC is working closely with government to secure investment in the growth and regeneration of West Northamptonshire. Our capital and revenue budget will be confirmed next March and we are currently in discussions with our sponsor department, Communities and Local Government, about an indicative three year funding allocation. This initial commitment is a clear indication that government views the regeneration of west Northamptonshire as an important, long-term priority.
- 1.2 Alongside these discussions, we are currently finalising our Corporate Plan for our next delivery phase, focusing on the redevelopment of Northampton's Grosvenor Centre, Castle Station, Waterside, Avon/Nunn Mills, and St Johns/Angel St, as well as the continued regeneration of Daventry and Towcester town centre.
- 1.3 The Corporation is actively exploring a range of funding options for the delivery of these projects, including both public and private sector investment. We will shortly be submitting a bid to the government's Regional Growth Fund to support the redevelopment of Castle Station., which is vital for the future growth and prosperity of the area.
- 1.4 Following their announcement earlier this year, our sponsor department is preparing the legislation to amend WNDC's planning powers. They are on schedule to revise the Corporation's powers by April next year, raising the threshold for applications to be determined by WNDC from 50 homes to 200.

## **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 Daventry, the iCon innovation centre has officially topped out, with all three of its eco- friendly roofs now completed. A ceremony was held on 4<sup>th</sup> November to mark the milestone, which was attended by the project partners as well as the local media.
- 2.2 The procurement process for a development partner for Towcester's Moat lane development continues to make good progress. Eight companies expressed an interest in the project, representing a wide range of regional and major multi-national developers. A

shortlist of 6 companies has now been invited to submit outline proposals for the scheme.

- 2.3 WNDC has worked with the University of Northampton and the East Midlands Development Agency to produce new 'sustainability guidance' for the UK development industry. It aims to show how UK developers can keep pace with the fast-moving green agenda and produce development that is well designed, energy efficient and ultimately more sustainable.

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

- 3.1 Since 2008, WNDC's Stronger Communities Fund has been awarding grants to voluntary and not-for-profit groups across the area. Over recent weeks, a number of these groups have been able to show the results of this investment. November saw the re-opening of Old Village Hall, which has been supported by a £7,750 grant to establish a film and theatre club at the venue. Also last month, the Friends of the Racecourse launched their latest playground improvements at the Racecourse, one of Northampton's most popular parks.
- 3.2 The Friends of the Racecourse were the recipients of WNDC's Stronger Communities Award at the annual Northamptonshire Community Foundation Awards in November. The Award was presented by WNDC's Chairman and recognised the excellent contribution that the group has made to the enhancement of the park, following a £17,339 grant from the Stronger Communities Fund.
- 3.3 On 25th November, the latest improvements to Northampton's Becket's Park were officially unveiled. Part-funded by WNDC, two distinctive wooden sculptures, known as 'clamber art', have been installed opposite the under construction Becket's Park Marina. Northampton's newest and most interactive artworks are suitable for people to climb, play or sit on and have been created in partnership with the local community following a series of design workshops.
- 3.4 Construction Futures, WNDC's ground-breaking construction training scheme continues to go from strength to strength. Apprenticeships have now been secured for local people on the 126 home development at the site of the former Pearce Leatherworks in Great

Billing. It is just the latest in a series of projects to participate in the Construction Futures programme.

#### **4. Communications**

- 4.1 WNDG is helping to promote key projects to their target customers and raise their profile in the marketplace. We are assisting the delivery of a marketing plan for the iCon innovation centre, with the creation of a brand identity, website and marketing collateral all underway. We are also actively promoting the Construction Futures project to potential public and private sector customers across the UK.
- 4.2 Alongside this, the Corporation continues to work closely with the local, national and specialist media to help raise awareness and encourage participation in our key initiatives. This activity has been far reaching, ranging from interviews with local BBC television about the redevelopment of Castle Station to feature articles in trade publications about the iCon innovation centre.