



# WNDC Board Report

## Report by Chief Executive

Paper Reference: 2011-01-05-01

Agenda Item: 5

1 February 2011

**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. Positive signs for 2011**

- 1.1 Despite challenging economic conditions, it has been a positive start to 2011 in the ongoing regeneration of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester. The area continues to receive strong interest from investors and developers, while its key regeneration projects, such as the redevelopment of Moat Lane, are attracting national recognition.
- 1.2 Research shows that the local economy is proving to be resilient and is starting to recover from the recession. Northampton's unemployment rate fell by more than one percent in 2010, which was the third biggest drop of any UK city. Our focus is on sustaining this growth through town centre regeneration, enabling commercial development sites and investing in vital infrastructure. Our activity is also intended to support Northampton's evolution from a low skill-low wage economy to a higher value added economy.
- 1.3 Central government recognizes that West Northamptonshire is a strategically important economy that can help drive the economic recovery of central England. We are working in close cooperation with government to finalize a funding settlement for the next three years, and although public finances are extremely constrained, it is clear that this area will deliver major returns on public investment.

## **2 Delivering for our customers**

- 2.1 WNDC is working in support of the local authorities to deliver a vision for the regeneration of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester. It is useful to highlight a number of key milestones that have recently been achieved through our delivery programme.
- 2.2 Working on behalf of WNDC, Network Rail has submitted plans to Northampton Borough Council for the redevelopment of Northampton railway station. The project falls within Network Rail's permitted development rights and it has applied for prior approval of the design and positioning of the scheme. Although funding for the project remains a significant challenge, commencing the formal planning process is a very important milestone.
- 2.3 The renovation of Bury Mount in Towcester town centre has won a prestigious national award. The scheme, which was completed in April 2010, has received a BALI award from

the British Association of Landscape Industries. It was recognised in the Land Renewal and Regeneration category at an awards ceremony in December.

2.4 On 20th January, the Sandy Lane Improvement North road officially opened. The £7.2m project, which was part-funded by WNDC, will eventually form part of an orbital route to the west of Northampton. As part of a wider regeneration plan, it will improve transport connections in a key part of the town and contribute to growth in the local economy.

2.5 WNDC has granted planning permission for BMW's new national distribution centre at Pineham, Northampton. This development has a high quality, environmentally friendly design, and will employ around 200 people in the local area. BMW is the latest in a series of world class businesses that have chosen to invest and locate in Northampton.

2.6 Pineham in particular continues to attract investment from the private sector and the Corporation granted planning permission for two new business premises at the industrial estate in December. This will enable two local companies - EBC Brakes and Frem Ltd, to remain in Northampton and expand their operations.

### 3. **Engaging the Market**

3.1 WNDC is helping to promote key projects to their target customers and raise their profile in the marketplace. We are managing and delivering marketing communications strategies for all of our key projects including the iCon and Construction Futures.

3.2 At a corporate level, we are supporting key partners, including Northamptonshire Enterprise to promote the area to key investors. In December, WNDC was a panellist at the Northamptonshire Economic Forum, run by Business Insider magazine. The event discussed issues relating to the economic growth of the area and raised the profile of its investment opportunities.

3.3 As part of our marketing activity, we will be procuring an interactive 3D virtual model of Northampton and Daventry town centres, which can be used for marketing key sites to investors. It is being developed in partnership with the local authorities and will also be a long term tool for their urban design, community engagement and spatial planning teams.