



WNDC Board Report

Report by Chief Executive

Paper Reference: 2011-02-05-01

Agenda Item: 5

14 March 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. A crucial 12 months

- 1.1 As the financial year draws to a close, West Northamptonshire can reflect upon a period of significant change and progress. Over the past 12 months, we have seen local landmarks such as the iCon and Becket's Park Marina start to appear, while planning permission for transformational schemes, including Towcester's Moat Lane development has been secured.
- 1.2 A number of key projects have been recognised with awards, while major infrastructure schemes, such as the Sandy Lane Improvements North, have been completed. Alongside this, the local community has benefited from pioneering initiatives including the Construction Futures training scheme.
- 1.3 However, there is much more to achieve in the forthcoming 12 months as we help to deliver the local authorities' vision for the area. Our priority will be the continued regeneration of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester town centres, building on the significant progress and investment that has already been completed. We will focus our resources on the major, complex regeneration projects that will have the largest impact on the economy and communities of West Northamptonshire.

2 Working with Government

- 2.1 In line with our emphasis on major urban regeneration schemes, the parliamentary process to transfer a range of planning powers from WNDC to the local authorities has commenced.
- 2.2 An order has been laid in parliament to enact a number of changes to our powers, including raising the threshold for residential planning applications determined by WNDC from 50 units to 200 units. Subject to parliamentary approval, the changes will be effective from April 2011.

3. Transforming town centres

3.1 Strong progress continues to be made on our portfolio of town centre regeneration projects. While a significant amount of this activity relates to laying the foundations for delivery, there are physical signs of our success across West Northamptonshire.

3.2 The iCon Environmental Innovation centre will reach practical completion this month and will be open for business in April. The award winning building has been delivered in support of Daventry District Council's vision for the regeneration of the town centre.

3.3 It is a key achievement for the Corporation, which has managed the construction process and has part-funded the project. It is a world class facility that features 55 office units, a conference centre and a café. Over time, we hope it will help to make Daventry a focal point of the low carbon economy in the UK and beyond.

3.4 The final phase of the Becket's Park Marina development is progressing well, with construction of the main facilities building underway. The building, which will house the Marina Manager's office and services for boaters, is expected to be open in July. The marina itself will be open to boats at Easter, marking an important milestone in the rejuvenation of Northampton's riverfront.

3.4 Nearby, work has commenced on the London Road / Ransome Road junction improvements. The work will improve capacity and safety at the junction, while unlocking new development at the Ransome road site, which is an integral part of wider plans for the waterside area of Northampton.

4. Securing Investment

4.1 The Corporation continues to secure vital public and private sector investment for the area. We will shortly receive confirmation of our capital investment budget for West Northamptonshire from central government. The settlement will span 3 years, reflecting the government's belief in the economic opportunity that this area presents.

4.2 Major investment is being secured through WNDC's approach to developer contributions to infrastructure. Since being established, WNDC has secured over £50million through

section 106 agreements related to planning permissions. It is collected as new developments progress and around £4m has been received to date. There is much more in the pipeline as new planning applications come forward.

4.3 The funding is transferred to relevant bodies, including the local authorities, so it can be invested in local infrastructure spanning transport, education, healthcare and community facilities. The Corporation has now signed a protocol with Northampton Borough Council, enabling funds to be transferred on an ongoing basis. This follows the signing of a similar agreement with Northamptonshire County Council last year.