



WNDC Board Report

Report by Chief Executive

Paper Reference: 2011-04-05-01

Agenda Item: 5

5 July 2011

Subject: Chief Executive's Report

Advice: That the Board **endorse** the progress WNDC is making in respect of the growth and regeneration of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.

1. Progress and Evolution

- 1.1 WNDC has finalised its Annual Report and Accounts for the financial year to 31 March 2011, and full details will be provided in the Head of Finance report. It provides an opportune moment to reflect upon our considerable achievements during 2010/11.
- 1.2 It has been a year of progress and evolution, not only for West Northamptonshire but for the Corporation itself, as we became an even more streamlined and highly focused organisation. In the past 12 months, we have reduced our running costs by 25%, while maintaining momentum on a portfolio of world class development projects. This includes the project management of award winning developments such as the iCon Environmental Innovation Centre, and the investment of over £13 million in the local economy. This activity has levered investment from other sources, including the European Union.
- 1.3 Together with the intelligent and pioneering use of our powers, as well as those of our partners, we are delivering over 1 million m² of high quality commercial floor space, which will create thousands of new jobs for local people.

2. New Enterprise and Innovation

- 2.1 Northampton has been successful in a competitive process to select the preferred location for an Enterprise Zone (EZ) in the South East Midlands. WNDC has been supporting Northampton Borough Council to try and establish an EZ covering the waterside area of the town. It would directly support the regeneration of Northampton, with key benefits including business rate relief for firms within the zone, simplified planning rules and tax allowances to make capital investment more attractive.
- 2.2 The Northampton proposal was one of 6 initial bids within the South East Midlands. Nevertheless, it was considered by the board of the South East Midlands Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) to be the most robust and credible proposal and was therefore selected as SEMLEP's preferred, exclusive bid. An application has now been made to central government, which will be assessed along with competitors from across the country, to become one of the UK's 21 new enterprise zones.

- 2.3 Work is progressing well on the creation of a 3D virtual model of Northampton and Daventry town centres. The model, which has been commissioned in partnership with the local authorities, will be a long term asset for the area and support a number of activities ranging from spatial planning to marketing.
- 2.4 In particular, the model will be used to help promote the area to prospective developers and investors in the UK and beyond. It will also serve as a sophisticated urban design tool that can assist the evaluation of development proposals and the assessment of different development scenarios. Other uses include bringing our plans for the area to life and providing an interactive platform for consultation exercises. Surveys of the towns, including aerial photography, have been undertaken and the model will be produced over the coming weeks. It is due to be completed by September.

3. Achieving Supporting vital infrastructure

- 3.1 WNDC has submitted a planning application for the construction of a new road which is key to the regeneration of Northampton's waterside area. The road will enable new development at the site of the former Avon cosmetics factory, the derelict Nunn Mills power station and the Ransome Road site.
- 3.2 It will be the latest in a series of infrastructure improvements to enable development on major brownfield sites, such as the £2.3 million London Road/Ransome Rd junction improvements which are currently underway
- 3.3 The regeneration of this area will transform a huge area of disused land into a prestigious location for commercial development, securing new jobs and investment, as well as a significant number of new homes in close proximity to the town centre. These plans are part of an exciting vision for the wider waterside area, building on the improvements that have already been made, such as the Becket's Park Marina.

4. Attracting recognition

- 4.1 The renovation of Bury Mount and the Water Meadows in Towcester town centre has won a high profile national award. The scheme, which was part-funded by WNDC and completed in April 2010, won the restoration category at the Museums & Heritage

Awards 2011. It overcame strong competition including a restoration project at Westminster Abbey.

- 4.2 This is the second award that has been won by the project, following its success in the British Association of Landscape Industries Awards last year. This is a reflection of the high quality of the scheme which, most importantly, is being used and enjoyed by the local community. It is a sign of improvements to come for Towcester, with the wider Moat Lane regeneration scheme set to bring new shops, offices and community facilities to the historic town centre.
- 4.3 Last month marked the official opening of the iCon Environmental Innovation Centre. The week of events, which were organised by WNDC in partnership with local community groups, included a range of concerts featuring local performers. The building also hosted a free exhibition with artworks created by young people from Daventry.
- 4.4 In addition, regular public tours were held throughout the week, enabling the community to see the building for themselves, learn about its innovative design features and discover how it will play a role in the future of Daventry's economy. This week of events will be followed by a high profile conference aimed at the business community. The 30 June event is focused on the future of the low carbon economy and will include leading speakers from the sector, including IBM and ProLogis.