



WNDC Board Report

Report by Chief Executive

Paper Reference: 2011-06-05-01

Agenda Item: 5

15 November 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. Attracting recognition

- 1.1 Construction projects led by WNDC have been attracting praise and recognition from industry experts. Two of our schemes have won East Midlands Constructing Excellence Awards, which celebrate innovation and best practice in the construction industry.
- 1.2 Daventry's new landmark, the iCon Innovation Centre won the award for environmental sustainability, due its cutting-edge design which minimises energy use. In addition, our ground-breaking Construction Futures training scheme won the award for skills and training.
- 1.3 Daventry has been selected as a location for a new University Technical College. WNDC has committed up to £300k towards the capital costs.

2. Transforming Northampton

- 2.1 The Corporation has continued to work in close partnership with the local authorities to regenerate Northampton. One of our key priorities is the redevelopment of the Grosvenor shopping centre, which is essential to support a modern, vibrant and prosperous town centre. To facilitate this development, the Board will be asked to approve the allocation of £8 million capital funding towards the relocation of bus services within the town centre.
- 2.2 This month, WNDC will be submitting a planning application for the Northampton Innovation Cube, a new office building that could support up to 60 small businesses. It is part of a planned 'station gateway' development, which will include new homes, offices and shops along the River Nene from the proposed Innovation Cube to the St Peter's Way gasholders.
- 2.3 The application follows news that a bid for Regional Growth Funding to support redevelopment of the station building has been unsuccessful. The Regional Growth Fund, which was more than three times oversubscribed, was largely awarded to projects in the North of England, where public sector job losses have had a particularly severe impact. WNDC is currently exploring a number of alternative funding options

for the new station. This includes private sector investment, as well as the Growing Places Fund, which was recently announced by Government.

3. Managing our transition

3.1 The transfer of WNDC's remaining planning powers to the local authorities is still on course to be completed by 1 April 2012, subject to parliamentary approval. The Corporation is working with its partners to ensure the majority of live planning applications are determined prior to planning powers being transferred. In partnership with the local authorities, we will deliver a gradual, seamless, and tightly controlled transition that minimises the impact on the local planning service.

4. Strategic support

4.1 Following the establishment of the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone, the Government has announced the creation of a Local Enterprise Partnership for the county.

4.2 The Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP) will attract investment to the area and coordinate a range of economic development activities. As such, it will help create the conditions for continued economic growth, and complement WNDC's key regeneration projects. NEP will, therefore, continue to be a key partner for WNDC in the months and years ahead.

5. Sharing best practice

5.1 In September, WNDC published its Interim Planning Obligations Strategy. Amongst other issues, it outlines our commitment to securing training and employment on new developments through the award winning Construction Futures training scheme. In this respect, our Planning Obligations Strategy is believed to be the first in the UK to have a formal connection with a training and apprenticeships provider.

5.2 Our approach could be mirrored by other planning authorities across the region, thus enabling them to secure new jobs and training opportunities for their communities. Over the next two months, the Construction Futures team is hosting a series of

seminars with planning authorities throughout the East Midlands, designed to generate awareness and interest in the Construction Futures approach.