



WNDC Board Report

Report by Chief Executive

Paper Reference: 2012-01-05-01

Agenda Item: 5

17 January 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. 2012 market expectations

- 1.1 Throughout the coming year, WNDC will continue to support the local authorities to promote and facilitate major development projects across West Northamptonshire. As always, the speed and scale of this development is largely influenced by the area's position in a fragile marketplace.
- 1.2 At both an international and UK level, property developers and institutional investors are understandably cautious. Market confidence has been significantly affected by the Eurozone debt crisis and the Government's austerity measures. Low occupier demand and barriers to accessing debt finance will continue to constrain commercial development across the UK in 2012. As a result, investors are prioritising prime, low-risk schemes that offer the most stable returns.
- 1.3 In this climate, we are powerfully positioning West Northamptonshire as an attractive investment opportunity. Working with our local authority partners, we are undertaking measures that present the area as a high-profile, low-risk proposition. This includes Northampton's Enterprise Zone status and our commitment to using Compulsory Purchase Powers to unlock the barriers to development.
- 1.4 Clearly, it is essential that we ensure West Northamptonshire has a competitive advantage in the marketplace, thereby supporting the delivery of new jobs, regeneration and investment. This is a strategy we will continue to advance throughout our final delivery phase.

2. Maintaining our momentum

- 2.1 As we start an important year in the regeneration of West Northamptonshire, the Corporation is well placed to maintain the momentum we have established on our key projects.
- 2.2 Crucially, the Government has confirmed the reappointment of our Chairman for a second and final term, which will run for the remainder of WNDC's life. John Markham's continued leadership and direction will be a vital asset to the area during the next two years.

- 2.3 Prior to the Christmas period, we were able to announce the achievement of a number of important milestones. These include the completion of vital junction improvements between Northampton's London Road and Ransome Road, which have enhanced capacity and safety at the junction. Most importantly they will support the future redevelopment of the adjacent Ransome Road, Avon and Nunn Mills development sites. It was just one of the encouraging announcements for that area, following the Board's decision to commence a Compulsory Purchase Order in our specially convened December meeting.
- 2.4 Daventry also finished the year on a positive note, as WNDC's planning committee approved an application for a major new industrial scheme in December. The 23,000 sq m development, which could create over 300 new jobs, will be on vacant land next to the Ford Parts Distribution Centre.