

## **Cabinet – 22 March 2006**

### **District Centres strategic regeneration framework**

<b>Portfolio:</b>	Councillor Adrian Andrew, Regeneration Councillor Melvin Pitt, Housing & community safety
<b>Service Area:</b>	Regeneration
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Yes

#### **Summary of report**

This report seeks Cabinet's approval for the District Centres' Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) and the transformational projects it proposes as a basis for consultation with residents and partners. The Regeneration Framework has been jointly commissioned with Walsall Housing Group (WHG) to:-

- provide a framework to guide the future sustainable regeneration of Walsall's District Centres,
- produce a strategic assessment of housing opportunities which support the regeneration of the borough's District Centres and to guide future housing investment
- identify priorities to provide strategic direction for the Walsall Helping Future Generations Company the company jointly established between the Council & WHG to administer the VAT shelter initiative,

The Regeneration Framework sets out to create a framework for planning, investment and the comprehensive regeneration of housing and district centres, through a commitment to stimulating investment, achieving excellence in design and working in partnership, as a means to create successful centres.

The Regeneration Framework is a 10-15 year view of development in Walsall, addressing the long term vision. It builds on and complements the statutory planning framework (the Unitary Development Plan and the future Local Development Framework), by focussing on projects and delivery and by helping to deliver sustainable social, economic and environmental regeneration.

The Regeneration Framework is not prescriptive but through the establishment of a number of clear principles for development, will act as a robust reference framework for 10-15 years in defining key investment decisions.

The Regeneration Framework does not cover Walsall Town Centre itself, which is addressed by the Walsall Regeneration Company Prospectus for Growth, but wraps round the town centre to provide comprehensive and integrated coverage of the Borough.

Copies of the Strategic Regeneration Framework Document will be placed in Group Rooms for information.

## **Recommendations**

That Cabinet:-

- (i) approve the District Centres' Regeneration Framework and the priority transformational projects detailed in the report as a basis for consultation with residents and partners.
- (ii) delegate authority for the adoption of the Strategic Regeneration Framework to the Executive Director Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Regeneration, following completion of the consultation period.
- (iii) request the outline 5 year Joint Investment Strategy be presented before Cabinet for approval following the consultation process.

## **Resource and legal considerations**

During early 2005, a consultancy team of BDP, King Sturges and EKOS were jointly appointed by WHG and the Council to develop the regeneration framework which was required to:-

- review existing strategies, master plans and research and provide a critical analysis of existing data,
- carry out an economic health check of the district centres, updating the work carried out by Healey and Baker for the Council in 2000, and to assess the physical opportunities and challenges to improving the range of housing choices and increase and diversify the local population.
- identify property ownerships and to identify options for land assembly that will facilitate regeneration activity,
- produce redevelopment proposals for housing, and other uses that will support the local infrastructure, e.g. ideas on high quality strategic environmental improvements, local commercial/employment opportunities, and required community facilities,
- review the provision of social rented housing, and in particular elderly provision.

- review WHG housing investment decisions and assist in their option appraisal process that will identify areas at risk,
- develop and agree early win sites/opportunities and illustrate the range of innovative delivery and funding models that could be utilised,
- identify opportunities to develop the WHG Skills Centre with partners and regeneration agencies,
- prepare a regeneration framework which will set out the priorities for investment over a 10 year period, specifically relating to the VAT shelter fund,
- ensure that the SRF proposals closely link with the Local Area Agreement outcomes for the economic and environmental regeneration of the borough,
- identify examples of best practice

In summary, the SRF has identified that the borough's district centres are important service "hubs" for the local communities they serve and should be treated as a priority for the regeneration of borough. All district centres have been assessed and areas of investment need and environmental problems and opportunities identified.

The Regeneration Framework identifies approximately 70 projects for implementation through. These cover all districts and include the following types of intervention:-

- a. District and local centre expansion and remodelling
- b. Improved neighbourhood management and services
- c. Redevelopment of whg housing sites / Walsall MBC sites
- d. Brownfield site regeneration
- e. Public realm and environmental improvement programmes
- f. Training, education and community projects

It is expected that the projects will be reviewed annually to determine priorities and actions, but also to allow new projects to be introduced as they emerge through consultation with partners and the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships. An element of community governance is required here to ensure that the ongoing programme reflects and responds to community objectives.

10 transformational projects are identified within the Regeneration Framework. These projects are expected to become exemplars for regeneration and also to deliver early and visible impacts, which will be considered as priorities within the draft Investment Strategy for the "Walsall Helping Future Generations" Company (WHELP), which was established to administer the windfall which arose as a result of the VAT arrangements entered into prior to the transfer of the Council's housing stock to WHG. WHELP will be seeking to invest its funds in supporting key regeneration projects across Walsall. The company's Board is made up from representatives from Walsall Council, WHG and a number of independent members.

The transformational projects identified include:-

- a. An integrated housing and town centre masterplan for Brownhills
- b. The promotion of a mixed use urban village development encompassing Willenhall district centre,
- c. Using public sector investment in services, public realm and housing as a catalyst for the regeneration of Darlaston district centre,
- d. Comprehensive redevelopment of the Goscote Lane corridor in Bloxwich, including Shakespeare Crescent and other brownfield land along Goscote Lane,
- e. Comprehensive redevelopment of the area incorporating the Old Pleck Road multi-storey flats to meet the new housing needs and create a new gateway to Walsall Town Centre and contributing to the regeneration of the A461 corridor,
- f. Increased owner occupation through both affordable home ownership and aspirational housing to attract and retain higher earners, focusing on key sites and locations across the borough,
- g. The redevelopment of sites in Moxley (Harrowby Road, Hughes Road and Moxley Tip) for high quality new residential provision,
- h. Improving the public realm and conservation areas in Aldridge district centre, whilst encouraging targeted redevelopment within the shopping centre,
- i. The regeneration of Bentley local centre, focusing on the creation of a new urban heart for the community created by the provision of a new multi-agency local access centre. This will incorporate a new library.
- j) further developing the environmental quality in Bloxwich District Centre, capitalising on the conservation value of the centre.

The other projects identified will be developed as appropriate resources become available be considered for implementation.

### **Citizen impact**

The regeneration of Walsall's district centres is a major regeneration priority for the Council and Walsall's communities.

### **Community safety**

The creation of safe and attractive local shopping facilities is a key priority for Framework study. The incorporation of secured by design principles in future developments and public realm work is a key recommendation of the Framework.

## **Environmental impact**

The Regeneration Framework:-

1. sets the scene for the transformation of local neighbourhoods by preparing an integrated regeneration framework for the key housing areas and the district centres;
2. provides a detailed strategy and action plan for Walsall's 5 district centres and the surrounding housing areas.
3. sets out the priorities for investment in a 10-15 year partnership delivery plan.
4. provides a bidding tool which can support range of funding agencies and to inform investment proposals with registered social landlords and other housing providers in the Borough.

## **Performance and risk management issues:**

### **(i) Performance Management Issues**

The delivery of a District Centre regeneration plans is a Vision Pledge for 2005/2006 and a priority for the Regeneration Directorate.

### **(ii) Risk Management Issues:-**

#### **Risk 1 – *Failure to obtain support for the initiative -***

This is considered to be a low risk in view of the level of community consultation and partner engagement undertaken during the development of the Framework.

#### **Risk 2 – *Failure to attract sufficient resources to fund priorities.***

This risk is considered to be low on the basis that the Regeneration Framework provides the basis of a coherent resourcing strategy for regeneration of Walsall's District Centres and clearly articulates the Council's and its partners ambitions in regenerating these areas of Walsall. The Framework provides the Council and its partners with a robust "bidding tool" when approaching investors and external funding partners for support.

In conjunction with the Regeneration Framework, a joint outline 5 year investment Strategy has been developed between the Council and WHG to guide the delivery of the priority projects identified within the Regeneration Framework and this will be presented back to Cabinet for approval following the consultation process. This will be used to inform the draft Investment Strategy for the "Walsall Helping Future Generations" Company.

The regeneration of the Borough's district centres is seen as a key priority by the Council and resources have been allocated through the approved 2006-2011 Capital Programme to improve the environment and conservation areas within district centres.

In addition, the approved Local Area Agreement for Walsall identifies the regeneration of the district centres as a key priority for the economic regeneration of the Borough.

### **Risk 3 – Failure to adequately resource adequate maintenance of improvements –**

This risk is considered low/medium on the basis that all projects will be implemented via a project team which will include representation from appropriate partners. The project team will be responsible for ensuring that projects are designed to be low maintenance and vandal resistant and to ensure that medium financial plans are in place to ensure that sufficient funding is in place when contract maintenance has expired.

### **Equality implications**

The improvement of the borough's District Centres will build upon the themes which reflect Walsall's diverse cultural heritage and which link people in celebration of Walsall's past and future irrespective of culture, race and ethnicity.

### **Consultation**

An initial information briefing on the programme and anticipated outcomes was made to Local Neighbourhood Partnerships Chairs' Forum on 22 March 2005. This was well received and partners were keen to become involved during later stages of the process.

Information on the commission has also been presented previously to Executive Management Team, Walsall Regeneration Company and Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership.

Two "Visioning Events" were held in late April 2005 with key partners. All Councillors and LNP members were invited to these events. These events helped to develop a shared vision for the district centres and informed early identification of issues and aspirations for the district centres.

In addition to the above, a further two community events were held during late Summer 2005 at Bescot Stadium, during which community representatives, partners and Members had the opportunity to review draft options and initial proposals for the regeneration of the district centres.

A detailed Communications Plan, encompassing all projects within the draft investment programme will be developed and agreed by the "Walsall – Helping Generations" Company Board. Local information sessions on the SRF will be held over the summer in the district centres.

## **Vision 2008**

The preparation of district centre regeneration strategies for all Walsall's District Centres is a Vision pledge for 2005/2006.

## **Background papers**

All published

## **Contact officer**

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