

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting:	20th January 2010
Report of:	Caroline Simpson, Head of Regeneration
Subject/Title:	Crewe Vision

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report informs members about the progress made by economic consultants SQW in the development of a vision and high level master plan for Crewe. Key findings and strategic priorities are also summarised. SQW will make a verbal report to committee and this is an opportunity for members to input into the development of the Vision.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the progress to date is noted and the findings of SQW's Stage 1 Report and presentation are endorsed.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Approval was given at Cabinet on 14th July for Cheshire East to lead the development of a high level vision for Crewe. SQW are now more than half way through their work and it is appropriate to review and endorse their findings and direction of travel.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Crewe North; Crewe South; Crewe East; Crewe West; Rope; Doddington; Nantwich.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Local ward members have been involved through briefing meetings, attendance at stakeholder events and through LAP meetings.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 Crewe is a spatial priority for Cheshire East Council. Although the town has witnessed both employment and population growth, it has failed to increase its relative economic value. Crewe is recognised in the 2006 Regional Economic Strategy as 'a significant town with economic potential'. Crewe's South East Quadrant represents a significant

opportunity for economic growth. There have been many successes to date but a number of projects and studies that have thus far failed to deliver. Progress with the Town Centre redevelopment has stalled due to the current economic climate but is still a major regeneration opportunity which can help deliver major image uplift.

- 6.2 The Crewe Vision project will build upon the existing studies and, through comprehensive stakeholder engagement, deliver a new vision for Crewe that has strong support from all sectors. The outcome of this work will feed directly into a range of local, sub-regional, regional and potentially national policy. The timescales have been set to maximise the opportunity to influence regional policy development through the Single Regional Strategy RS2010 and the Department for Transport funding allocation process. The vision will be translated into planning policy through the Local Development Framework (LDF) following a process of formal public consultation.

7.0 Risk Management

- 7.1 There are minimal risks associated with Cheshire East leading this piece of work as all stakeholders fully endorsed the need for the new Council to show leadership. SQW and Cheshire East staff have included as wide a range of Stakeholders as possible in the process – local businesses, landowners and agents, community groups, voluntary and educational sectors, trade unions, Crewe and Nantwich LAPS.
- 7.2 SQW was procured through an existing NWDA panel which was established in accordance with EEC procurement regulations. The contract was let and has been managed in accordance with NWDA's standard terms and conditions of contract for services.
- 7.3 The consultancy project has been supervised by staff with appropriate contract and project management skills, working with a steering group drawn from CE Places Directorate staff, Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance and the North West Development Agency.

8.0 Project Progress

- 8.1 SQW was appointed by letter on 25th August 2009 following the procurement process described above. There were some delays to the original programme due to an extended scoping and initial consultation process. The full scoping report was submitted to the steering group on 16th October 2009. Work is now progressing at a rapid pace and is on course to be completed before the end of March 2010.
- 8.2 SQW is undertaking the project in three phases. The first is now complete and consisted of information gathering, interviews and consultation with stakeholders. The collected data and information has been analysed and presented in the Stage 1 Report (summarised in sections 9.0 and 10.0).

- 8.3 The second phase consists of the development of the Strategic Framework. This work is nearly complete and an update will be presented by SQW during the meeting.
- 8.4 In the third phase of work SQW will work with members and stakeholders to develop an Action Plan through which the Strategic Vision can be implemented. The Action Plan will provide high level detail of projects, delivery mechanisms and it will propose governance arrangements for the project. The project will be completed by 31st March 2010.

9.0 Summary of Stage One Findings

- 9.1 Economic Indicators - Crewe is a major economic driver for Cheshire East. It is a largely self contained economy, but generally it underperforms and lags behind the UK. Growth is likely to occur, but largely without creating additional jobs due to the balance between growing, adjusting and shrinking sectors. Its two major employers are within the automotive and health sectors, Crewe's future is positive, but potentially fragile.
- 9.2 Strategic and Local Transport Assets - It is important that Crewe creates a vibrant and competitive town centre with attractive and efficient transport gateways (road and rail). Successful development of strategic employment land at Basford is vital to the development of Crewe's economy as is a property portfolio that drives new business start ups in the knowledge economy. Housing development must be strategically planned so that new development is properly integrated with supporting community facilities.
- 9.3 Transport - There is a need to reduce road congestion in and around Crewe by a mixture of infrastructure projects, traffic management and a shift in modes of transport. Mobility must be future proofed for a low carbon economy, growing population and increased employment. The benefits from being a rail hub should be maximised and Crewe's status as rail and road gateway should be enhanced.
- 9.4 Skills and Employment - There is a need to improve the skills and productivity of Crewe's workforce, with immediate action required to prevent unemployment from becoming entrenched and to raise attainment within secondary education. It is important to target employment growth for Crewe residents, but skills must be matched to needs and growth in high value businesses. The Manchester Metropolitan University campus, South Cheshire College, the proposed Rail Academy and adjacent Keele University and Reaseheath College provide a strong resource that should be maximised.
- 9.5 Enterprise Competitiveness and Knowledge Economy - The attractiveness of Crewe for businesses arises from its transport connectivity, but this requires strengthening, also weaknesses in the town centre, public realm, image, cultural offer, skills and office

accommodation must be addressed. Bentley is very important to the town's economy, the emerging ICT sector should be supported (including next generation broadband roll out) and Crewe as a location for business should be actively marketed.

- 9.6 Communities and Neighbourhoods - There is a concentration of deprivation and health related issues within 7 of Crewe's wards, but this is masked within overall figures for Crewe. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) is high across Crewe. Some of the Borough's most affordable housing is within Crewe, but this could be due to both low demand and housing stock in a poor condition. Crewe's quality of place is poor and physical redevelopment could make a real difference to the town's image.

10.0 Strategic Priorities Identified by SQW:

- Exploiting and maximising accessibility into and around Crewe
- Unlocking the existing development opportunities
- Growing the knowledge economy and increasing innovation
- Maximising linkages and synergies with surrounding urban areas and London
- Supporting and enabling diversification of Crewe's economy and business base
- Transforming Crewe's image through a new USP/brand and physical regeneration
- Creating an excellent place to live by raising the quality of public services and voluntary sector provision
- Raising the standard of secondary education and increasing employment training
- Ensuring that Broadband and ICT services are developed
- Broadening access to opportunities for disadvantaged communities
- Embracing the low carbon agenda and ensuring the highest standards of sustainability
- Providing strong leadership and engendering ambition at all levels within Crewe

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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