

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Report to Portfolio Holder for Regeneration & Assets

**Date of Meeting:** 15 December 2015

**Report of:** Caroline Simpson  
Executive Director for Economic Growth & Prosperity

**Subject/Title:** Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Framework for Growth

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Don Stockton, Regeneration & Assets

### 1. Report Summary

- 1.1 Crewe town centre is at a pivotal point in terms of its potential to attract new investment, increase footfall from residents and visitors, and instil greater civic pride. A revival is already underway, instigated in part by the Council's commitment to the new £15m Lifestyle Centre and the approval of a University Technical College (UTC) for Crewe, as well as wider investments in strategic infrastructure, such as the new roads connecting the town to the A500/M6, and the prospect of major investment in a new HS2 North-West Hub at Crewe. In September, the Council gave approval for officers to commence the procurement process to select a development partner to deliver a leisure-led, mixed use redevelopment scheme on the Royal Arcade site in Crewe town centre, which it acquired earlier this year.
- 1.2 In April, Cabinet approved a new Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Framework for Growth (*Regeneration Delivery Framework*) which sets out an ambitious blueprint for the future of the town centre through development that would bring in millions of pounds of new investment. As well as physical development of key sites, it recognises the need to tighten planning policy so that the town centre is in a much stronger position to compete against out-of-centre locations and help prevent leakage of retail and leisure investment and footfall.
- 1.3 An invitation for local residents and businesses to give voice to their opinions on this landmark report, as part of its first 'Your Town, Your Choice' consultation, resulted in a very positive response with record levels of interest, reflecting a shared ambition for growth and investment in Crewe.
- 1.4 This report considers the findings of the consultation recently undertaken by the Council, and proposes that the Portfolio Holder agrees to revisions to the draft *Regeneration Delivery Framework*, to take account of comments made during the consultation.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration & Assets:
  - i) considers the findings of the responses to the 'Crewe: Your Town – Your Choice' consultation and agrees to proposed revisions to the draft 'Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Framework for Growth' report, to take account of comments made during the consultation.

- ii) endorses the planning policy position relating to the town centre, that was previously agreed at Cabinet and remains substantially unchanged, which supports the strengthening of Crewe town centre in terms of its boundary and the range of uses within it, to ensure it can be more competitive against out-of-centre developments, with consolidation of the town centre's retail and leisure core
- iii) approves the publication of the 'Overview of Findings' report to be shared with third parties including local stakeholders and media
- iii) supports the sharing of this report to other Council services, to help ensure 'joined-up' planning and decision-making.

### **3. Other Options Considered**

- 3.1 This report requires approval by the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration & Assets as it relates to the adoption of a formal document and policy, previously endorsed in draft by Cabinet, which will influence the Council's regeneration plans and planning policy for Crewe town centre.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 The Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Framework for Growth sets out a compelling vision for a revitalised Crewe town centre in the immediate future in preparation for the opportunities that may emerge from HS2. It goes on to identify both current constraints and the significant opportunities to regenerate key parts of Crewe town centre, leading to its strengthening overall. Whilst the retail sector is experiencing significant change nationally and globally, the Crewe town centre core is assessed as having great potential as a destination which is not being harnessed currently, and has even more significant potential when consideration is given to the longer-term prospects offered through securing Crewe as HS2's North-West Gateway and the creation of a rapid transit link between a new station and the town centre. The Framework will play a key role in helping to support the Council in leading the regeneration of the town centre.
- 4.2 From a planning perspective, the Framework identifies that the primary objective must be to protect the town centre from uses within it, and in the wider area, that will undermine its vitality and viability as a town centre. As such the emerging policy framework which supports promoting a 'Town Centre First' approach is critical, and this will help to prevent further leakage of retail and leisure investment and footfall from the town centre. This proposed approach is in conformity with Government guidance and the Council's saved and emerging Local Plan policies

### **5. Background /Chronology**

- 5.1 At its April 21st meeting, Cabinet agreed to endorse the draft *Regeneration Delivery Framework*, and to consult on this prior to formal approval by Cabinet. Further information on this is provided below.

#### ***Consultation***

- 5.2 As part of its delivery plan for the Royal Arcade as well as the development of the Regeneration Delivery Framework, during July 2015, the Council commenced a pilot 'Your Town – Your Choice' consultation with local residents and businesses. The consultation covered a wide range of town centre issues, including the draft

Regeneration Delivery Framework. The consultation included an in-depth questionnaire, a shorter survey, six consultation events/meetings, and was supported by publicity and coverage from the Crewe Chronicle (and associated group papers) as the media partner as well as social media activity. An initial analysis of the 1,167 survey responses received (excluding 13 late responses) and the comments by members of the public and key stakeholders at the consultation events. This is summarised in Appendix A.

5.3 The responses from the survey and events broadly endorse the Council's approach:

- 94% support plans for more investment and regeneration in Crewe town centre
- 79% agree with the proposed Vision.
- In terms of the Framework's Objectives, by far the strongest response related to its primary objective, Objective 1: *investment in the town centre by bringing vacant sites back into use, intensifying the use of underperforming sites and utilising Cheshire East Council's assets*
- the majority of responses supported the six key statements relating to the Council's planning policy approach for the Town Centre.

## 6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

6.1 All Crewe wards and all Crewe Local Members.

## 7. Implications of Recommendations

### ***Policy Implications***

7.1 The proposal in this report relates directly to four key outcomes identified in the Council's Three Year Plan:

**Outcome 2: Cheshire East has a strong and resilient economy.** Cheshire East is known as a good place to do business – we attract inward investment, there is access to a high quality workforce and our businesses and visitor economy grow, to create prosperity for all.

**Outcome 4: Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place.** Cheshire East's rural and urban character is protected and enhanced through sensitive development, environmental management, transport and waste disposal policies.

**Outcome 5: People live well and for longer.** Local people have healthy lifestyles and access to good cultural, leisure and recreational facilities. Care services focus on prevention, early intervention and physical and mental wellbeing.

7.2 This report aligns strongly to the Council's Economic Development Strategy and its more recently created Vision and Strategy for Economic Growth: East Cheshire Engine of the North, which articulates the need to increase investment in our town centres, by ensuring they offer themselves as attractive locations for retail and leisure operators.

7.3 As part of the Council's All Change for Crewe regeneration programme, there is previous work that has laid the way for this report. This includes:

*Prospectus for Crewe:* Sets out the Council's development priorities for the town centre, based on five key zones, and three development areas under the Council's influence.

This served to garner interest from the development community and instigate dialogue which has helped to inform this report.

*All Change for Crewe - High Growth City*: Reflects recent progress in the wider Crewe area, including Bentley's expansion, plans for geothermal energy and investment secured to enhance connectivity through road and rail.

#### ***Legal Implications (to be authorised by the Head of Legal Services)***

- 7.5 The Localism Act 2011 introduced the General Power of Competence, which allows the Council do anything an individual can do, provided it is not prohibited by other legislation. These powers have replaced the previous wellbeing powers, however, the use of these powers must be in support of a reasonable and accountable decision made in line with public law principles.

#### ***Equality Implications***

- 7.6 There are no immediate equality implications in terms of the recommendations of this report, but detailed analysis of the consultation will provide additional intelligence in relation to the use of the town centre by different groups (e.g. by age group)

#### ***Rural Community Implications***

- 7.7 The regeneration of Crewe town centre promotes the economic prosperity of Crewe. This has a direct relationship with residents and businesses across the wider South Cheshire area, including rural communities that shop, visit or work in Crewe.

#### ***Human Resources Implications***

- 7.8 None

#### ***Public Health Implications***

- 7.9 None

#### ***Financial implications (to be approved)***

- 7.10 The *Regeneration Delivery Framework* identifies a number of development opportunities, but these do not represent a formal position on the Council's part and do not require a financial commitment at this stage.
- 7.11 It should be noted that 'Crewe Town Centre Regeneration' is a named scheme within the 2015/18 Capital Programme approved by Council in February 2015. This budget was used to acquire the Royal Arcade site. Any further proposals – which may include, but not be limited to those identified in the *Regeneration Delivery Framework* - will be considered for funding from this budget at the appropriate time.

### **8. Risk Management**

- 8.1 There are no significant implications associated with the report's recommendations at this stage.

## **9. Access to Information / Bibliography**

Appendix A: 'Your Town – Your Choice': Crewe town centre consultation – Overview of findings.

Appendix B: Proposed revised *Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Framework for Growth*.

## **10. Contact Information**

10.1 Contact details for this report are as follows:

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