

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 24 MARCH 2015**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE)**

SUBJECT: **VIBRANT AND VIABLE PLACES**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update members on the progress made in delivering the Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP) programme in Deeside.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The VVP programme was launched by Welsh Government in May 2013. The aims of the programme are:

- To revitalise and promote the sustainable development of town centres, coastal communities and Communities First clusters, making the most of their green infrastructure, heritage and historic character;
- To build sustainable and vibrant communities that are more prosperous, better educated and healthier;
- To tackle poverty by creating jobs, encouraging skills development and helping people into work;
- To encourage wider investment in housing; and
- To deliver strategic, regionally important projects of significant scale.

2.02 Cabinet approved the submission of a bid to the programme on 16 July 2013. The final bid was submitted in November 2013 on behalf of the Deeside Partnership for a package of projects that will contribute to the wider regeneration of Deeside.

2.03 The VVP programme is currently approved for the 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2016/17 financial years.

2.04 Whilst projects within the programme are able to span more than one year the funding allocation in each year cannot be moved from one year to the next. The programme is, in addition, a purely capital programme with no support for revenue costs.

2.05 Flintshire was allocated £6.024m by Welsh Government for the three

years of the programme. A financial breakdown is provided in Appendix 1. The approval was formally granted in July 2014 which has curtailed the period for project delivery in the first year.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 Deeside is a major economic hub for North Wales and the development of the Deeside Enterprise Zone, which will bring up to 7,000 new jobs, will further strengthen this role. However, Deeside also experiences considerable levels of deprivation, in particular in the areas covered by the Communities First programme. The challenge for the regeneration process is to harness the economic growth to, wherever possible, improve economic opportunities and quality of life.
- 3.02 The VVP programme includes projects to:
- improve the energy efficiency of public sector housing;
 - improve the quality of private sector housing to raise quality of life and encourage people to live in Deeside;
 - encourage the development of residential units over retail premises to improve business viability and increase town centre vibrancy;
 - develop small housing projects on hard-to-develop sites and improve the appearance of poor quality stalled sites;
 - encourage private sector investment in regenerating Deeside;
 - improve the appearance of the town centre public realm and encourage the improvement of shop fronts;
 - provide opportunities for unemployed people to gain skills and work experience; and
 - investigate the feasibility of increasing Wi-Fi access in Deeside town centres.
- 3.03 The programme is overseen by two governance structures. The Deeside Partnership comprises representatives from the main delivery bodies for regeneration in Deeside including the Council, registered social landlords, Deeside Enterprise Zone and the voluntary sector. Welsh Government attend the Deeside Partnership meetings in an advisory capacity. The Deeside Forum includes all Council ward members and representatives from the town and community councils in Deeside. Both structures are scheduled quarterly to review the progress of the programme.
- 3.04 The current progress towards delivering the projects in the VVP programme is set out in Appendix 2. Overall, despite the late start to the programme, the majority of the projects have mobilised effectively and are now delivering in accordance with their planned actions.

In particular:

- WHQS+ - the project has been delivered as planned, installing energy efficiency measures to Council properties.

- Promoting Deeside as a Place to Live and Work – the project has supported the installation of energy efficiency measures to private properties and has overachieved against its original targets. A programme of environmental improvements in Garden City has been tendered and this will be delivered in year two.
- Living Above the Shops – the project has supported the conversion of vacant space above shops into new residential units and has achieved its target for this year of three units.
- Stalled sites – this involves the acquisition of The Old Dairy in Connah's Quay which is due to complete this year.
- Bringing Vibrancy Back to the High Street – the original intention was to purchase two vacant shops units and run them as business start-up projects, or social enterprises. However, the Council has not yet secured a delivery agent to manage the shops. The alternative option was that VVP would fund the demolition of the Council buildings in Connah's Quay, however, the demolition has been delayed until the end of May 2015.
- Improving the Appearance of Deeside – the project had a number of themes including provision of work opportunities through the Groundwork North Wales Green Team which has had a very successful first year. Other elements of the project, including preparation of the Deeside Plan and environmental improvement projects have been slower to mobilise.
- The Town Centre WiFi project has been delayed in the commissioning phase and will now take place in year two.

3.05 Welsh Government has allowed enough flexibility within the programme to allow the Council to move funding between projects to enable the full funding allocation for this year to be drawn down.

3.06 The outputs achieved to date by the programme are shown in Appendix 2.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That the progress in delivering the Vibrant and Viable Places programme is noted.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 The programme is largely funded through the Welsh Government VVP funding. Match funding for the programme is drawn from a mixture of Council and external funding sources.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 The VVP programme benefits the most deprived areas of the County and will have an impact which will extend beyond Deeside.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 Environmental enhancement is a key outcome of this programme; the Council is expected to see significant benefits for the most environmentally stressed part of the County.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The programme is targeted at some of the most deprived communities in Flintshire and will help tackle economic, social and environmental issues.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 Consultation will be undertaken with groups affected by the work of the programme. There will be ongoing dialogue with the Deeside Forum and Deeside Partnership.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Consultation has been undertaken with the Deeside Partnership and Deeside Forum.

12.00 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - VVP project finance summary
Appendix 2 - VVP project progress summary

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

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