

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 4 th November 2015
Report Subject	Delivery and Outcomes of recent Regeneration Programmes
Report Author	Chief Officer, Community and Enterprise

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the strategy for regeneration in Flintshire and a brief summary of the main regeneration programmes and projects that have been delivered in Flintshire since 2010. The report sets out the current and anticipated changes to the main regeneration programmes and the future direction of travel for regeneration activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny Committee is reassured that the Council is maximising opportunities for regeneration in Flintshire and notes the outcomes of recent programmes and is supportive of the future priorities identified in this report.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING DELIVERY AND OUTCOMES OF RECENT REGENERATION PROGRAMMES
1.01	Overall, the economy of Flintshire is one of the most buoyant in Wales, acting as a driver for the economies of North Wales and North West England. However, this vibrancy masks a number of regeneration challenges, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pockets of deprivation where the benefits of the economy are not being fully shared and where there are higher levels of

	<p>unemployment and ill health and lower skill levels;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • town centres struggling to adapt to a changing national trend in consumer behaviour; • some urban areas with a poor physical environment; • areas of poor quality private sector housing; <p>These are not only issues in their own right; if unresolved, they also undermine the competitiveness of the County and the quality of life for residents.</p>
1.02	<p>The Flintshire Regeneration Strategy, published in 2009, set out a vision for regeneration in the County until 2020 based on three strategic objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To develop a sustainable, world class, modern economy, based on business enterprise and a highly motivated, well trained workforce supported by modern technology, which maximises the County's physical and human assets. 2. Strengthen the rural economy through encouraging diversification and revitalise towns by developing them as successful local centres, each with their own distinctive character which complement each other and the wider retail offer across the County and neighbouring Counties. 3. Develop a range of initiatives aimed at local people who are suffering poverty, disadvantage and hardship. The most deprived communities will be helped to give them an equal opportunity of benefiting from the future economic success of Flintshire. <p>The programmes of work summarised in this report were developed in response to the priorities of the Strategy.</p>
1.03	<p>The housing renewal programme is not covered in this report as it has been reported to the Committee previously. However, the programme forms an integral part of the approach to regeneration by encouraging investment, improving the appearance of target areas and improving the housing stock; bringing environment, social and economic benefits.</p>
1.04	<p>Similarly, the approach to business development is omitted from this report as it is covered in a separate report on the economy in Flintshire.</p>
1.05	<p><u>Town centre regeneration</u></p> <p>Smaller town centres across the UK have declined over recent decades due to shifting customer preferences towards supermarkets, out-of-town retail parks and internet shopping. This has been exacerbated during the economic slowdown by the closure of a number of major High Street retailers such as Woolworths. The Council undertook a comprehensive health check review of the main town centres in the County in 2008. The review identified that all town centres were, in different ways, experiencing decline and needing support.</p>
1.06	<p>The Town Action Plan programme, approved by the then Executive in 2009, set out to develop long term plans to support each town centre working closely with local stakeholders. The main strands of activity in the programme have been:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. improving the image and appearance of the town centres; 2. encouraging investment; and 3. attracting customers. <p>The projects completed, underway or under development against each of these is shown in Appendix 1.</p>
1.07	<p>The need for physical investment identified in many of the long term town centre plans led the Council to develop a bid to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme to secure new resources for the area.</p> <p>The bid was submitted in 2011 and £4m was approved in 2012 for projects in Flintshire and Wrexham. There were two programmes of work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Streetscape improvements across the town centres to improve their appearance to customers. 2. Grant aid of up to £80,000 or 80% to encourage businesses to bring vacant High Street properties back into active employment use. Nine properties were brought into use through the project. <p>The programme of works was part-funded from the Council's capital programme. The project concluded in June 2015.</p>
1.08	<p>The funding programmes for regeneration change continuously and the current position for the main programmes is:</p> <p><u>European programmes</u></p> <p>The 2007-15 European funding programmes have largely ended. The first projects are now being approved across Wales under the 2015-2020 programmes. The new programmes will continue to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • research, development and business innovation; • renewable energy; • supporting people into employment and raising skill levels; <p>In addition to national projects developed by Welsh Government and national voluntary bodies, regional projects are under development through the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) which also seeks to co-ordinate project development to ensure it meets regional needs. The type of regeneration projects funded through the previous programme are not eligible for support under the new priorities.</p>
1.09	<p><u>Vibrant and Viable Places</u></p> <p>The Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP) programme is the flagship Welsh Government regeneration programme providing capital investment to transform settlements. The programme was launched in May 2013 and included a two-stage competitive application process open to local authorities across Wales. Flintshire County Council was one of eleven successful authorities in this process and was awarded £6.024M in July 2014 towards the Deeside regeneration programme.</p>
1.10	<p>Deeside was identified by the then Executive Committee in March 2011 as a strategic priority for regeneration. Cabinet approved the inclusion of Deeside in the VVP proposal on 16 July 2013. The VVP proposal centred</p>

	<p>around linking the economic opportunities emerging from the Deeside Enterprise Zone to the areas of need and in particular to regenerating deprived communities, areas of poor quality housing and areas with a poor physical environment.</p>
1.11	<p>The current programme spans the 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 financial years.</p> <p>The main programmes of work in the 2014/2017 period are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of energy efficiency improvements to 494 Council homes. • Private sector housing improvements to 150 properties. • Grants schemes to improve shop front and convert upper floors to 24 residential units. • Environmental improvements. • Purchase of vacant and derelict sites for regeneration and housing. • Work experience programme for 130 unemployed people.
1.12	<p>The process to develop the 2017/2020 programme and the priorities for funding have not yet been released by the Welsh Government. However, early indications from Welsh Government officials indicate a similar process and largely unchanged priorities can be expected. It is anticipated that that all local authorities will be invited to submit proposals shortly after Christmas 2015.</p>
1.13	<p><u>Rural Development Programme (RDP)</u></p> <p>The Rural Development Programme for the period 2007-2015 was managed by the Council on behalf of the Welsh Government. The Council co-ordinated the rural partnership and ensured that delivery partners met the complex administrative requirements of the programme and that the benefits of the programme were maximised.</p>
1.14	<p>In addition, the Council secured funding from the programme to support regeneration in the County. £744,763.95 of funding was secured in 2012 for a programme of works including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support for streetscape improvements in Mold and Holywell town centres. 2. A grant scheme to improve the appearance of High Street properties in Mold and Holywell. Up to 50% or £10,000 was offered and 6 properties were improved. 3. A programme of parking improvements, signage and public art in Talacre and Gronant to improve the appeal and function of the destination.
1.15	<p>The Rural Development Plan 2007-2015 programme has also come to an end and the new programme is under development by Welsh Government for the period 2015-2020. There are two elements of particular relevance to regeneration:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LEADER – the programme is managed locally through Cadwyn Clwyd, the rural development agency, and steering by a multi-sector partnership. The programme will develop new approaches to rural service delivery and enterprise development.

	<p>2. Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF) – this programme provides capital funding to community projects through direct competitive bids to Welsh Government.</p> <p>The Council is working with partners to identify and develop suitable projects for both funding streams.</p>
1.16	<p><u>Communities First</u></p> <p>The Communities First programme is the Welsh Government’s flagship programme to tackle poverty in Wales. The programme was originally launched in 2001 and went through a major overhaul in 2012. This saw the development of the current structure in Flintshire; two delivery areas based on clusters of deprived communities in Holywell, Flint and Mold in the West and Shotton and Connah’s Quay in the East.</p>
1.17	<p>The Communities First programme is based on three themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prosperous Communities – in particular helping people to re-engage with the labour market. 2. Healthy Communities – encouraging the adoption of healthy lifestyles. 3. Learning Communities – encouraging people to re-engage with learning activity and undertake entry-level qualifications. <p>Each cluster is able to develop a programme of activities based around these themes that meets local needs. Clusters are required to develop a plan for engaging and consulting their local communities to ensure the programme meets local needs. A team of staff is employed in each area to deliver the programme.</p>
1.18	<p>Examples of Communities First programme activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Entrepreneurship Network – provides mentoring, learning and networking opportunities to potential entrepreneurs. To date, 87 members have joined the network and 27 businesses have been established. • Jobs Clubs are run weekly from a number of Communities First locations to provide informal support to jobseekers in a community setting. • Jobs Fairs are run periodically to enable jobseekers to engage with employers. The last Jobs Fair, in April 2015, was attended by 793 people of whom an estimated 157 gained employment. • Communities First has established a new social enterprise, West Flintshire Community Enterprise, to deliver training and enterprise activity. The enterprise has developed a retail outlet on Holywell High Street to showcase the work of 40 local craft producers and provide work experience.
1.19	<p>In 2014 Flintshire was selected by Welsh Government as a pilot area for the LIFT programme. The programme provides one to one mentoring support, training and work experience to enable unemployed people to overcome barriers to learning and employment. The programme has been in operation for just over a year and to date 90 people have been engaged and 12 supported into employment or learning.</p>

1.20	The Communities First programme is funded until 31 March 2016. It is anticipated that new bids for funding will need to be submitted for funding but, as yet, the timescales, priorities and levels of funding have not been released by Welsh Government. The LIFT programme will continue until at least 2017 and Welsh Government has released a new programme to engage with unemployed people, delivered in the Communities First areas, called Communities4 Work (C4W) will be start in Flintshire in 2016.
1.21	<p>The key future priorities and challenges for regeneration in Flintshire are considered to be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refresh the overarching strategy for regeneration in Flintshire; • develop a co-ordinated strategy for the regeneration of Deeside to maximise the benefits arising from the economic growth in the area; • maximise the value of the current VVP programme and develop a competitive proposal to Welsh Government for the next round; • refresh the approach to supporting town centres to reflect the continuing challenges they face; • take advantage of the recent service restructure to more closely integrate the different regeneration functions; • refocus the more limited resources available to the service towards securing external funding to deliver regeneration priorities; • co-ordinate the growing range of labour market support projects funded by the new European programmes to ensure that they have the greatest local impact; and • review and refocus the Communities First programme to maximise the benefits to deprived communities.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None arising from this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Every element in the regeneration programme has been the subject of extensive consultation; in the development of the Strategy; in the development of each plan and programme; and as each project has been implemented.
3.02	The development of each programme in the future will require consultation with strategic partners, local stakeholders, businesses and local communities.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None arising from this report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – list of town centre projects

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Niall Waller, Service Manager, Enterprise & Regeneration Programmes Telephone: 01352 702137 E-mail: niall.waller@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Communities First – the Welsh Government flagship programme to tackle poverty in deprived neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods are selected based on those considered the most deprived across Wales.</p> <p>Communities 4 Work (C4W) - a new Welsh Government programme to help people to re-engage in learning and employment. The programme will begin in Flintshire in 2016 and will be delivered in the Communities First areas.</p> <p>European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – one the main European funding programmes to support economic development.</p> <p>LEADER – The European approach to rural development in operation since 1991 focussing on community-led innovation in service delivery and enterprise development. The LEADER approach is included in the 2015-2020 rural programme.</p> <p>LIFT – the Welsh Government pilot programme, implemented in Communities First areas, to provide intensive support to unemployed people.</p> <p>North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) – the partnership to develop a strategic and co-ordinated approach to economic development across North Wales.</p> <p>Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF) – the new rural programme providing capital support to rural community projects.</p> <p>Rural Development Plan (RDP) – the European funding programme dedicated to the development of rural areas. The majority of the programme supports the land-based industries including farming and forestry but a small proportion supports wider rural development activity.</p> <p>Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP) – the Welsh Government flagship programme for regeneration in Wales. The programme provides capital funding between 2014/15 and 2016/17 for eleven priority areas in Wales, including Deeside.</p>