

27 January 2014

**Update on Masterplans for
County Durham**

**Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
and Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and
Economic Development**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee with background information on the development of Masterplans within County Durham prior to the presentation.

Background

- 2 At the meeting of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 19 November 2012 an update was provided to members on the development of the various Masterplans within County Durham. It was requested at that meeting by Members that as part of the refresh of the work programme for 2013-2015 that the Committee continue to receive future updates on the progress of the various Masterplans for principal towns across the County.
- 3 It was therefore considered timely that an update be provided by Officers from the Economic Development and Housing Service at the meeting on the 24th June, 2013 prior to Cabinet considering a series of regeneration Masterplan reports in September. The presentation at the meeting focused on the strategic context, progress in relation to the development of the Masterplan process, information on the consultation exercise together with examples of various projects.
- 5 Arrangements have been made for Chris Myers, Regeneration Projects Manager and Wendy Benson, Community Economic Development Manager to attend the meeting on the 27 January 2014 and deliver a presentation focusing on recent and emerging delivery activity across the 11 principal towns across the County.

Masterplans

- 6 Masterplans provide the detailed programme of activity that is taking place or is planned by the Council and partners in principal towns across the County. They provide the strategic context to delivery and seek to establish key principles to co-ordinate and guide regeneration activity and investment decisions.

Strategic context

- 7 Masterplans are prepared at a town centre or settlement level and are developed to provide detail on current or proposed activity. They are designed to supplement the information provided through the planning framework and can provide an opportunity to ensure the effective alignment of services or investment by the Council and its partners at a local level. This can include town centre improvement budgets, highways and local transport investment and alignment of the Council's accommodation and customer services approaches.
- 8 The development and adoption of masterplans provides an opportunity to challenge, prioritise and channel resources to the most appropriate locations and ensure that requirements and opportunities are resourced appropriately. This has become particularly relevant given the ongoing pressures on public finances and the relatively weak private development sector.

Developing and delivering masterplans

- 9 All masterplans produced follow a similar format and are developed using a multi-disciplinary group of staff driven by the Regeneration and Economic Development (RED) service grouping which typically included Planning, Economic Development, Housing and Transport colleagues and depending on the location other service areas or partner organisations may input throughout the process.
- 10 The Cabinet reports included a detailed consultation log of the external individuals, groups and organisations that fed their thoughts into the document. A key element of this consultation relates to the relevant Area Action Partnerships, many of which have identified or retain task and finish groups looking at the main centres.

Update on the development of masterplans

- 11 Regeneration Masterplans have now been prepared for each of the County's principal Towns.

Next steps

- 12 Officers will seek resources through the Capital Programme to implement the various projects outlined in the Masterplan documents. All Masterplans are considered to be "live" documents. Officers will evaluate the implementation of the Masterplans and will update them where required.

Recommendations

- 13 Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment upon the information provided during the presentation.

Background Papers

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny report – Masterplans for County Durham – 19th November, 2012

Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny report – Masterplans for County Durham – 24th June, 2013

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – Each masterplan contains a detailed delivery plan with identified costs across Council services.

Staffing – None.

Risk – Detailed risk assessments will be undertaken for each development project.

Equality and Diversity – Each masterplan is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. Further, more detailed work will be identified and addressed on an individual project basis.

Accommodation – Accommodation issues will be identified on an individual basis.

Crime and Disorder - None

Human Rights - None

Consultation – Appropriate consultation has taken place in relation to the various masterplans within the County, typically utilising Area Action Partnership structures.

Procurement - None

Disability Discrimination Act - None

Legal Implications – The masterplan documents will provide evidence to support the County Durham Plan but it will not have any statutory weight in the planning process.