

Report To: **Cabinet**

Date of Meeting: **29 March 2016**

Lead Member / Officer: **Cllr Hugh Evans, Leader**

Report Author: **Rebecca Maxwell, Corporate Director: Economy & Public Realm**

Title: **Rhyl Going Forward – Review & Next Steps**

1. What is the report about?

Rhyl has been a regeneration priority for over 10 years. The first priorities were adopted in 2004. In 2008, Rhyl was included in Welsh Government's North Wales Coast Strategic Regeneration Area. Priorities were reviewed in 2011 and the Council was given responsibility for leading the Neighbourhood & Places work programme. This became the Council's Rhyl Going Forward programme.

5 years on it is appropriate to assess progress and agree what the future shape of regeneration activity should be. The Welsh Government Regeneration programme for the North Wales Coast has now concluded, with funding now being made available across Wales through the Vibrant & Viable Places and Tackling Poverty initiatives, for which coherent regeneration strategies are required.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

This report sets out a review of progress with the Rhyl Going Forward Regeneration Programme and an assessment of where the Programme needs to go next.

3. What are the Recommendations?

Cabinet is invited

1. Note the progress made with regeneration projects in Rhyl;
2. Approve the proposals for the next phase of regeneration activity in Rhyl set out below and illustrated in Appendix 2 and agree that they should be used to inform priorities for any regeneration funding that may become available; and
3. Approve the programme management and governance arrangements set out below and illustrated in Appendix 3

4. Report details

- 4.1. Like many other seaside towns, Rhyl suffered from the decline in domestic holidays. As visitor numbers decreased, businesses in the town began to suffer. Former guest houses became Homes of Multiple Occupation and low property values led to poor standards and conditions. Areas of the town became host to concentrations of residents with complex social needs problems and of multiple deprivation.

Denbighshire County Council recognised this problem and in 2004 adopted its first Strategy & Key Investment Priorities for Rhyl.

- 4.2. In November 2008, Welsh Government established the North Wales Coast Strategic Regeneration Area. Covering the coast from Prestatyn to Mochdre, the SRA aimed to tackle the issues that were deterring visitors, to identify opportunities to revitalise existing and grow new activities, to address infrastructure gaps with the aim of encouraging private sector investment and to improve the area for local residents, making it a nicer place to live.
- 4.3. A review in 2010 culminated in a Strategic Regeneration Framework, the aims of which were to **Recreate Rhyl as a place where people choose to live and stay** and **Rediscover Rhyl as a place to visit**. Under this framework, regeneration activity was split between Neighbourhoods & Places, People & Communities, and Economy & Skills. The Council took responsibility for the Neighbourhood & Places agenda. This became the Council's Rhyl Going Forward programme.
- 4.4. The objectives were agreed as:
 - a) Creation of a sustainable housing market in West Rhyl, where people choose to live
 - b) More people visiting Rhyl for an attractive, well maintained tourism & leisure offer
 - c) A good range of shops and services in the town centre, in a high quality, clean street environment
 - d) New businesses locating in Rhyl and new job opportunities being created
- 4.5. 55 individual projects were identified to deliver the programme. It soon became clear that making progress on all 55 projects was impossible. Streamlining took place during 2012 and a revised set of projects was agreed.
- 4.6. An interim report (Appendix 1a) was produced in 2013 to assess progress across the 4 workstreams and to set priorities for the next 2 years (ie to 2015). This demonstrated good progress against the 2012 priorities. 3 years on, most of the remaining work has now been either completed or is making good progress. The main exceptions relate to work on regeneration of the Town Centre.
- 4.7. Turning to results, it is difficult to quantify the degree to which all of the above activity is having an impact on outcomes for Rhyl – its residents and businesses. Investment in regeneration is recognised as having long lead-in times before structural improvements to outcomes can be seen. One source of information is the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) and this shows a mixed picture, with some neighbourhoods improving their relative ranking but others worsening.
- 4.8. Beneath the headline figures, income and employment deprivation remain a concern and have yet to show any significant improvement. The biggest successes are in the domains of Education and Community Safety, with Education in particular showing significant improvements. This is encouraging in terms of prospects young people in Rhyl today and their life chances.
- 4.9. The Neighbourhood & Places Delivery Plan attempted to measure a different set of indicators to understand 'on the ground' experiences in Rhyl - in particular Visitor Numbers and Retail Performance. A more focused dashboard was also developed

for the West Rhyl Housing initiative. The performance on these are mixed with visitor numbers fluctuating and Town Centre indicators showing continuing cause for concern. Anecdotally, we know that the trading environment on the High Street remains very challenging. Low household incomes in large parts of the town combined with continued loss of town centre footfall is taking its toll on Town Centre businesses. Indicators relating to housing are showing signs of improvement.

- 4.10. It is clear that the journey for Regeneration in Rhyl is not yet complete. Outcomes are still poorer than we would like and the town is not yet in a position where the market will address these weaknesses on its own. Rhyl has not yet transitioned from an area requiring regeneration to one which is ready to respond to more mainstream economic development. Further action is required to create that tipping point.
- 4.11. The next phase of Regeneration activity should build on the foundations laid over the last 5 years. The focus should be on activities that improve footfall to the town, attract more economically active residents to live in Rhyl, overcome Rhyl's poor reputation and nurture business confidence and growth. A much closer connection also needs to be created between this physical Regeneration activity and the Council's (and its partners') wider activities for addressing social issues and tackling poverty.
- 4.12. Taking all of the above into account, it is recommended that:
 - a) A new Rhyl Regeneration delivery programme is created with 3 workstreams containing projects focusing on Tourism & Visitors, Town Centre, and Living & Working in Rhyl (see Appendix 2)
 - b) Each project is assigned a project executive and collectively these officers form the Council's virtual Regeneration Team
 - c) The overall Programme Sponsor continues to be the Corporate Director for Economy & Public Realm
 - d) A Programme Delivery Group is established, chaired by the Corporate Director, to coordinate the individual projects. A representative of the Council's Tackling Poverty Board should attend the Delivery Group to align activities.
 - e) Strategic governance of the overall programme is provided by the newly formed Corporate Plan Improvement Board to ensure delivery against the Corporate Plan targets and priorities
 - f) Formal scrutiny of the Programme and its individual projects is conducted through the Council's Scrutiny Committees as required
 - g) A Local Reference Group comprising the elected representatives in Rhyl (County & Town Councillors, the AM and the MP) is established to monitor implementation and provide guidance at local level
 - h) A communications plan is developed to ensure wider communications, in particular with the local community
 - i) More routine economic development activity is led by the Council's Economic & Business Development Team through the Tourism Growth, Town Centre Growth and Supported Businesses projects being delivered for the Economic & Community Ambition Programme

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Regeneration of Rhyl has been a Council priority since 2004 and continues to feature as a priority in the current Corporate Plan.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Specific costs will be determined through the individual project workstreams. Some dedicated funding already exists – through Welsh Government Tackling Poverty fund, for example. Other funding sources are likely to become available. It is imperative that the Council has a clear picture of its spending priorities in Rhyl to enable coherent funding bids to be submitted and avoid ‘grant-chasing’ distracting attention from important activities.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

An EqIA is not required for this report. Equality impact will be assessed as individual projects are developed. Successful regeneration in Rhyl will improve the overall wellbeing of the local community – its prosperity, resilience, health and cohesiveness – and will address a significant inequality currently existing in Denbighshire.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

A review of progress was carried out with Rhyl Going Forward Board members during 2015. A separate more detailed assessment was carried out with service representatives later in the year. The recommendations contained in this report have been shared with local elected Members.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The programme sets out a number of ambitious projects. The report clarifies the priorities of the programme and sets out a clear governance structure. Given the potential level of financial investment from a number of sources, it is crucial that clear planning priorities have been established and that governance arrangements are robust.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

The main risk is that regeneration activity will not have the impact that we would intend it to and that indicators of multiple deprivation continue to be poor for Rhyl. The strategy set out in this report aims to minimise this risk by setting out a clear, coherent approach with a rationale and clear priorities, and making better connections between the 3 regeneration pillars of place, people and economy. Risks for individual projects will be identified and managed through standard project management approaches.

11. Power to make the Decision

s2 Local Government Act 2000 – power to do anything to promote or improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area.