

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Lead Member / Officers: Cllr Hugh Evans, Leader / Emlyn Jones / Mike Horrocks

Report Author: Mike Horrocks, EBD Team & Programme Manager

Title: **Rhyl Town Centre Master Plan & Vision Document**

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**1. What is the report about?**

1.1 Rhyl Town Centre Vision and Master planning work.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

2.1 To present a final version of the Rhyl Town Centre Vision document and proposed approach to the governance and resourcing of its delivery

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

3.1 That Cabinet supports the long term aspirations and 8 key ideas outlined within the Vision document (Appendix 2).

3.2 That Cabinet confirms it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 1) as part of its consideration and commits the council to focussing on delivery of the long term positive wellbeing impacts contained within it.

**4. Report details**

4.1 Over the past 18 months Denbighshire County Council has worked collaboratively with a range of people and partners to develop a vision for Rhyl Town Centre through a master planning process.

4.2 A cross service project team led by the councils EBD Section Manager consisting of 'Topic Leads' and officers with relevant expertise, supplemented by private specialist contractors in engagement and urban design has worked together to engage stakeholders and create the Vision document.

4.3 The key early objectives set for the project team were to achieve a plan that will deliver:

1. A vibrant and balanced mix of uses
2. Improved ease of access to the town centre
3. Improved pedestrian flows around the town centre
4. A desirable town centre ambience

4.4 Short term benefits of the master planning process were identified as:

- Clarity of purpose and co-ordination of organisational effort
- A consistent reference point for decision makers, developers and investors that speeds up the process of re-development
- Improved confidence in and perceptions of Rhyl town centre, Rhyl and DCC
- Identification of key projects to feed into the Welsh Government TRI Programme

- 4.5 Numerous longer term / Wellbeing benefits were identified, including increased business profitability, investment in the town, increased employment and incomes, increased resident and visitor satisfaction, increased value of housing and businesses premises, improved community cohesion and resilience, a healthier population, increased trust in the County Council and reductions in demand for high cost public services.
- 4.6 To ensure the Vision incorporated the aspirations of a number of stakeholders, agencies and wider community members a comprehensive programme of engagement was undertaken. Over 2,500 people got involved in shaping the Vision and the key ideas. The second stage of the engagement programme presented back to stakeholders the ideas worked up by the Project Team, with an overwhelmingly positive response received. A summary engagement report is attached (Appendix 3). Engagement will need to be ongoing over the long term.
- 4.7 The engagement process revealed several key issues which are responded to in the Vision:
- Rhyl town centre currently suffers from poor-quality public realm. This is predominantly due to a lack of greenery, run-down shop fronts and neglected buildings, poor quality street furniture and signage with a lot of clutter and mismatched styles. The appearance of the town influences people's perceptions of it and plays a role in determining how long people stay, whether or not they see it as a place they would like to live / work; and whether or not they feel confident of gaining a return on any investment they might make.
  - Most visitors now approach Rhyl via the A55 and A525, entering the town centre from a southerly direction. The existing traffic system was built to cater for a heavy east-west traffic flow and is mismatched with current needs.
  - Pressure on household budgets and changes in consumer habits have reduced the number of people using the town centre. Many locals with money to spend tend to avoid the town centre and go elsewhere for a better retail offer / experience, making it harder for current businesses to survive. At the same time the costs of operating a business on the high street remain high.
  - There is a significant amount of vacant and underused space in town centre buildings, with many proving difficult to find economic uses for.
  - The town has disconnected from its beach, discouraging pedestrian flows into the centre.
- 4.8 Eight key ideas were generated by the Project team and endorsed by stakeholders:
1. **Reunite** the beach and the town centre
  2. Expand the existing **recreational-led** offer and **diversify** the **choice** in retail and food
  3. Create a great town centre **throughout the day**
  4. Invest in the public realm; create **civic spaces to be proud of**
  5. Invest in the public realm; create **great places to spend time**, whatever the weather
  6. Transform the Queen's Buildings into a vibrant **community asset**
  7. Make the town centre a **destination for locals**; the tourists will follow
  8. Create opportunities for the **local community** to shape their town and **raise aspirations**
- 4.9 To put ideas into practice a number of key projects are proposed under each of the 8 areas, some of which have been started in order to take advantage of opportunities for funding and others yet to be developed.
- 4.10 Work is underway to develop the 8 ideas into a forward work programme of priorities and projects over the 15 year life of the Vision. This will form the basis of a draft programme implementation plan for the Rhyl Programme Board to enact development and delivery of.
5. **How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

5.1 Many aspects of the Vision will help to deliver corporate priorities including:

- Developing new town centre housing
- Creating an attractive town centre environment that supports economic prosperity
- Improving connection between residents and their town centre, shops and services
- Developing Rhyl Town Centre as a place where young people want to live and work
- Enabling local people to plan and shape the future of their town centre

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

6.1 Project development has not yet started in many cases and therefore detailed costs have not been identified. Project costs will be presented to the Rhyl Programme Board when identified and both AMG and SIG will sign off projects where appropriate. Staff time will be needed to maintain accountability and drive forward beneficial changes. We may not have the skills within the council to develop / deliver certain aspects of projects so these may need to be acquired through partnership working or purchased from external sources.

6.2 Funding for some early projects has been identified but there is a significant focus on attracting private sector investment into the town centre as a key long term goal. The Project Manager has worked closely with Welsh Government and the Regional Regeneration Officers Group to influence policy around direction of regeneration funds towards town centres, with the direct intention of increasing potential financial assistance for delivering the Rhyl Vision.

6.3 Services potentially impacted by the Vision have been involved in its development including CCM, HES, FAH, BIM and PPP. The emerging draft Vision has been shared at SLT, HES and PPP staff away days and at various service management Team meetings. Representatives from PPP, CCM, FAH and HES are members of the Project Team.

## **7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

7.1 The outcomes of the WIA and engagement process revealed a number of issues that have been shared with the Rhyl Community Development Board and Working Denbighshire. Main conclusions are:

- Sustaining of current and the creation of new entry level jobs. Potential to expand higher paid/skilled jobs and the Vision contains projects which aim to exploit this. We anticipate an increase in the numbers of people commuting for higher wages.
- Clear plans to improve the town centre as a place to live healthily, work and visit. Coupled with community development action these will widen diversity of town centre residents and users with higher levels of disposable incomes – a major determinant of success
- There are numerous opportunities to maximise the impact of the Masterplan on biodiversity, infrastructure, Welsh language and culture and some guiding principles have been established.
- The Vision aims to re-purpose and re-use the town centre as a sustainable asset. It is in direct contradiction to approaches that seek to build new, out of town neighbourhoods and facilities which use up limited natural resources.

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

8.1 A detailed engagement report documenting consultations and activities is at Appendix 3.

- 8.2 The draft version of the Vision document was discussed at Rhyl MAG on 17<sup>th</sup> June and previous early versions shared with MAG and Rhyl Reference Group with positive feedback.
- 8.3 The Vision will be shared with Rhyl Town Council on the 18<sup>th</sup> September and taken to the Rhyl Community Development Board for adoption this month. The Vision and draft programme plan will be presented at the next Rhyl Programme Board on the 25<sup>th</sup> September.
- 8.4 Beyond DCC the Project Manager continues to engage with a wide range of stakeholders including private sector investors. Police, College, Health Authority and RSL senior staff have been briefed and discussions held to align long term organisational forward planning.

## 9. **Chief Finance Officer Statement**

The report itself does not commit the Council to any additional funding commitments. However it is obvious that additional funding will be required if the ambitious goals included in the plan are to be met. It needs to be kept in mind that resources available to the council are reducing and there is a need to fund existing pressures and competing priorities. It is welcome that there is a recognition that external funding should be maximised where possible. Each project will need to be assessed individually with a robust Business Plan approved by the Strategic Investment Group, Cabinet and Council depending on the size of project and funding commitment.

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

### 10.1 Key risks to the Master Plan include:

- A number of plans to regenerate aspects of Rhyl have been consulted upon over the years. Some of these have not resulted in demonstrable change to the town centre and there is a risk that this plan, if not delivered, may be criticised in the same way. Risks have been reduced by early and thorough engagement.
- The delivery of the Vision is intended to be carried out through a mix of approaches by more than one DCC Service area and partners. The delivery timescales, scale of input and staff skills required may be beyond the resource available internally. These risks can be reduced through effective communication of the Vision, proper programme / project management and a long term approach that brings the resources of numerous organisations and the local community together.
- Establishing a Vision, long term priorities and a collaborative approach to delivery are intentional actions designed to mitigate increasing risks to the wellbeing of people in Rhyl. The long term outcome of the process is also intended to reduce risks around increasing demand for public sector services in Rhyl.

## 11. **Power to make the Decision**

s2 Local Government Act 2000