

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 15th January 2013

Lead Members: Councillor Hugh Evans, Cabinet Lead for Economic Development, Councillor Huw Jones, Cabinet Lead for Tourism, Leisure & Youth (including Rural Development)

Report Author: Rebecca Maxwell, Corporate Director: Economic & Community Ambition

Title: Delivering Denbighshire's Town and Area Plans

1. What is the report about?

During 2011/12, Denbighshire County Council conducted consultations to compile Town Plans for the County's seven principal towns, excluding Rhyl. A similar exercise was carried out in Rhyl to develop the Rhyl Going Forward Delivery Plan. The Town Plans were approved by Cabinet between December 2011 and March 2012 and have allowed community needs and priorities to be identified for each major settlement. They have not yet, however, addressed the needs and priorities of smaller and more rural communities. This report sets out the arrangements now in place to broaden the Town Plans into wider Area Plans, confirms the funding allocated to implement the Plan priorities and makes initial allocations from that funding.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To confirm the process for consolidating and expanding the Town Plans into broader Area Plans that also address the needs and priorities of smaller and more rural communities, and to propose an initial allocation of funding for priorities identified so far.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- a) To note the arrangements that have been established to consolidate Town Plans and broaden them into wider Area Plans, i.e. Town Plan Champions, the Town Plan Co-ordination Group and the associated officer support
- b) To confirm that the funding available to implement the priorities in the Town and broader Area Plans comes from the following sources:
 - Corporate priority funding for 'Improving the local economy'
 - Community funding revenue budget
 - Community capital and match funding capital allocation
- c) To approve the recommendations from the Town Plan Co-ordination Group on initial allocation of funding in 2012/13 and 2013/14.

4. Report details.

Background

- 4.1 During 2011/12, the Council conducted a major exercise to compile Town Plans for the County's seven principal towns, excluding Rhyl, in order to identify community needs and priorities. A similar exercise was carried out in Rhyl to develop the Rhyl Going Forward Delivery Plan. The Town Plans for Corwen, Denbigh, Llangollen, Prestatyn, Rhuddlan, Ruthin and St Asaph were approved by Cabinet between December 2011 and March 2012.
- 4.2 Projects and initiatives were identified in each of the seven Town Plans and prioritised for action over the 5 year life of the Plans. Projects arising from the Town Plans fall into three broad categories:
- a) Those which can be delivered within existing service budgets
 - b) Those which can be delivered wholly or in part using external funding, including grant funding, and
 - c) Those which will only take place within a reasonable timeframe by using the funds from the Council's corporate priorities budget.
- 4.3 A subsequent review in Rhyl is in the process of refining and prioritising individual projects within the overall Rhyl Going Forward Delivery Plan.
- 4.4 Work to date has not yet addressed the needs and priorities of smaller and more rural communities. Further work is required to identify and incorporate those needs into the priority setting and funding process. In line with the approach adopted for the Town Plans, it is recommended that a more strategic approach is now taken to ensure best value is delivered in the allocation of funding to community priorities.

Town Plan Development & Implementation

- 4.5 In order to assist with implementation of the Town Plans, the Leader asked Member Area Groups (MAGs) to nominate lead Members for each of the Town Plans. The lead Members (Town Plan Champions) meet collectively as the Town Plan Co-ordination Group, supported by the Strategic Regeneration Manager, the Head of Housing & Community Development and the Corporate Director for Economic & Community Ambition. The Town Plan Champions are:
- Corwen – Cllr Huw Jones
 - Denbigh – Cllr Gwyneth Kensler
 - Llangollen – Cllr Stuart Davies
 - Prestatyn – Cllr James Davies
 - Rhuddlan – Cllr Arwel Roberts
 - Ruthin – Cllr Huw Hilditch Roberts
 - St Asaph – Cllr Bill Cowie
- Cllr Joan Butterfield represents Rhyl on the Group.
- 4.6 The Cabinet Lead for Economic Development retains overall responsibility for development and delivery of the Town and Area Plans. The Town and Area Plan Champions act in support of this to ensure delivery at local level. The Champions' role is to work with their local MAG to drive forward delivery of the Town and emerging Area Plan priorities, to facilitate effective communication

within the MAG and with other relevant local town and community stakeholders, and to ensure all relevant Town and associated community priorities are captured within the emerging Area Plans.

4.7 The Town Plan Champions are supported by an officer allocated from the Strategic Regeneration Team, whose role is to act as interface between the Champion and Council services, and to support the Champion in driving delivery and in monitoring, reviewing and developing the Town and Area Plans. A description of each role is attached at Appendix 1 for information.

4.8 Two early discussions for the Town Plan Co-ordination Group have been:

a) Development of the Town Plans into broader Area Plans

The Town Plan Co-ordination Group acknowledged that Town Plans represent a good starting point. They allow local community priorities to be identified alongside the Council's strategic objectives and support actions that are important to residents at local level. The Group also recognised that more work was needed to identify and incorporate needs and priorities from surrounding associated communities.

Evidence suggests that cities are important hubs and economic drivers for their surrounding regions. Similarly towns are important resources for their surrounding communities, and Town Plans should develop to reflect this. Consequently, through MAGs, discussions have begun to capture the needs and priorities of smaller and more rural communities.

Local Members have been asked to identify initial issues and priorities for discussion through the MAGs. Town Plans will then be expanded into broader Area Plans centred on the Towns and their associated smaller and rural communities. A similar consultation process will be adopted to that undertaken for the original Town Plans. MAGs will review and recommend Area Plans for formal adoption.

Area Plans will have 3 broad sections – one identifying the vision and priorities for each Town, a second identifying how smaller and more rural communities relate to the Town, and a third setting out any specific needs or priorities for the smaller and more rural communities.

It will be for MAGs to ensure that Area Plans as they are developed appropriately reflect the needs and priorities of all communities covered by the Plan, including smaller and more rural communities. In addition, the Cabinet Lead for Rural Development will act as Rural Champion in the process, ensuring that Area Plans incorporate rural priorities and checking that full and proper consultation has been carried out.

b) Funding for the emerging Town and Area priorities

The Council has previously supported projects identified as being priorities for local communities in different ways through a variety of different grant scheme approaches. Often these were complex and time consuming to administer. It was not always possible to measure the local or strategic benefit of allocations made.

In adopting the Town Plans approach, from 2012/13 the Council identified a £175k annual budget to support implementation of the emerging priorities. Previously the Council also allocated £100k revenue and £480k

capital budgets to provide funding for local and community projects. The proposal is that these are combined into a single source of funding for Town and Area Plan priorities.

For 2012/13 and 2013/14 **combined** this provides a funding pot of £1.275M, taking into account underspend carried forward from 2011/12.

Town Plan Champions have worked with MAGs and their allocated support officer to identify priorities for funding from the existing Town Plans. Attached in Appendix 2 is an initial allocation of funding for early priorities.

Some projects, including larger projects within the Rhyl Going Forward programme, may require more significant funding than is possible from the corporate priority fund identified above. Any such projects will be considered by the Strategic Investment Group, with recommendations for approval made to Cabinet/Council in line with governance arrangements.

As work to identify priorities for smaller and more rural communities, and to confirm priorities and possible funding sources for projects in Rhyl, is still at an early stage, it is not intended to allocate the full funding available at this stage. Appendix 2 contains proposals for around £600,000 of the 2 year funding pot. The remainder is reserved until the broader Area Plans have been finalised to ensure that funding remains available for any additional priorities that may emerge.

- 4.9 In terms of governance, the Town Plan Co-ordination Group also discussed the process for reviewing and amending Town and Area Plans as they develop. The Group agreed that the Plans should be living documents, able to adapt to changing needs and demands. Appendix 3 sets out the process recommended by the Group. Regular monitoring of progress will take place through MAGs and the Town Plan Co-ordination Group, and will be included within performance reports to Scrutiny/Council on Council corporate priorities.

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

- 5.1 The Corporate Plan identifies vibrant and economically active towns and communities as essential components of a strong local economy. The allocation of County Council funding to Town and Area Plans and the Rhyl Going Forward projects will support implementation of the corporate priority, Improving the Local Economy and will also assist the Council in meeting its ambition of being Closer to the Community.

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

- 6.1 It is proposed that for 2012/13 and 2013/14, Town and Area Plan priorities are funded from a budget line encompassing a number of separate existing allocations as follows:

Revenue budget of £175,000 per annum for 'improving the local economy' corporate priority for 2012/13 and 2013/14	£350,000
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Revenue budget of £100,000 per annum for community projects in 2012/13 and 2013/14	£200,000
Capital allocation for community capital projects and match funding for 2012/13	£480,000
Carry forward underspend from 2011/12	£245,000
	£1,275,000

6.2 Decisions on 2013/14 capital programme have not yet been made. A second allocation of £480k capital has therefore not been assumed at this point.

6.3 It is intended that Rhyl Going Forward projects will be largely funded either from the £175k corporate allocation for Regeneration made in 2011/12, or for larger scale projects, through specific proposals considered by the Strategic Investment Group for decision by Cabinet. Some call may however be required from the Town and Area Plans funding allocation outlined above. Further detail on this will be available once the prioritisation of projects within the Rhyl Going Forward programme has been completed.

7. What consultations have been carried out and has an Equality Impact Assessment Screening been undertaken?

The Town Plan Co-ordination Group has discussed the proposals outlined in this report. The previous Town Plans were subject to extensive consultation and the same will be expected as the broader Area Plans are developed.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The Town Plans form an important part of the Council's strategy for getting closer to the community and should be appropriately funded. This paper contains a reasonable way of allocating the available funds.

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

The risks associated with implementation of the Town Plans are:

- Failure to fund identified priorities
- Uncoordinated spend on projects with little or unclear strategic or local benefit
- Failure to address the needs and priorities of smaller and more rural communities

These risks are addressed through the process outlined in this report.

The Town Plan priorities have been reviewed and re-confirmed by Town Plan Champions and MAGs. Members representing smaller and more rural communities have been asked to start identifying needs and priorities for their areas as the first stage of broadening the Town Plans into wider Area Plans. Funding has been identified and a process of prioritisation is in place to allocate funding to specific projects in 2012/13 and 2013/14. Funding will be managed across the two financial years to allow time for priorities from smaller and more rural communities to emerge.

The risk of not delivering the actions identified for completion in the early years of the Town Plans has been reduced by creating the roles of Town and Area Plan Champions to drive the delivery of the priorities identified within the relevant Town and Area Plans and by allocating budgets to enable priority actions to be funded which otherwise could not be delivered through existing service budgets.

10. Power to make the Decision

Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 gives the Council the power to do anything which it considers is likely to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.