

Report To: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 17th January 2013

Lead Member / Officer: Head of Housing & Community Development

Report Author: Strategic Regeneration Manager

Title: Town Plans

1. What is the report about?

The report is about the development of economically viable and sustainable towns that will boost the local economy and improve outcomes for local businesses and residents and attract visitors to the area.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

The reason for making this report is to review the effectiveness of Town Plans in beginning to deliver their objectives.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee notes and provides observations on the:

- 3.1 arrangements which have been put in place to progress the delivery of Town Plans;
- 3.2 proposals to develop Area Plans to identify priorities in rural communities;
- 3.3 proposals for monitoring performance; and
- 3.4 determines which Scrutiny Committee should receive future reports about Town Plans.

4. Report details

Town Plans for the county's seven largest settlements apart from Rhyl were endorsed by Cabinet between December 2011 and March 2012 during the term of office of the previous County Council. Following the elections in May 2012, presentations were made to the five relevant Member Area Groups to enable newly elected members to familiarise themselves with the contents of the previously approved Town Plans and to initiate a review of their contents to ensure that they were still valid and to enable any additional priorities to be incorporated.

All six Member Area Groups including Rhyl were invited to nominate a Lead Member, subsequently designated as a Champion, to work with the Group to drive forward delivery of the Plan priorities, to facilitate effective communication within the Group

and with other relevant local town and community stakeholders, and to ensure all relevant community priorities were captured within the Plans. The initial arrangement was to have one champion per Member Area Group but this was later amended to one per Town Plan. The champions meet together in a Plan Co-ordination Group. An officer from the Strategic Regeneration section has been designated as a “Single Point of Contact” for each Member Area Group to work with the relevant Champions.

The Co-ordination Group has agreed a process for updating and making amendments to the Plans and the Champions have been working with the Single Point of Contact Officers to update the Town Plans. The revised versions are being presented to the Member Area Groups in their current round of meetings.

The Co-ordination Group has also considered the allocation of funding from the budget for delivering the corporate priority for improving the local economy prior to its endorsement by Cabinet earlier this week. This will enable those priority actions identified for early implementation which could only be delivered within a reasonable timeframe with financial support from this budget to proceed.

The Plans approved to date have not yet addressed the needs and priorities of smaller and more rural communities. Members representing the relevant wards have been asked to identify initial issues including the appropriate geographical coverage for Area Plans which may not necessarily correspond with the Member Area Group boundaries, and priorities for discussion through the Member Area Groups. The intention is that Town Plans will then be expanded into broader Area Plans centred on the Towns and their associated smaller and rural communities. It is envisaged that Area Plans will have 3 broad sections: one identifying the priorities and vision for each Town, a second identifying how the outlying 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. A similar consultation process will be adopted to that undertaken for the original Town Plans. Member Area Groups will review and then recommend Area Plans for formal adoption. It will be for Member Area Groups 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 as well as those identified for the larger Towns and checking that full and proper consultation has been carried out.

A process for monitoring the performance of the Town and Area Plans has been developed in conjunction with the Business Planning & Performance service to complement the reporting arrangements for the Corporate Plan. A performance report will be presented to the Member Area Groups on a quarterly basis which will highlight the delivery confidence attached to each of the live priority actions in the relevant Town and Area Plans using the same Red-Orange-Yellow-Green status which has been adopted in the corporate project management methodology. A sample quarterly performance report for Rhuddlan is attached as the Annex to this report as an example of the format which will be used and which has been approved by the Town and Area Plan Co-ordination Group. The information in these individual Town and Area reports will be aggregated and included in the Quarterly Performance Report submitted to Cabinet commencing in the first quarter of the 2013/14 financial year. The intention is also to provide an annual report to County Council.

Consideration is also required as to which Scrutiny Committee would be the most appropriate to receive future reports on these Plans.

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

The Corporate Plan identifies vibrant and economically active towns and communities as essential components of a strong local economy. The implementation of Town Plans will support implementation of the corporate priority for 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?

It is proposed that for 2012/13 and 2013/14, Town and Area Plan priorities are funded from a budget 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
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

Whilst a bid has been made for a further capital allocation of £480,000, decisions on the capital plan for 2013/14 have not yet been made therefore the availability of this allocation has not been assumed.

It is intended that Rhyl Going Forward projects will be largely funded either from the £175,000 corporate allocation for regeneration made in 2011/12, or in the case of larger scale projects, through specific proposals to be considered by the Strategic Investment Group prior to decision by Cabinet. There may however be some call on the funding allocation for Town and Area Plans for Rhyl Going Forward projects.

7. What consultations have been carried out?

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

Not applicable

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 deliver priorities identified for completion in the early years of the Town Plans, and
- failure to address the needs and priorities of smaller and more rural communities

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.

Article 6.1 of the Council's Constitution empowers Communities Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise area focussed service delivery and developments including the Town Plans

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