

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Date	7 APRIL 2014
Title	WISBECH 2020 VISION UPDATE

1. PURPOSE/SUMMARY

To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Panel with an update in regard to the Wisbech 2020 Vision project.

2. KEY POINTS

- The Wisbech 2020 Vision project was first commissioned in April 2012 by the Leaders of Cambridgeshire County Council and Fenland District Council and the MP for North East Cambridgeshire.
- Extensive engagement was carried out with stakeholders, local businesses and the public in the development of a future vision for the town. The comments, ideas and suggestions resulting from this consultation were used to inform the Wisbech 2020 Summit in October 2012 at which stakeholders considered the initial ideas from the consultation. The outcomes from the Summit were then used to inform the Vision document which was launched at the Wisbech 2020 Vision launch in January 2013.
- The Vision is split into three themes of:
 - Wisbech – a great place to work
 - Wisbech – a great place to live
 - Wisbech – a great place to visit
- 29 long and short term actions were assigned to a theme lead to progress the work with progress updates sought approximately every 6 months and posted on the Wisbech 2020 Vision website.
- Many successes have been achieved through collaborative working as a part of the Wisbech 2020 Vision which will be marked at the 2nd Vision summit.
- The 2nd Wisbech 2020 Vision summit is taking place on Friday 2 May 2014 which will include an update on progress achieved against all of the actions within the Vision as well as provide stakeholders with an opportunity to present ideas for future short and long term actions for a revised Vision document.

3. RECOMMENDATION(S)

To consider and discuss the progress of the Wisbech 2020 Vision project.

Wards Affected	All Wisbech wards (including the surrounding rural wards)
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Background Paper(s)	Wisbech 2020 Vision document

1. BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Wisbech 2020 Vision project was first commissioned in April 2012 by the Leaders of Cambridgeshire County Council and Fenland District Council, and the MP for North East Cambridgeshire. They expressed their joint resolve to tackle the many challenges that Wisbech, and other local towns, face in today's tough economic climate.
- 1.2 To ensure that the Vision document reflected the thoughts and ideas of as many people as possible, consultation was carried out with stakeholders, local businesses and the public. This was achieved through public consultation and the delivery of 8 themed workshops during the latter part of 2012, which focused on :
 - The future economic role of the town
 - Stronger families in communities
 - Housing
 - Education, skills and aspiration levels
 - Social cohesion
 - Transport and infrastructure
 - Pride, reputation and image
 - Leisure, culture, cycling and tourism
- 1.3 The suggestions, comments and ideas from the themed workshops and the public consultation were collated and considered by stakeholders at the Wisbech 2020 Summit in October 2012.
- 1.4 Feedback from the Summit led to the design of the Wisbech 2020 Vision with actions designated as short or long term, and then assigned to one of following three elements of the Vision document:
 - Wisbech – a great place to work
 - Wisbech – a great place to live
 - Wisbech – a great place to visit
- 1.5 Finally, a 'Theme Lead' was assigned to each of the 29 short term and long term actions to help lead the partner agencies who would be driving the vision forward, and also to provide progress updates when requested.
- 1.6 The final Wisbech 2020 Vision document was launched in January 2013 at the first Wisbech 2020 Vision launch. It was also posted onto the dedicated Wisbech 2020 Vision website (www.wisbech2020vision.co.uk) with links to the Wisbech 'Shape Your Place' website (www.wisbech.shapeyourplace.org). Many organisations took part in a symbolic signing of the Vision document at the launch event to illustrate their commitment to the delivery of the Vision.

2. PROGRESS TO DATE

- 2.1 Action to deliver the Vision started immediately by theme leads with regular progress updates and press releases provided. Progress on all short term actions was provided in mid 2013 and posted on the Wisbech 2020 Vision website (please go to <http://www.wisbech2020vision.co.uk/article/7533/Wisbech-2020-Vision-progress-update> for more information).

- 2.2 To inform the second Wisbech 2020 Vision Summit, theme leads have recently been asked to supply further updates on the short and long term actions which will be shared at the event scheduled for 2 May 2014.
- 2.3 Some key examples of achievements against the Wisbech 2020 Vision and other projects associated with the town include:

Wisbech – a great place to work

- Over £300k of funding has been secured from the LEP to develop a skills pilot in the local area.
- The Wisbech Loyalty Card has been launched to encourage more visits to local retailers. Approximately 900 cards have been issued to date.
- An economic and spatial analysis of Wisbech has been carried out by the University of Cambridge to help support our economic development activity and support external funding bids.
- A Wisbech Job Café has opened and provides help to local people seeking employment.
- Detailed studies have been commissioned to build the business case for investment in Wisbech rail links. Lobbying on this, and improvements to the A47, has raised the profile and priority of these schemes with Government.

Wisbech – a great place to live

- The £7.2 million College of West Anglia Technology Centre officially opened in February 2014 to provide new engineering, manufacturing and motorsport courses through £1.5 million of funding from Fenland District Council, as well as further support from the College of West Anglia and Cambridgeshire County Council. This important educational establishment has secured delivery of a number of key courses at the campus and access to further education to Wisbech and Fenland residents.
- Awdry House, the new £6.5 million site for Cambridgeshire County Council was opened in October 2013 on the College of West Anglia site providing a central hub for county council services in Wisbech.
- Fenland District Council contributed £400,000 to the Building Schools for the Future project at the Thomas Clarkson Academy to provide an enhanced performance space for both school and community use.
- The Delamore Horticultural Skills Centre opened in August 2013 providing new opportunities for apprenticeships within its new state-of-the-art facilities, including a classroom and a special training greenhouse, will cater for work-based student. This was achieved through support from Fenland District Council and funding from the Greater Cambridgeshire Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise supporting an important industry to develop and grow in the town.
- A Heritage Lottery Fund Bid is currently being developed for submission in August 2014 focusing on improving the High Street area of Wisbech through working with partners and the community.
- The completed Cromwell Park development on Cromwell Road has now opened with a large Tesco store and a cinema and restaurants opening shortly. The old Tesco site is currently being demolished to make way for new retail units which will provide employment for local people and a diverse retail offer on one of the main gateways into Wisbech.
- An agreement has been secured to commence house building on the former gas works site within the Nene Waterfront Regeneration area. This follows on from the successful completion of the infrastructure works to the sites including road surfacing and junction improvements.

- Wisbech was the main focus of Operation Pheasant and Operation Endeavour which has helped to tackle rogue landlords and exploitation in the area. This is a great example of partner agencies working together to address large and complex problems in a localised area. This approach has been recognized nationally and the Council has successfully bid for funding to tackle rogue landlords in Fenland. The grant of £178,600 over two years was awarded and commenced in January of this year. The Council has increased capacity in key enforcement areas to take a tough stance on poor property conditions, inadequate and illegal management, planning and tenancy relations to tackle illegal evictions and harassment. The work continues to be part of the broader Operation Pheasant Task force.
- Intensive work has been on going to address derelict buildings in the town. This includes a proactive approach to using Council powers to bring buildings back into use through the use of section 215 notices and liaising with property owners.
- An innovative approach has seen the development of a fantastic design for the disused Coalwharf Road site opposite the historic North Brink through a Design Competition which was the result of a land swap between Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council which also paved the way for a new Pupil Referral Unit.
- There has been a marked increase in the number of children in Wisbech applying for free school meals as a result of proactive partnership working and direct communication to local families. This means that schools receive extra funding for every additional child in receipt of free school meals as well as the child receiving a healthy meal.
- Joint patrols of the Council's Street Scene Officers and the Police have been used to address 'hot spot' areas around the town, helping to address alcohol related littering and increase pride in the local area.
- Targeted actions around illegal money lending have been well received by the public, and a credit union has now been set up in the town.
- Wisbech had a fantastic result at the national Britain In Bloom Awards achieving a Silver Gilt medal in their category with glowing praise from the judges. This was thanks to all of the hard work of the various 'Friends of' groups and Street Pride volunteers who tend lovingly to our parks, gardens and open spaces in the town with support from the Council's contractor, The Landscape Group.
- Wisbech was placed at number 24 in 2013 The Times' list of the 30 Best Towns in Britain alongside Henley-in-Arden and Bradford-on-Avon. Places were chosen on the basis of their history, housing, amenities and looks. The Times said, "Wisbech is an impressive Georgian town. Its people are creative; it is home to the Angles Theatre and an operatic society".

Wisbech – a great place to visit

- New brown tourist signs have been installed at key locations signposting the town from the A47 and to key tourist attractions such as Elgoods brewery, enabling visitors to find the town's attractions easily and discover new attractions.
- Octavia Hill Garden is now complete following funding providing a haven for visitors to the museum as well as regenerating a previously disused site.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 The next Wisbech 2020 Vision summit will take place on Friday 2 May 2014 at the Boathouse in Wisbech. Local county, district and town councillors representing Wisbech and the local rural area will receive an invitation, along with other stakeholders and the press. The event will be sponsored by Anglian Water.

3.2 The agenda for the summit is broadly as follows:

- A recap of the last year (including achievements to date)
- 3 workshop sessions to discuss progress to date and any new actions which need to be included in the vision document.
- Feedback from the workshop sessions
- Final comments and close

3.3 Feedback from the Summit will be collated and used to refresh the existing Wisbech 2020 Vision document which will be published mid-2014.