

Report of:	To:	Date	Item No.
Cllr Peter Murphy, Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder	Council	30 July 2015	9(d)

### Executive Report: Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder

#### Purpose of report

#### 1.

- 1.1 To inform Council of progress on key objectives and the current position on issues within the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio, as set out below.

#### 2. Coastal Communities Fund Scheme

- 2.1 The restoration of Euston Park was completed for the official opening ceremony on the 15 June. Work remaining involves completing the fountain installation and adjacent seating. There is an expected underspend of £15,000.
- 2.2 Construction of the water play facility and café started in January and is scheduled for completion in the near future. A grant of £30,000 has been awarded by the Lancashire Environmental Fund to enhance the inclusive play area. The construction of a skate bowl was completed in May and associated landscape works in June 2015. An official opening ceremony for both attractions is planned for early August.
- 2.3 Work on the Ecology Zone at Rossall included site investigations, ecological surveys, access improvements, new signage, and seed collection. Following extensive community and visitor consultation a Masterplan was produced taking into account people's views and this will be submitted for discharge of planning conditions soon.
- 2.4 The Marine Lakes works have now been completed with improvements to the depth of water, replacement of aprons, installation of safety steps, new access routes for circular walks, a boat access ramp and an enhanced refuge for overwintering birds.
- 2.5 The Events Programme and Training Programme for SMEs and the unemployed will continue in year 2 and will be tailored based on business feedback.

### **3. Business support**

- 3.1** The next event will take place on 9 September at Fleetwood FC.
- 3.2** An 8 page Wyre Business Review was published in late June in the Blackpool Gazette, Garstang Courier and Fleetwood Weekly News. We had 12 businesses and services signed up to the review, each contributing towards the cost of £6,000. Feedback so far has been positive with another review being planned for next year. An electronic version and hard copies are available for businesses to promote themselves.
- 3.3** Plans are underway for two major business events in 2015. The Wyre Expo taking place on 14 October at the Marine Hall will be a business expo, where companies from across the Fylde Coast come together to do business. The second event is the Wyre Business Awards which is taking place on 26 November at the Marine Hall, this will be the second awards event.

### **4. Wyre Local Growth Plan**

- 4.1** Work has begun on updating and reviewing the Wyre Local Growth Plan. A revised document will be available in September 2015.
- 4.2** There have been some significant improvements with regard to the Key Strategic Initiatives (KSIs), particularly KSI3 – ‘Strengthen the relationship between employers and skills providers’ with the number of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants reducing by 123 to 601. Also in respect of KSI6 – ‘Ensure the viability and vitality of our town centres’ it is noted that the number of vacant shop units in Garstang has reduced by about 50%.

### **5. Growth accelerator**

- 5.1** Completion of the Fylde Coast Growth Accelerator Study (GAS) has been delayed due to other work to establish a new Enterprise Zone at Blackpool Airport. The GAS needs to be considered by the EDC Board. The study will identify the main growth opportunities in the area and include an action plan to highlight key activity to maximise positive economic impact.

### **6. Planning policy**

#### **Local Plan**

- 6.1** Consultation on the ‘Issues and Option’ document for the Local Plan which sets out key issues, a vision and objectives, three strategic options for the distribution of development and development options in each of the settlements, started on 17 June and will finish on 7 August. Consultation was extended by a week from the earlier end date of 31 July. A briefing was given to Parish and Town Council Ambassadors; and a briefing to LALC was given on 16 July. Staffed ‘drop in sessions’ events have taken place in Garstang, Poulton, Thornton and Great Eccleston and they have all been well attended. Main issues raised include; impact on the character of the area, loss of greenfield land and inadequacy of infrastructure to cope with additional development, especially roads, schools and health facilities. Further staffed ‘drop in sessions’ are planned at Fleetwood and Stalmine.

- 6.2** Progress on defining a housing requirement for the Local Plan has slipped slightly. It is important that evidence is robust and therefore the consultants working on a number of scenarios for identifying job growth figures have been asked to re-consider certain assumptions. Consequently work relating to the housing requirement has also been delayed. As previously reported the housing requirement needs to align with economic growth targets. Work is also progressing in relation to constraints, in particular flood risk and highways. It is necessary to run modelling to understand the implications on the local highway network in Wyre, but also parts of the network in Blackpool, following concerns raised by Blackpool. It is anticipated that these various work streams will be concluded later in the summer and will feed into defining a housing requirement figure in the local plan.
- 6.3** The Planning Policy Working Group met on 15 July to consider the draft Settlements Study and the Green Infrastructure / Playing Pitch Strategy. A workshop on the Settlement Study will also be organised with Parish and Town Council Ambassadors.

### **Fylde Coast Highways and Transport Masterplan**

- 6.4** The County Council considered the Highways and Transport Masterplan on 9 July with a recommendation to approve. It is disappointing that the County did not engage again with district Councils on the Masterplan prior to its adoption. It has not been possible to obtain documents in time for this report and therefore more detail will be given in the next report. It is understood that the Masterplan continues to safeguard the 'blue' route.

### **Lancaster Highways and Transport Masterplan**

- 6.5** There has not been any further information regarding the Lancaster Highways and Transport Masterplan which was published in March for public consultation.

## **7. Development management**

- 7.1** In the 12 months to end of March 2015 our performance on the speed of decision making for major applications has been relatively poor with only 49% being decided within the requisite 13 week timescale. One significant reason for this has been the slow response from statutory consultees, particularly Lancashire County Council Highways. We are, however, in the top group nationally for the quality of decision making on major applications with no decisions made overturned on appeal.

## **8 Comments and questions**

- 8.1** In accordance with procedure rule 11.3 any member of Council will be able to ask me a question or make a comment on the contents of my report or on any issue, which falls within my area of responsibility. I will respond to any such questions or comments in accordance with Procedure Rule 11.5.