

Regeneration Panel – Final Report

Report of the Chairman of the Panel – Cllr Gwynne

Recommended:

- 1. That the Committee endorses the proposals of the Regeneration Panel:-**
 - a. That all councillor briefings be arranged to update on progress with both masterplans at least annually, or at key milestones;**
 - b. That a review of progress and next steps for the Andover masterplan to be undertaken in 2026; and**
 - c. That all member briefings be held on the future business plan for the new theatre and the current management arrangements for the Chantry Centre.**
- 2. That the findings of the Regeneration Panel as set out in recommendation 1 are recommended to Cabinet.**

SUMMARY:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointed a member panel to review the approach being taken to the regeneration of our town centres with a specific focus on the Andover programme. This report summarises the findings of the panel.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Regeneration is a key deliverable for the Council as part of its commitments in the Corporate Plan. Given the significant nature of the Regeneration projects, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that it should form part of the scrutiny work programme. This was to help Councillors further develop their understanding of the approach being taken and be an opportunity to review progress and offer feedback that will support the council in delivering these key strategic programmes of work.

2 Background

- 2.1 Since setting up the panel, members have gained an understanding of background to the masterplans, with a specific focus on the Andover regeneration programme given its greater complexity, cost, resource demand and duration. The Romsey masterplan did form part of the panel discussions for the purposes of comparison.
- 2.2 The scope of the panel was agreed on 22 November 2023 with a timeline that sets out the panel would final report back in 2024. The panel met twice during this time. The panel was chaired by Cllr Gwynne and included Cllrs K Brooks, Cattell, Gidley, Gregori and Hasselman.

3 Review Findings

- 3.1 The Panel acknowledged the extensive range of work that the Council has undertaken and will do as the masterplan moves from concept to delivery. The panel received information on the background to the Andover masterplan and the evidence used to support its creation. This focussed on two main elements, engagement and deliverability. A summary was given on the type and scale of engagement that was undertaken to develop the masterplan proposals. The background to the timeline of land acquisition and the partnership work with other key landowners helped provide the context for the scope of the masterplan.
- 3.2 In terms of deliverability, the Panel understood that the Council recognised the need for a changing offer for the town centre early and adopted a proactive approach to regenerating its town centres in Andover and Romsey. In Andover, the Council has funded the new Leisure Centre and acquired the Former Magistrates Court. In 2019, the Council acquired the freehold of the Chantry Centre, not as a commercial investment proposition, but to gain control of an asset considered critical to the regeneration of the whole town centre.
- 3.3 What the Panel felt was that for the newer Councillors and those non Andover Councillors there was a gap in understanding of the story behind the Council's masterplan and what progress has been made. This is especially for those newly elected Councillors and for those that don't represent an area covered by one of the masterplans. There was a similar gap in knowledge between the masterplans and the links with Andover Vision (AV) and Romsey Future (RF). The opportunity for panel members to attend AV and RF meetings was arranged but due to commitments not all panel members could attend.
- 3.4 Discussion was had on the role of AV and Andover Councillors in the masterplan and comparison made with RF. There were areas of similarity between the involvement of Andover and Romsey Councillors in the masterplans, particularly with regards to formal updates from key officers. Also, since the second panel meeting, the Council has procured architects to bring forward designs for the new theatre. Andover Councillors, along with other key partners, such as the BID, took part in the successful selection process. This process reflects that used by RF in the choice of consultants for the masterplan. What was demonstrated was that there was a need for sharing updates with all councillors when appropriate.

The Panel proposes that all councillor briefings be arranged to update on progress with both masterplans at least annually, or at key milestones.

- 3.5 As part of the discussions, it was highlighted to Panel members that the Andover masterplan document sets out some of the actions that would be necessary to help deliver the four elements of the masterplan and make wider improvements to the town centre. Following the adoption of the masterplan one of the projects identified was the redevelopment of the Chantry Centre.

The likely first phase of regeneration was to be the demolition and redevelopment of the northern arm of the Chantry Centre that accesses the High Street. The Panel were briefed on the detailed phasing, feasibility and viability work that had been undertaken to inform any future decisions that the Council would have to make.

- 3.6 However, the Panel recognised the timeline of events and the announcement of the Levelling Up Fund meant that to make the most of this opportunity the Council needed to reconsider which project would be the first phase. This led to the Council choosing to deliver the Western Avenue/ Riverside Park and the new Theatre in the heart of the town. One of the discussion points was the ability for the Council to react, respond and to shift focus where these external funding opportunities arise. Whilst the success of the LUF bid was much welcomed by the Panel, it was highlighted of the need to monitor the capacity of the Council's resources to be able to react and the impact this has on the timeline for phasing and delivery of the other elements of the masterplan.
- 3.7 A summary was provided by the Head of Finance regarding the estimated project costs, potential funding sources and the details behind the approved Council funding strategy for the four initial regeneration projects for Andover and Romsey. The Panel questioned what the next stage of delivering the masterplan would be once Western Avenue/Riverside Park and the new theatre anticipated completion by 2027. The Panel wanted to understand which elements of the masterplan would come forward next but also the mechanism for securing funding and delivery. At this stage it is too premature to identify with a degree of certainty what the next stage will be. As such the Panel recommends that the Council should undertake a review on how best to focus its resources prior to any future commitment on subsequent regeneration projects.

The Panel proposes that a review of progress and next steps for the Andover masterplan to be undertaken in 2026.

- 3.8 The Panel recognised that redevelopment is only one aspect of a successful town centre regeneration. The role of partnership working, communication and place branding all contribute to maintaining and enhancing a vibrant town centre. There was also a recognition of the importance of enhancing a mixture of uses including culture can help support the town. Panel members also asked questions about the future business plan for the new theatre and about the current management arrangements for the Chantry Centre. Whilst this fell outside of the scope of this panel, it was felt that there would be benefit in recommending an all member briefing session to be had on both aspects.

The Panel proposes that all member briefings be held on the future business plan for the new theatre and the current management arrangements for the Chantry Centre.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 This report brings together the work of the Regeneration Panel. It sets out the findings of the panel and proposals that should be considered as the Council moves forward with its regeneration projects in Andover.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u> Andover Masterplan 2020			
<u>Confidentiality</u> It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	None		
Author:	Councillor N Gwynne	Ext:	N/A
File Ref:	N/A		
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	9 October 2024