

**REPORT TO:** CABINET OVERVIEW WORKING GROUP

**DATE:** 12 MARCH 2020

**TITLE:** REGENERATION STRATEGY – INTERIM REPORT

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**RECOMMENDED that** the Working Group notes:

- A** The progress towards production of the Regeneration Strategy.
- B** That the final Regeneration Strategy will be reported to a Working Group meeting in the next municipal year.

## **BACKGROUND**

1. At its meeting on 10 October 2019 the Overview Working Group established a sub group comprising of Councillors Simon Carter, Tony Edwards and Frances Mason to help produce a Regeneration Strategy. Due to the General Election in December 2019, the sub-group held one meeting prior to the close of 2019 and has then met on a further three occasions in January and February 2020.
2. The sub-group has reviewed and discussed a variety of recent evidence, and assessed progress since the Council's previous Regeneration and Social Inclusion Strategy was adopted in 2010. The sub-group has also conducted a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis for the future Regeneration of Harlow. As directed by the Working Group, themes discussed to date include Infrastructure, Employment and Skills, Business, Arts and Culture and Neighbourhood Renewal. The sub-group has also reviewed and noted the changing organisational structures and relationships since the previous strategy was developed to understand how the new Strategy will need to influence the work of partners.
3. Following consideration of this interim report, the sub-group will continue to meet to consider the remaining themes. These are:
  - a) Utilising public sector assets;
  - b) Community leadership; town centre regeneration;
  - c) Embedding climate change mitigation and social inclusion to the strategy;

- d) Consider a PESTLE (political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental) analysis for the future regeneration of Harlow; and
  - e) Develop the vision and overarching Regeneration Strategy for Harlow.
4. In addition to this there will be engagement with the relevant Portfolio Holders to discuss and consultation with community and voluntary sector leaders.

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

### **Progress Since 2010-15 Strategy**

5. The number of businesses in the town has continued to grow, up from 2,060 in 2010 to 3,010 in 2019. Jobs (including self-employed jobs) in the town have grown from 42,000 in 2010 to 47,000 in 2018.
6. Significant infrastructure regeneration has taken place including:
- a) Pathfinder project delivered 18 new council houses at The Hill, Fesants Croft and Felmongers;
  - b) Prentice Place, the refurbishment of the neighbourhood centre and 16 council homes is nearing completion;
  - c) Housing schemes delivered at Carters Mead and Vince Dunn Mews;
  - d) Clifton Hatch has been redeveloped delivering new retail facilities and 26 new homes;
  - e) Bromley Cottages, two ex-Council void properties refurbished and now run by Streets2Homes to provide accommodation for up to nine homeless people;
  - f) Wissants, redevelopment of a flat block to provide six new homes for affordable rent;
  - g) The Briars, Copshall Close and Aylett Field is in the final phase of redevelopment with the new Atelier housing scheme, delivering 343 dwellings with around 200 affordable homes;
  - h) Fern Hill Travellers site refurbished;
  - i) New housing developments delivered at Fifth Avenue, Newhall (2,500 when complete), Gilden Park, Tanyard Place (65 homes) and Ram Gorse;
  - j) The Town Park has benefitted from a £2.8 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant to restore Pets Corner, the Bandstand, Spurriers House and landscaping. This has also delivered a new café, Learning Centre and

Events Barn and a range of educational and training opportunities in the Park;

- k) Major sporting facilities have been redeveloped and renewed. The Leisurezone has been completed, new Rugby Club, and football stadium and athletics provision;
- l) Improvements to the A414 completed, namely the 'hamburger' roundabout and dual carriageway to M11 Junction 7, Clocktower roundabout, First Avenue roundabout and current Edinburgh Way scheme due to complete in summer 2020;
- m) Harlow Railway Station refurbished and multi storey car park complete;
- n) New Lister Medical Centre at Staple Tye;
- o) New multi-screen Cineworld in Town Centre and Market Square refurbishment;
- p) New educational facilities at Harlow College – university centre building, Advanced Manufacturing Centre and BMAT STEM Academy;
- q) New Passmores secondary school built and two secondary schools being rebuilt or built new – Mark Hall School and the Sir Frederick Gibberd College;
- r) Harlow Enterprise Zone – Kao Park refurbishment of ex-Nortel buildings for Grade A office space complete and occupied, the first of data centre of the Kao data centre campus built;
- s) Harlow Enterprise Zone – the first two buildings complete of the new Harlow Science Park – Nexus and Anglia Ruskin University Business Innovation Centre; and
- t) Public Health England have begun work on site to enable the move of their Headquarters and National Science Hub to Harlow.

7. Since 2010, new organisations and relationships that affect regeneration have evolved. New agencies include Homes England, the Cities and Local Growth Unit, and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. At a local level the Council is initiating the Harlow Growth Board which will bring together the key agencies involved in securing, influencing and enabling Harlow's growth and renewal. In addition, the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town board has been created with Government support to help kick-start house building. Harlow Council's Regeneration Strategy now sits within and influences the Organisational Structure.

8. Issues arising from the evidence and themes so far discussed:

- a) Ageing infrastructure – as noted above, although much has been achieved within the last 10 years in terms of renewal, as a former new town, Harlow still faces the challenge that infrastructure is ageing at the same time;
- b) Low incomes – although resident earnings per week have risen by £96 per week since 2008, they are now £67 per week lower than the national average and £85 per week lower than average workplace earnings in Harlow. This is an improvement on the position in 2008 when the gap between average workplace earnings and average resident earnings was £193. In 2018, average full time earnings were the lowest in Essex;
- c) The most recent Indices of Multiple Deprivation shows sustained improvement for Harlow since 2010 but still leaves Harlow as the second most deprived district in Essex. Harlow district is ranked 100 of 317 local authority areas which is an improvement in rank from 68 in 2010. The district is in the lower 40 per cent of most deprived lower tier local authorities nationally;
- d) Skills levels, although improvements have been made, continue at lower than national averages in terms of proportions of the working age population qualified at all NVQ Levels;
- e) Education levels – In 2018, 59.6 per cent of pupils achieved grade 9-4 in English and Maths (a good pass) which is above the England average and 38.3 per cent achieved grade 9-5 (a strong pass) which is just below the England average of 39.9 per cent, at GCSE. Higher Education participation remains lower than the national average;
- f) Growing businesses – numbers of businesses are increasing however the numbers of employee jobs remains broadly similar over the last few years. Appropriate land, accommodation and support to enable businesses to grow and employ more people are a key focus;
- g) Continue to diversify housing offer – in order to support economic regeneration and provide homes for existing residents, an increasing and varied supply of housing type and tenure is required. In addition to this investment is required to deliver neighbourhood centre and housing renewal to ensure the towns existing neighbourhoods compare well to new neighbourhoods of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town developments;
- h) Housing, population and economic growth means that the town's infrastructure, services and assets will need to be robust in order to meet increased needs. Growth can deliver regeneration for Harlow but ensuring investment in the right infrastructure and capture of investment from growth outside of Harlow's borders which will be required to enable it to happen;

- i) Investment and resources must extend to arts and culture and ensure a cultural regeneration of Harlow, building upon the world class public sculpture collection, the towns existing incredibly diverse creative sector and its strong heritage in performance ranging from dance to music and drama. The sub-group recommends the production of a Public Arts Strategy document;
  - j) Ensuring Climate Emergency mitigation must play a central role in our new Regeneration Strategy. This must encourage opportunities at development stage for the built environment and consider how we encourage our businesses to adopt low carbon practice, service and product innovation. Sustainable travel must be a priority and public transport, walking and cycling need to be prioritised. To enable this we must secure investment for our extensive cycle track network, improving maintenance, security and lighting, connectivity and priority over roads. Similarly, the improvement of public transport through frequency, comfort and reliability, new routes and ease of use must be encouraged;
  - k) Digital innovation can underpin regeneration, improving services, customer experience, quality of life, resource efficiency and the environment. As the birth place of fibre optic telecommunications, this is also a key theme for the Regeneration Strategy;
  - l) Inclusion must be at the heart of our Regeneration Strategy, driving opportunities for all of our communities; and
  - m) Continue to develop Discover Harlow to promote Harlow, challenge negative perceptions and encourage visitors, new business, residents and investment.
9. Harlow has some extraordinary once in a generation opportunities to truly transform the town and its residents prospects. The Council will seek to work with partners to maximise the benefits from these opportunities whether they be for employment and skills, economic or business outcomes, cultural or wider social benefits. By working together innovative solutions and outcomes can be sought
- a) Public Health England cements Harlow's place at the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor, bringing 2,700 jobs and business supply chain opportunities;
  - b) Harlow Enterprise Zone and Harlow Science Park provides space to attract businesses within the target sectors of Life Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing, and ICT;
  - c) Harlow and Gilston Garden Town brings housing growth, vision and impetus for sustainable transport development;

- d) A new Junction 7a on the M11 will support Harlow's economic and housing growth;
- e) A new Princess Alexandra Hospital will bring much needed renewal of health facilities for a growing population in its catchment area; and
- f) Town Centre renewal will deliver a town centre fit for a growing population at the heart of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and a growing economy home to global companies and Public Health England. It will encompass a new residential offer, sustainable transport interchange, new leisure and commercial opportunities and improved night time economy.

10. The above assets will enable Harlow to grow and regenerate, benefiting from its location at the core of the UK Innovation Corridor in close proximity to London, Cambridge and Stansted Airport. With collaboration through the Harlow Growth Board, opportunities outlined in Harlow's Regeneration Strategy can be progressed.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)**

The production of a new Regeneration Strategy will complement the Council's emerging Local Plan and help to deliver the longer term vision that is set out there. The development of this strategy can work in parallel with the development of various strands of Supplementary Planning Guidance following adoption of the new Local Plan.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning**

### **Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)**

None specific.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Chief Executive**

### **Housing**

As outlined in the report.

**Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

### **Community Wellbeing (Includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

### **Governance (Includes HR)**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance**

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Harlow Regeneration and Social Inclusion Strategy (2010-2015)

## **Background Papers**

None.

## **Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

BMAT – Biomedical Admissions Test

PESTLE – Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats