

Area West – 20th June 2007

## 9. Chard and Area Community Plan

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### Purpose of the Report

To advise members of the progress of the Chard & Area Community Plan and update members of wider community regeneration issues in Chard.

### Recommendation

That members note the contents of the report.

### Background

Chard has a Community Plan “Chard’s Flying Start”, which has been prepared by Action for Chard Town (ACT) funded under the Market and Coastal towns Initiative. The plan was published in October 2005 and is based on a series of consultation events that took place within Chard. The key aims of the Community Plan are as follows:

- Improve the skills of Chard workforce and encourage better quality jobs.
- Sustain Chard’s viability and vitality as a market town.
- Ensure that Chard’s infrastructure and support systems are available to all who need them.
- Raise peoples self esteem and aspirations and bring back a sense of community pride.

### Report

ACT as a group continues to meet and has been involved with a number of projects in 2006/07. Its most successful project was the family learning event that was held in October 2006 at the Chard Guildhall. The event was a great success and has received a national award. Planning has already commenced for another such event this year.

ACT has completed the creation of its public transport survey covering Chard and the surrounding area and is in the process of having this distributed. This survey should help to inform future decision making in the area of public transport provision. It is anticipated that results will be available in September this year.

ACT has completed the production of a planning brief for an “enviro centre”. This is a business incubation proposal for a centre to encourage the start up of green-based businesses in the area. The document has now been completed and will be officially launched shortly. ACT is currently approaching possible partners to take the project forward.

Work continues on the community garden project to be created at the junction of Fore Street and Silver Street. Initial designs have been drawn up and ACT is in the process of commissioning an architect to complete a final design and cost estimates for the project.

Officers continue to support ACT and continue to see it as a valuable mechanism for involving the community in the delivery of regeneration projects for the town and surrounding area.

## **ACT AGM**

The ACT AGM was held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2007 and was a successful event. A number of new people who have previously not been involved in the community planning process attended the event and indicated a desire to become involved. This included 2 members from the Portuguese speaking community and members expressed a desire to initiate projects to foster improved community relations between the Portuguese and non-Portuguese speaking communities. A new chair, vice chair, treasurer and secretary were elected at the meeting. The organisations finances are in a healthy state and members are keen to pursue new projects in the coming year. The group have already agreed to concentrate on the project to stage an annual festival of flight in the town and initial plans are under discussion.

## **ACT Future**

ACT was formed by a number of local volunteers, with encouragement from SSDC. Throughout the MCTI project in Chard, SSDC officers and members have consistently recognised and supported the achievements of ACT in bringing forward ideas and practical proposals for local improvements. As an organisation ACT still has a role to play in delivering these. However, it is recognised that it is no longer appropriate for their role to be the leading one in the development of a much more strategic vision for Chard. It is for this reason that we are establishing the Chard Vision project (For further information on the Chard Vision proposals see report to District Executive January 2007). The Council has recently appointed an Economic Development Officer who will be seconded to Area West from September 2007 for 18 months to support the development of the Chard Vision.

It is anticipated that the Chard Vision will work in partnership and in parallel with ACT, concentrating on some of the more long term strategic issues for the town. This will then leave ACT to develop some of the more localised projects.

## **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications for Area West Committee.

## **Implications for Corporate Priorities**

- Increase to 65% by 2010 the people who feel engaged in and can influence decisions that affect their communities – (Objective 15).
- Maintain above 80% the people satisfied with their neighbourhoods as a place to live (Objective 16).

**Background Papers:** None.

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