

## The Highland Council

City of Inverness Area Committee – 21 October 2013

Agenda Item	5
Report No	CIA/53/13

### City Development Officer Working Group – Update Report

#### Report by Director of Planning and Development

#### Summary

This report updates the Committee on the projects being co-ordinated through the City Development Officers Working Group. Members are asked to note progress to date.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 Following a report on the establishment of a City Development Officer Working Group (CDOWG) in August 2012, it was agreed that six monthly update reports would be provided to the Committee. The aim of the CDOWG is to promote, align and deliver the programme of projects, working with the teams and partners who manage each project to achieve the best results.
- 1.2 The CDOWG has met on a six-weekly cycle since August 2012 and has identified a number of priority projects arising from the Inverness City Vision and other plans and strategies for the city. These are set out in more detail below.

#### 2. City Vision Priority Areas

- 2.1 The Inverness City Vision sets out the overarching vision and aspirations for Inverness. Five action areas were identified where coordinated action and more detailed masterplanning was required. An update on progress with this work is given below:
  - **City Centre** - the City Centre Development Brief was adopted as Supplementary Guidance to the Highland wide Local Development Plan by the City of Inverness Area Committee on 8th October 2012. The purpose of the Brief is to identify and promote key development opportunities within the City Centre and to inform planning and investment decisions. There has been active developer interest on sites identified within the development brief and a number of planning applications are either pending or expected in the short term. There is a separate report on this agenda dealing with a proposed update to the City Centre Development Brief, which will build on discussions between officers from different Services across the Council (particularly in respect of transport).
  - **Ness-side/Torvean** – Work to prepare the Torvean and Ness-Side Development Brief has now been completed. The approved Development brief will now be used to guide development in the area, and to help in the determination of planning applications.
  - **Longman** – Discussions are continuing between the Council and Transport Scotland over longer term transport solutions at the Longman roundabout. As Members are aware, there are a number of issues relating to

development potential on the former landfill site. Most recently the Scottish Prison Service, in a late representation to the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan, has expressed an interest in developing part of the site for a relocated Inverness prison. Whilst still at an early stage, this use, as well as any potential development options will be taken forward as options for consideration in the preparation of a Development Brief for the site (during 2014).

- **Muirtown/South Kessock** – Discussions continue to take place with Scottish Canals on taking forward masterplanning work associated with the Muirtown Basin and surrounding areas. There is still a commitment to prepare a Development Brief for this wider area, and it is hoped that these initial discussions will form part of that work in due course.
- **Inshes/Raigmore** - the development of the campus and continued development of housing and other commercial uses off the Southern Distributor Road increases the importance and attraction of this area within the City. A pre-requisite to further development in the Inshes/Raigmore area is the preparation of a development framework (Development Brief) which will set out the transport improvements necessary to open up existing and potential new areas for development. Whilst formal work on this has not yet started, discussions are underway with Transport Scotland and other development interests, and it is hoped that this work can be co-ordinated through the City Development Officers Group as a priority over the coming months.

### 3. CDOWG Projects

3.1 The CDOWG has identified a series of projects which are currently underway or at inception stage, and efforts have been made to monitor progress, to identify linkages and to be pro-active in moving these forward. The priority projects are identified below, along with an update of progress.

3.2

Project	Update
River Ness Flood Scheme – tidal Phase I	Contract awarded to Morgan Syndall and works commenced on site. Completion targeted at March 2015.
River Ness Flood Scheme Phase II	Tender documents issued with planned start in January 2014 with completion targeted at March 2015
Streetscape 1 (riverside enhancements in Huntley Street and Douglas Row)	Included in the River Ness Flood scheme phase I with works being carried out towards the end of the contract. October 2013 - December 2014.
Streetscape 2 works (including Academy Street)	Design work to identify the opportunities for improving the attractiveness of Academy Street and to promote the regeneration of the wider city centre is an important priority. As Members are aware a bid was made to the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, for improvements to Academy street and Grant street properties and the outcome is awaited. The stage 1 bid was successful and a

		<p>stage 2 bid was submitted on 14<sup>th</sup> October. We will know if we are successful in December 2013</p> <p>Links will be made to ongoing discussions with private developers and to the Townscape Heritage Project (see below).</p>
Academy Street Townscape Heritage Project (including the future opportunities for the Victorian market)		<p>The Council submitted a Townscape Heritage application to the Heritage Lottery Fund on the 30 August 2013. The HLF operate a two stage grant application process. If the Council is successful in obtaining a stage 1 pass in January 2014 then it will have approximately 9-12 months to complete the stage 2 application. It is during this stage that the finer detail of what is proposed is developed with property owners etc. If the Council is successful in achieving a stage 2 pass then the project will commence 1 April 2015 and run for five years.</p>
Inverness Campus		<p>Culloden Road widening with access to the campus complete. Phase 1 construction is now substantially complete. Inverness College building is now progressing with a completion date of summer 2015. HIE and UHI have announced plans for a new joint building on the campus comprising offices, teaching, research, and laboratory facilities. A 6 month OJEU procurement process began in mid-September.</p>
West Link		<p>The planning application for the West Link is scheduled to be lodged in mid-October 2014 with the CPO to be published at the end of October 2013</p>
Prison Relocation		<p>As set out above, the Scottish Prison Service is continuing to seek a new site in Inverness. The CDOWG will continue to liaise with SPS on this important project for Inverness and report back to the Committee as appropriate.</p>
Longman Road Corridor		<p>A further meeting took place with the Scottish Futures Trust (acting on behalf of Inverness College) on the prospects for the reuse or redevelopment of the Longman (and the Midmills Campus) buildings. No firm plans are yet in place, but the intention is that they will prepare development masterplans for both sites, working closely with the Council in order that the most effective linkages can be made to the city centre and other development sites and potential transport improvements.</p>
Private Development Opportunities	Sector	<p>A number of private sector developments are being progressed or promoted throughout the city. An important role for the CDOWG is to identify linkages to other projects where appropriate.</p>

	<p>Discussions have been held with the owners of the land at Rose Street who have permission for a phase 1 student accommodation block, and plans to redevelop the area for phases 2 &amp; 3. Similarly, it is expected that other opportunities, for example at 92-94 Academy Street, Church Street and at the former Al Welders building, will be forthcoming over the coming months. These developments, if managed in a co-ordinated way, could provide impetus to the regeneration of this part of the city. Early opportunities to improve streetscape at Farraline Park, Margaret Street, Rose Street and on specific crossing points on Academy Street could assist the attractiveness of the whole area to the development market, and will be brought forward by the CDOWG, in discussion with Members (see separate report under <a href="#">agenda item 4</a>).</p>
--	---

- 3.3 Other important items that have been considered by the CDOWG have included discussions with a local agent (Ryden) on current market opportunities for Inverness. These discussions will be supplemented over the coming months with input from other local agents and with organisations such as the Scottish Futures Trust

#### **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1 The projects identified in the table above are considered to be the priorities for the CDOWG over the next six months. Other opportunities will be looked at on a case by case basis as they emerge, and Members may wish to suggest others to be considered.

#### **5. Carbon Clever, Legal, Equality and Resource implications**

- 5.1 There are no known direct legal or equality implications arising from this report. Effective integration of development opportunities with wider green travel and high design standards are a fundamental means of delivering the Council's carbon clever aspirations, and as such will be actively managed.
- 5.2 Resources to deliver the projects identified in this report are either committed within the Council's capital programme or within individual Service budgets. External sources of funding are also being investigated, including potential investment opportunities for the City of Inverness Common Good Fund.
- 5.3 Some of the projects identified in this report are not currently supported in the Council's capital programme. In these cases there may be an opportunity for Outline Business Cases to be developed by officers to input to Council consideration of the longer term capital programme.

**6. Recommendation**

- 6.1 The Committee is invited to note progress by the CDOWG on implementing the Inverness City Vision and the priority projects outlined in this report.

Designation: Chief Executive

Director of Planning and Development

Date: 05 October 2013

Author: Malcolm Macleod