North Essex Garden Communities

North Essex Garden Communities Programme

2018/19 Annual Review

Overview

Following implementation of the NEGC Ltd's first Interim Business Plan with all four partner Councils in July 2018, the North Essex Garden Communities programme made significant progress in 2018/19 against the eight identified priorities, whilst also responding proactively and strategically to the evolving situation regarding the North Essex Authorities' Local Plan submission after receipt of the Inspector's initial letter in June 2018.

This Annual Review provides a strategic overview of the NEGC programme outcomes for the 2018/19 year and includes details of the NEGC Ltd accounts for this financial period.

NEGC Priorities

The 2018/19 Interim Business Plan set out eight key areas of focus for the NEGC programme and these were:

- Development Corporation Structure
- Business Strategy & Plan
- Planning & Transport
- Infrastructure & Utilities
- Commercial Delivery
- North Essex Economic Strategy
- PR & Communications Strategy
- NEGC Company Matters

Highlights & Outcomes

The NEGC programme was structured around the most pressing needs of the shareholder councils; namely providing appropriate expert input into the Local Plan process (including the Rapid Transit System study but excluding the Sustainability Appraisal) in order to respond to the specific technical challenges posed by the Inspector, as well as to prepare for the NEGC Ltd's own evidence base, and the undertaking of the holistic groundwork required to explore all options for ongoing delivery models, ahead of the production of an Outline Business Case for the chosen option to be presented to the NEGC Board to approve in November 2019.

Progress on the Delivery Strategy has also included positive engagement with existing landowners and developers, with further discussions planned for 2019/20. In addition, strategic masterplanning was undertaken for all three sites, enabling the completion of the accompanying cost analysis and cash flows. Place making masterplanning will commence during 2019/20 in conjunction with the start of a three-sequence public engagement programme. The programme has also undertaken soft market testing of proposals for an Infrastructure Fund with pension funds and the results of this are forming the basis of discussions with HM Treasury and Homes England during 2019/20.

The reporting year saw the establishment of a new stewardship workstream, which is progressing with the development of an overall vision and strategy that includes governance, asset management, funding arrangements and ongoing community engagement and development.

The NEGC programme also provided strategic masterplanning input towards the submission of the HIF bids for Tendring Colchester Borders (new link road between the A133 and A120 plus the establishment of the rapid transit system) and Colchester Braintree Borders (A12 widening/ repositioning) sites. In addition, a report identifying the Utilities upgrade requirements and costings has been completed, which will be used as the basis of the delivery options appraisal analysis and commercial discussions with providers in 2019/20.

The Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) was commissioned to

produce detailed analysis and evidence for how Garden Communities can contribute to an economic vision and strategy for the North Essex Sub-Region. This has informed the employment figures for the Local Plan evidence as well as providing the basis for the key skills and inward investment workstreams that will be progressed in 2019/20. The Inward Investment work will build upon the success of the "North Essex Opportunity" branding launched at MIPIM UK in October 2018.

In respect of communications and engagement, a number of communications channels have been established and a variety of meetings held with local and national politicians. In addition, there were a series of informal meetings held with key local stakeholders, including parish councils and business advocates. However, the NEGC Ltd Board was constrained from wider engagement on legal advice, pending the outcome of the Sustainability Assessment commissioned by the shareholder councils. Further research was also undertaken with the wider public across North Essex, including some initial polling, all of which will pave the way for targeted engagement and communications activities in 2019/20 as part of the public engagement (Sequence 1), which is planned to commence following the completion of the statutory consultation by the NEAs on the additional Local Plan evidence.

NEGC Ltd Accounts 2018/19

Table 1 summarises the budget position and outturn on the NEGC programme for the 2018/19 year ended March 2019.

This shows that based on the audited outturn to the end of the 2018/19 financial year there is £914k left to carry forward into the financial year 2019/20.

Summary

Overall, programme activity against the 26 milestones for 2018/19 was rated as Green, noting that the 2019/20 Interim Business Plan was endorsed by the Board in June 2019 and subsequently approved by the shareholder councils thereafter, and the final version of the Rapid Transit System report was published the week commencing 1 July 2019 as part of the pack of Local Plan evidence that will be presented to Council Committees over the Summer.

Table 1: NEGC Ltd Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2019

	Actual	Accruals to end March 2019	Out turn March 2019
BUDGET AREA:	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**
Delivery Team	309	3	312
Legal support:			
Delivery Vehicle	140	40	180
Planning	76	0	76
Other	15	24	39
Delivery Support:			
Corporate Finance	243	88	331
Project Management	78	8	86
External Audit	6	4	10
Specialist Delivery Advice	433	24	457
Property Consultants	107	45	152
Infrastructure	0	0	0
Other	274	108	382
Planning	0	34	34
Community & Communications	144	62	206
Contingency	3	0	3
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**1,828**	**439**	**2,267**
FUNDED BY:			
Reserves brought forward	1,526	0	1,526
Government Grant	1,190	0	1,190
Contributions from Essex Councils	465	0	465
TOTAL FUNDING	**3,181**	**0**	**3,181**
Reserves carried forward	1,353	-439	914