

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2008

MAIN STREET, NEWMILNS 'OUTSTANDING' CONSERVATION AREA TOWNSHEME: 47-51 MAIN STREET, NEWMILNS, OFFER OF GRANT - ADDITIONAL FUNDING REQUEST

Report by the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Council to offer an additional building repair grant of £40,000 under the Newmilns Townscheme to help bridge a significant funding gap that has occurred during the implementation of external works to the facades of 47-51 Main Street, Newmilns. The additional funding will enable the project to be completed thus improving the Conservation Area and bringing one retail unit and a flat back into use.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Main Street, Newmilns 'Outstanding' Conservation Area Townscheme is jointly funded by Historic Scotland and the Council and has been in operation since 2004, following on from the significant success of the Newmilns Townscape Heritage Initiative. The Townscheme has helped to improve the visual quality of the Conservation Area as well as bring vacant properties back into use through the grants that have been awarded.
- 2.2 47-51 Main Street, Newmilns is a two-storey flat roofed property in poor condition. The property consists of three ground floor retail units, two of which are currently vacant and a second floor residential property. The external facade of the building has been left to deteriorate for several years and is having a detrimental visual impact on the Conservation Area along with the vacant units.
- 2.3 A grant of £33,000 from Historic Scotland and the Council under the Newmilns Townscheme (£10,000 from Historic Scotland and £23,000 from the Council) was made to the owners of the property, which was accepted on 20 December 2006. The owners contributed £37,140 to the cost of the external works. The internal works are not grant eligible. The total projected project cost at that time for the external works alone was £70,140 including expenses and VAT.
- 2.4 On 1st February 2008, the owners' architects advised that the costs for the project have escalated and that the majority of these costs were unforeseen. On that basis, the Development Planning and Regeneration Section met with the owners and their architects to

discuss the additional costs. The total project costs for the external works is now £130,026 including VAT.

3. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 As indicated in paragraph 2.4, the project costs have now escalated. The owners' have provided evidence that they can only borrow up to a maximum of £19,900 towards the external works, which would leave a gap of £40,000 excluding the internal works. Historic Scotland has already provided the maximum amount of grant that they are allowed under the provisions of the Town Scheme. The owners have advised that without additional funding they would have to abandon the project after making the building structurally sound.
- 3.2 If the project is not completed the building will continue to have a detrimental visual impact on the Conservation Area and could act as a disincentive to other property owners in Newmilns with regards to bringing their vacant buildings back into use using the Town Scheme.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the Council offer an additional grant of £40,000 to help bridge the funding gap that exists subject to stringent conditions. The additional funding will help to improve the Conservation Area, bringing one enlarged retail unit and a flat back into use. It will also provide a positive message to the general public that the Council can assist property owners to repair and bring their vacant properties back into use within the Main Street, Newmilns 'Outstanding' Conservation Area.

4. SUSTAINABILITY

- 4.1 The upgrading and repair of the property will be carried out in long lasting traditional materials and the grant will be subject to appropriate future maintenance of the property.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The additional grant funding of £40,000 can be met from existing budgets, (utilising the £25,000 balance of grants received from Historic Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund in previous years for the Newmilns Townscheme and Townscape Heritage Initiative, and £15,000 from the Improvement Grants element of the 2008/09 Departmental Revenue Budget.)

6. LEGAL/PERSONNEL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Nil.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The grant support through the Newmilns Townscheme contributes to achieving the aims set out in the 'Improving the Environment' Action Plan of the East Ayrshire Community Plan, specifically to regenerate, protect and improve the natural and built environment through sustainable development.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Without this additional funding the property at 47-51 Main Street, Newmilns will remain vacant and incomplete while detracting the character and appearance of the Main Street, Newmilns 'Outstanding' Conservation Area.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet is asked to:
- (i) approve an additional offer of grant of £40,000 towards the repair and upgrading of the property at 47-51 Main Street under the Newmilns Townscheme.

Elizabeth Morton
Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

31 March 2008 (AMcG/SA)
AN-FV

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Colin McKee, Heritage Projects Co-ordinator, on 01563 576759 or Antony McGuinness, Planning Officer, on 01563 576757.