

# EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET 23 JUNE 2010

## FOUR TOWNS ENQUIRY BY DESIGN REPORTS

### Report by Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's views on the Four Towns Enquiry Design reports produced by the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment and agree proposals for how the reports can be utilised to assist the Council's efforts to regenerate these communities.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Princes Foundation for the Built Environment (PFBE) is an internationally recognised educational charity that exists to improve the quality of people's lives by teaching and practicing timeless and ecological ways of planning, designing and building. A key technique is the collaborative planning process known as Enquiry by Design (EbD) where residents, community groups, local businesses and other local stakeholders combine with a range of consultants to jointly prepare a detailed plan of an area following consideration of its history, geographical setting, economy and physical characteristics.
- 2.2 The EbD process is normally applied to one town or village or to design an extension to a town or village. For the very first time the technique was applied by the PFBE to a much larger sub regional area incorporating the towns of Mauchline, Auchinleck, Cumnock and New Cumnock. The 5 day EbD event was held in April/May 2009 and at the end of the week the initial findings and recommendations were presented at a public meeting with a particular focus on town centres. All of the information gathered throughout the week has been brought together by the PFBE into a series of 5 reports. These were finalised in January 2010. There is one report for each community and an over-arching report providing a detailed overview of the area as well as summaries of the key recommendations and proposals for each town. The reports are to be found in the Members' Portal.
- 2.3 An elected members and senior officer seminar to discuss the content of all 5 reports was held in Cumnock Town Hall on 7 April 2010.

#### 3. SUMMARY OF CONTENT

##### 3.1 Volume 1 – Overview Document

Volume 1 provides the background to the 4 Towns EbD event and outlines the methodology behind the EbD process. Importantly the report identifies three themes as the basis for an area wide sustainable regeneration strategy. These are (1) heritage and heritage tourism, (2) transition from a non-

renewable resource economy (mining) to a renewable resource economy and (3) a centre of excellence for traditional and rural skills.

- 3.2 Within the first theme of heritage and heritage tourism emphasis was placed on the need for collaboration across all sites and towns within the sub regional area, on the value that should be attached to conserving and interpreting physical heritage assets and using that as a springboard for regeneration particularly to complement the plans for Dumfries House and Estate and the need for marketing and promotion.
- 3.3 The need for local communities to capitalise on the availability of local wind and biomass energy resources combined with the drive to build low or zero carbon developments was highlighted in the second theme. Proposals by Catrine Community Trust and at Knockroon, Cumnock highlighted the potential for the area to become much more self reliant in terms of energy generation.
- 3.4 The final theme emphasised the opportunities within the local area to set up a centre to teach traditional building crafts and skills, estate management, farming and food production.
- 3.5 All of the above themes were set within an analysis of the transport framework, the local economy, the retail and commercial sector within the area and within each town, and the surrounding landscape and ecology.
- 3.6 A summary of proposals for each town following an urban scale analysis is then provided. It is emphasised that volume 1 must be read in conjunction with each volume dedicated to an individual community. Whilst each town was seen as an individual entity with strengths and key opportunities the connections and interdependence of all 4 communities to the surrounding landscape is also emphasised.
- 3.7 The physical structure of each town is analysed and a 'diagnosis diagram' outlining the various issues that need to be tackled is provided. This is followed by a set of masterplans for key areas of the town which show how the issues identified can be addressed. More detailed strategies covering movement and connectivity, landscape and ecology, health and education and retail and commercial uses underpinning the masterplans are provided in each individual volume for each of the four towns.

### **Mauchline**

- 3.8 Key proposals for Mauchline include those that tackle traffic congestion and promoting its urban environment. Particular attention is paid to how the central area and its many historic buildings could be promoted (for example through a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme) to capitalise not only on the town's links with Robert Burns but with the manufacture of curling stones and Mauchline box ware. The town's identification in the Ayrshire Structure Plan as a strategic expansion location and the proposed bypass are acknowledged but proposals to create additional capacity in the road network without the need for a bypass are put forward, as an option following the EbD process.

### **Auchinleck**

- 3.9 The masterplan for Auchinleck focuses on the town centre. Its aim is to show how new residential and mixed use development can be integrated, improving connectivity and movement within the town particularly from the rail station. The rail station is highlighted as a key asset for the town and proposals to make it an attractive and functional arrival and destination point are provided. Detailed design guidance for Main Street is also provided.

### **Cumnock**

- 3.10 The vision for the town centre is to create a primary retail centre for the catchment comprising specialist and comparative retail shops and to reinstate it as a market town for the area. The detailed proposals contained within the masterplan for the town centre are based on the Glaisnock Shopping Centre workshop prepared by the PFBE to support the Council's Cumnock Town Centre regeneration proposals.
- 3.11 A masterplan has also been prepared for the Caponacre industrial estate which introduces mixed and residential uses to the location and creates an interconnected set of streets which reduces the scale of the area whilst integrating the large industrial buildings that currently exist. Small business units and workshops are also incorporated.
- 3.12 A detailed masterplan has also been produced for the streetscape in front of Cumnock Academy.
- 3.13 All of the masterplans follow the principals adopted for the Knockroon development which has outline planning consent. The masterplan for Knockroon was developed following a separate EbD exercise early in 2008. A detailed application for the first phase comprising 80 dwellings, is expected to be submitted for detailed planning approval this summer. Knockroon will be an exemplar project as it is part of the Scottish Government's Sustainable Communities Initiative.

### **New Cumnock**

- 3.14 Proposals relate primarily to the Castle area and Afton Bridgend with the aim of adding definition to the steetscene by careful mixed use and residential infill developments. There are also proposals for redefining public space along the A76 as it is channelled through these areas.

A feasibility study is recommended for that part of the Cairnhill Estate has been cleared to determine how the land could be best utilised to the benefit of the community as a whole. The potential for innovative social enterprises based on renewable energy is noted.

- 3.15 How the communities of Bank Glen, Connel Park, Leggate and Pathhead can grow is also addressed.

## **4. COMMENTARY AND WAY FORWARD**

- 4.1 Many community groups, residents, local business people and others with an interest in the future planning of the 4 communities took part throughout the 5 day EbD event. They should all be congratulated for giving up their own time to help produce the strategies and masterplans. The EbD process has proven

to be very successful in bringing together a cross section of the local community to discuss and shape its own future.

- 4.2 The interconnectedness of all communities (particularly the role of Cumnock as the natural market town for the area) and the fact that the themes emerged from an analysis of the wider geographical area must also be acknowledged. The strength of these themes can be recognised by virtue of the progress that is being made at Catrine, Dumfries House and Estate and Knockroon and are ones that should be examined further.
- 4.3 The proposals and masterplans for each community are visionary in terms of what needs to be done and aim very high in terms of what can be achieved even if it is to be accomplished over a relatively long timeframe. In essence the reports distil into one set of plans what each community would ideally like to see and whilst there is much within them that cannot be objected to they are in many respects highly ambitious at the present time. If the aim had been to raise the aspirations of and guide private and public sector investment in the right direction, in the context of a booming national and local economy, the plans would have been more achievable. However the reality is that there has been limited investment from the private sector over many years as margins have been extremely tight on the back of low values triggered by the sudden and catastrophic loss of mining and other manufacturing jobs. Public sector resources are to be similarly very constrained for many years. So whilst the potential is highlighted by the reports the means available to achieve that potential was not fully considered by the EbD.
- 4.4 Nevertheless there are a number of projects already in evidence that tap into renewable technologies or traditional skills (notably those identified above at Catrine, Knockroon and Dumfries House and Estate) that point the way forward. Other opportunities for taking forward renewable technologies through community enterprises are also identified in the reports for example on land that the Council own in New Cumnock. Implementation of these projects is not likely to bring about major change in the urban realm or in the development of vacant brownfield land quickly. It is probable that many of the detailed aspects of the masterplans will not be realised even within a medium to long time frame.
- 4.5 That being said there is still much of value in the reports and the process has been very beneficial. In particular the identification of the three themes as a springboard for an area wide regeneration strategy is invaluable. Additionally there are many benefits to be gained in setting down in detail through the masterplans what potentially can be accomplished so that when proposals are being considered they can be compared against the masterplans and, if appropriate, suggestions for improvement can be given.
- 4.6 Given particularly the economic context set out in paragraph 4.3 above, it will be important to identify a delivery mechanism which maximises the opportunities available for meeting the aspirations set out in the plans. When exploring the models and in identifying the most appropriate option, consideration should be given to capturing local interest, potential local and other investors and commercial input and building on existing work with the Princes' Charities.

- 4.7 As an early step, there would be considerable advantage in developing a short list of potential projects, in association with local community groups and organisations and as resources allow that they be developed for implementation. As stated above, the identification of a delivery mechanism, including funding streams will be vital.
- 4.8 It is also recommended that the reports be considered for incorporation as supplementary Planning Guidance into the new Local Development Plan for which preparatory work is now underway.
- 4.9 Additionally it is recommended that the Council insert an introductory foreword to the reports outlining their purpose and the way ahead in the light of the above comments. The full text of the proposed introductory foreword is provided in appendix 1 attached to this report.
- 4.10 To conclude, the reports provide a vision of what the future could be like for the 4 Towns and should be accepted only on that basis by the Council. Realising even part of the vision will be challenging and will require commitment and ingenuity from all parties. Early steps will be to work with local communities to help them appreciate that whilst the content of the reports is visionary and something to aspire to they can be of real benefit at the present time and that a start can be made to realising some of the aspirations by drawing up a priority project lists and working to assemble the funding required. Work will also be on identifying options for delivery

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Any financial implications arising from the development and implementation of any projects arising from the reports will be separately assessed and submitted to Cabinet for approval.

## **7. COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The contents of the reports will be a significant contribution to the ongoing review of the Community Plan.

## **8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications directly arising out of this report.

## **9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Managing the expectations of communities and organisations that attended the Enquiry by Design event will be essential. It is proposed that a public feedback session for all four communities is undertaken in the near future.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 It is recommended that Cabinet

- (i) agrees the reports as a detailed vision for the 4 Towns of Mauchline, Auchinleck, Cumnock and New Cumnock;
- (ii) agrees that the reports be considered as Supplementary Planning Guidance in the new Local Development Plan;
- (iii) agrees that the foreword in appendix 1 be inserted before the preface in all of the reports;
- (iv) agrees that the dialogue started by the Enquiry by Design event be continued with community representatives of each community so that a list of priority projects can be prepared;
- (v) agrees that it be remitted to appropriate Officers to explore delivery mechanism options as outlined in the report; and
- (vi) otherwise notes the content of the report.

**Elizabeth Morton**

**Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

10 June 2010

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### **List of Background Papers**

1. Report to Cabinet 8 July 2009, "Four Towns Enquiry By Design".

***Implementation Officer: Alan Neish, Head of Planning & Economic Development***

### Foreword

The regeneration of communities is one of the key objectives of EAC. To achieve that objective requires a deep knowledge and an understanding of what makes each community tick. To that end the Council appointed The Princes Foundation for the Built Environment with the ground breaking request that they apply the Enquiry by Design (EbD) process, which had been successfully undertaken for the proposed extension to Cumnock at Knockroon, simultaneously to the communities of Mauchline, Auchinleck, Cumnock and New Cumnock that straddle the A76 in the southern half of East Ayrshire.

The Princes Foundation held the '4 Towns' Enquiry by Design over 5 days between 27 April 2009 and 1 May 2009.

As a result each community as well as the Council and its partners was helped to better understand the setting and socio-economic context of all four towns, to recognise what makes them special and identify the potential for improvement that exists within them. The final outcome is a unique set of reports that are extremely ambitious, forward looking and visionary and provide a detailed blueprint for change over the long term.

The challenge now is how to translate the vision and blueprint into actions particularly those that can be seen to be making a difference. In the current economic climate that will not be easy to accomplish and will require many years of work.

However EAC has already taken the first step in managing the process of change. It has accepted all of the reports as part of a continuing dialogue started by the EbD event. The next step in the process is to agree a list of priority projects that can be established for each community and to prepare accompanying action plans. The action plans will set out possible funding sources as well as a timetable for implementation.

In addition the reports will be considered as part of the preparatory work which has just started for the Council's new Local Development Plan. The Council will consider the content of each report for inclusion in the plan with the option of approving each individual community report as supplementary planning guidance to enable it to effectively manage future planning proposals.

To conclude the Council is of the view that the reports provide a vision of what the future could be like for Mauchline, Auchinleck, Cumnock and New Cumnock. Realising even part of the overall vision will be very difficult and will require much commitment and ingenuity from all parties including the Scottish Government. The Council and the Princes Foundation for the Built Environment along with the other Princes Charities however are keen to make a start and look forward to working with each community and all its partners to begin to make the vision a reality.