

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JUNE 2007

CUMNOCK TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION : LOCAL CONSULTATION

Report by Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To seek the approval of the Council to establish a formal consultation mechanism involving the business community in Cumnock Town Centre and nominated representatives of East Ayrshire Council.

2. BACKGROUND – CUMNOCK TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVE

- 2.1** Due to structural changes of reduced employment and increasing poverty in the economy of the Coalfields Area, resulting principally from the extinction of the deep mining industry, but also the reducing textile industry and significant change within the agricultural industry, the trading strength of Cumnock Town Centre has declined over the last two decades, or so.
- 2.2** In the early years of East Ayrshire Council and at the suggestion of Local Members, supported by local traders, the Cumnock Town Centre Initiative was formed. This was an informal grouping of local retail businesses trading in the town centre area, whose purpose was to work together and in association with the Council, to promote and increase the sustainability of Cumnock Town Centre.
- 2.3** Initially when established, the Initiative met on a regular basis immediately after the close of the day's trading and focussed its attention on the organisation of events and on associated fund raising. Although initially strong, the local commitment to the Initiative declined and it is now effectively a group of less than a dozen enthusiastic town centre retail businesses, supported by Local Elected Members and officers of the Council. Professional support was also provided on a free of charge and voluntary basis by the Manager of the former Promoting Kilmarnock Town Centre Limited.
- 2.4** It should be noted that the Group was effectively self financing, with no core funding allocation from either East Ayrshire Council or any public sector agency.

3 BACKGROUND – CUMNOCK TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION PROJECT

- 3.1** The Council is committed to a major regeneration project in Cumnock, involving:
- the development of a new supermarket;
 - the redevelopment of the existing Glaisnock Shopping Centre;
 - the development of new office accommodation; and
 - improved parking, traffic management and public realm.
- 3.2** Following a rigorous tendering procedure, the appointment of a preferred development partner was approved by the Council at its meeting on 28 November 2006.
- 3.3** The master-planning stages of the development of the project are nearing completion. It is planned that the finalised master-plan and associated detailed project timetable will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval, soon after the Council's summer recess.
- 3.4** A crucial aspect of securing support for and progressing the Cumnock Town Centre Regeneration Project is local consultation, involving :
- Local residents;
 - Local business community;
 - Other appropriate groups with particular interests (e.g. the tenants in Glaisnock Shopping Centre).
- 3.5** A Project Board to direct and manage the progress of the Regeneration Project has been established within the Council. The Project Director is the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support and the Project Manager is the Business Development & Tourism Manager. The Project Board includes senior officers of other services which have a direct professional contribution to make to the progress of the project and it meets on a fortnightly basis, reporting to the alternate fortnightly meeting of the Corporate Management Team.
- 3.6** Monthly project progress meetings with the Council's development partner are also held.

4 PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE CONSULTATION MECHANISM

- 4.1** It is considered now to be appropriate and timely that a formal Cumnock Town Centre Liaison Forum be established, much as there is in Kilmarnock, as a consultation mechanism between the local business community and the Council.

- 4.2** To be effective in its role, the following key principles should be applied :
- The Forum should act as a single consultation mechanism, with no opportunity for confusion or duplication;
 - The Forum should be strategic in its approach, whilst allowing the participants to raise other issues of particular interest or concern; and
 - The Forum should be inclusive and representative of all relevant interests.
- 4.3** The remit of the Forum should be in accordance with the following key objectives :
- To reflect the opinions of business people in Cumnock town centre to East Ayrshire Council and other relevant agencies on matters which affect the town centre;
 - To represent the business community and the users of the town centre at various meetings, as required;
 - To highlight issues which, in the opinion of the Forum, are inhibiting the effectiveness of the town centre as a place in which to do business;
 - To work with relevant agencies in the development of effective responses to issues which affect the town centre; and
 - To play a role in informing the wider community about town centre matters.

5 THE WAY FORWARD

- 5.1** It is proposed that the Council should seek to initiate the formal establishment of a Cumnock Town Centre Liaison Forum.
- 5.2** It is important that the Forum is as inclusive as possible and, therefore, every effort will be made to secure the engagement and participation of not only retail interests, but also other businesses operating within the town centre – e.g. solicitors, accountants, banks etc.
- 5.3** Therefore, it is suggested that the membership of the Forum should reflect that which is operating successfully in Kilmarnock and should consist of eight representatives of the town centre business community and four nominated Elected Member representatives of East Ayrshire Council. It is further suggested that the Council's representatives should be the Leader of the Council and one of the two Environment & Regeneration Spokespersons, together with two of the four Ward 8 Members
- 5.4** The administrative servicing of the Liaison Forum should be undertaken by officers of the Department of Corporate Support (Business Development & Tourism team).

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The above proposals will support the achievement of the objectives of the East Ayrshire Community Plan: Improving Opportunities and Improving the Environment.

6.2 The above proposals also accord with the Council's key operating principle of working in partnership with communities, groups and other interests to secure the achievement of shared strategic objectives.

7. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no immediate financial, legal or personnel implications arising as a result of this report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the Council :

- (1) approves the establishment of a Cumnock Town Centre Liaison Forum, as proposed in section 5 of this report;
- (2) nominates appropriate Elected Member representation on the proposed Forum;
- (3) instructs the Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Corporate Support to bring forward a monitoring report on the progress of the consultation arrangements, to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

ELIZABETH MORTON

Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Corporate Support

EM/JRS : 12 June 2007

BACKGROUND PAPERS - Nil

For further information on this report, please contact JOHN SPOONER, Business Development & Tourism Manager on extension 6143.

Implementation Officers

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