

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 8 MARCH 2006

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE – REGENERATION POLICY STATEMENT

Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purposes of this report are to:-

- (a) Inform the Committee of the Scottish Executive Regeneration Policy Statement published on 28th February, 2006 and
- (b) Present initial comments on the Statement and its implications to assist with the realisation of the regeneration of East Ayrshire.
- (c) Recommend to the Committee appropriate responses to the opportunities provided by the Statement.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Following a series of industrial closures representations from the Ayrshire Economic Forum were made to the Scottish Executive regarding the need for additional support to regenerate the Ayrshire economy. The Scottish Executive subsequently organised a meeting in Kilmarnock on 30th March 2005. This was attended by the Deputy First Minister/Minister for Enterprise and Life Long Learning, senior politicians both nationally and locally, Civil Servants, officers from the Councils and delegates from the FE and HE Sectors, Scottish Enterprise and other agencies. The purpose of the meeting was to highlight the challenges facing the area and to identify the opportunities for Ayrshire's future economic stability, diversification and growth.

2.2 The outcomes of the group discussions at the meeting included:-

- There needs to be joint effort to regenerate key locations such as Kilmarnock and Irvine Bay in order to make them more attractive places in which to live and do business.
- The M77 extension offers opportunities for parts of Ayrshire but more needs to be done to improve people's ability to take opportunities that this opens up.
- Improved road and rail infrastructure were considered vital in growing the local economy

- Tourism is a significant opportunity for Ayrshire but its full potential is not being realised
- The current skill stock and its fit with market/employer needs in Ayrshire requires to be better understood.
- Options for better matching of available business space and business requirements need to be explored, as does the private sector's ability to make an acceptable return on investment in commercial property and the implications of this for public sector intervention and collaboration with the private sector.

The Executive undertook to maintain contact with local partners to identify where it can add value and, in accord with the wishes of local partners, ensure some boost to staffing resources as considered most appropriate.

- 2.3 Further meetings have since been held with the Scottish Executive both at political and officer levels and meetings and discussions have also been held with the East Ayrshire Community Plan partners particularly with the Improving Opportunities Group.
- 2.4 Since the initial meeting, East Ayrshire Council has led the development of the Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy and associated projects and this strategy was launched on 26th January 2006. A strategy for the regeneration of Cumnock Town Centre has also been progressed and these and other opportunities will continue to sit within the East Ayrshire Community Plan.
- 2.5 The Council was made aware of the development of the Scottish Executive's Regeneration Policy and were advised that the East Ayrshire/Ayrshire position would be informed in that context.

3. THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE REGENERATION STATEMENT

- 3.1 On 28th February, 2006 the Scottish Executive launched its Regeneration Policy Statement. This is a comprehensive document within which the Scottish Executive confirms that successful regeneration – the lasting transformation for the better of places and communities – is central to achieving its main goal of sustainable economic growth.
- 3.2 The policy statement outlines the approach adopted by the Scottish Executive to date regarding regeneration and sets out a new approach in order to:-
- Improve the alignment of key private and public sector players:

- Maximise the impact of public and private sector investment in specific places;
- Focus its efforts on a small number of strategic geographic priorities;
- Support tightly targeted action to regenerate the most deprived neighbourhoods;
- Tackle land issues which can inhibit regeneration; and
- Create mixed and vibrant communities.

3.3 The Scottish Executive intends to play a wider, more strategic and much more ambitious leadership role on regeneration in the future, including by:-

- Setting out clear geographic priorities for regeneration and working with the private and public sectors to achieve real and lasting transformation there;
- Prioritising the investment that can make the greatest difference;
- Making sure that key players, especially Communities Scotland and Scottish Enterprise work closely together in partnership to plan, deliver and invest in regeneration;
- Removing the barriers to regeneration led by others especially the private sector, and making it easier for others to work with the Executive;
- Maximising the impact of the Scottish Executive investment by seizing new opportunities for collaboration across the Executive and its agencies on spending, and creating favourable conditions for investment;
- Modernising the planning system to ensure that development plans are renewed and kept up to date every 5 years; and
- Taking action right across the Executive, especially through targeted programmes like the Community Regeneration Fund, to support the renewal of the most deprived neighbourhoods.

3.4 The purpose of the Statement is to help ensure that the need to regenerate and renew communities across the country is tackled pro-actively in an integrated way. For the Executive the Enterprise Networks and Communities Scotland, working with the Local Authorities, the private sector and others are at the forefront of regeneration delivery and the roles played by these agencies and also the roles of other national agencies such as Scottish National Heritage, Historic Scotland, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Transport Scotland and sportscotland, amongst others are recognised.

3.5 The Statement confirms that it is at the regional, local and neighbourhood levels where regeneration initiatives actually happen and the Executive sees Community Planning Partnerships taking the lead strategic role in regeneration at this level.

- 3.6 In terms of geographic priorities, the Executive recognises that it, and its agencies, cannot realistically aspire to regenerate everywhere at the same level of engagement at the same time. In identifying geographic regeneration priorities they have considered a range of factors including market opportunity, availability of labour and the extent to which concentrations of deprived neighbourhoods and vacant and derelict land could link to emerging economic opportunities. On this basis, they have decided that the current national regeneration priorities should be the Clyde Corridor and that it will also support major regeneration initiatives with a regional impact initially in Inverclyde and Ayrshire.

4 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR EAST AYRSHIRE

- 4.1 The identification of Ayrshire, as a priority area, within the Regeneration Policy Statement is important. It recognises the issues and opportunities regarding the regeneration of the area. It emphasises the critical importance of developing Partnerships at every opportunity and at all levels to prepare regeneration strategies and to realise associated projects. This relates to opportunities provided through the East Ayrshire Community Plan, the development of pan Ayrshire opportunities and opportunities to compliment and contribute to other Scottish Executive Initiatives such as the City Region.
- 4.2 The designation should assist in accessing funding support from the Executive and its agencies for key regeneration projects and opportunities will require to be taken to lobby for due recognition of the needs and opportunities of the area to be incorporated in relevant agency strategies as well as within future State Aids and Structural Funds programmes.
- 4.3 As an example, Malcolm Chisholm, MSP, The Minister for Communities when announcing the Policy Statement, indicated that funds would be available from the Executive to support the development of the Town Centre Living Initiative proposed as part of the Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy. £40,000 will be made available in financial year 2006/2007 and a further £80,000 in financial year 2007/2008.
- 4.4 The Committee is asked to note also that a submission has been lodged with the Scottish Executive for a Business Improvement District: Demonstration Project in Kilmarnock, that a bid has been submitted to Historic Scotland for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme including for the Outstanding Conservation Area in Kilmarnock Town Centre and that a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to support a Townscape Heritage Scheme within Kilmarnock town centre is in preparation.

5 COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The identification of Ayrshire as a geographic priority within the Regeneration Policy Statement will assist in realising each of the Themes and many of the Actions identified within the East Ayrshire Community Plan.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Committee
- (a) Notes the publication of the Scottish Executive Regeneration Policy Statement;
 - (b) Welcomes the inclusion of Ayrshire as one of the geographic priorities and the announcement of support to develop the proposed Town Centre Living Initiative;
 - (c) Authorises Officers of the Council to work with partners to maximise the opportunities resulting from the Regeneration Policy Statement including for recognition within relevant agency strategies, the State Aids Review and Structural Funds Programmes; and
 - (d) Authorises Officers of the Council to prepare a comprehensive Regeneration bid to the Scottish Executive which should include project priorities, cost estimates and recommendations as to the most appropriate delivery mechanism, for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee.

James Lavery
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1 March 2006
DAH/PM

Background Papers

People and Place: Regeneration Policy Statement – Scottish Executive – February, 2006

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