

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE: 4 MAY 2004

RESTORING COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME (RCP)

**PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME, MAIN STREET & WELL ROAD,
AUCHINLECK.**

Report by the Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to inform Committee of progress with the Property Improvement Scheme for Main Street and Well Road, Auchinleck. The scheme is being implemented as part of the Restoring Communities Programme, through the Planning and Building Control Division in conjunction with the East Ayrshire Coalfield Area Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP).
- 1.2** The report seeks to amend the scheme based on the experience gained during its first year in operation. The report also seeks the authority for the Council to offer grants to, and to enter into legally binding agreements with, owners of private residential and commercial property for the purpose of implementing improvements to their property.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The 21 October 2003 Development Services Committee noted the progress with the development of the Restoring Communities Programme (RCP) Property Improvement Scheme, authorised the implementation of the scheme based on a set process and criteria, and authorised the Solicitor to the Council to enter into any legal agreements necessary for the implementation of the scheme.
- 2.2** The Development Services Committee of the 10th March 2004 were informed that the EA Coalfield Area SIP have agreed to continue the funding of the Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans and Projects in 2004/2005. This included an allocation of £30,000 for the continuation of the RCP Property Improvement Scheme.

3. PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – 2003/2004

- 3.1** The RCP Property Improvement Scheme was set up to tackle the issue of the poor quality environment in Main Street, Auchinleck. It's aim is to implement environmental improvements to properties in partnership with property owners and to complement the action being taken to remove a number of prominent derelict properties through the Revolving Fund for Demolitions.

- 3.2** A Project Manager and professional design team were appointed to produce and implement detailed proposals for improvement works to be carried out in Main Street, Auchinleck.
- 3.3** Works to the following four properties were carried out under the Property Improvement Scheme 2003/2004:
- Liddell's Coaches, 1 Mauchline Road, Auchinleck
 - Residential Property, 226-228 Main Street, Auchinleck
 - Residential/Commercial premises, 86 Main Street, Auchinleck
 - Residential/Commercial premises, 157-159 Main Street, Auchinleck
- 3.4** Whilst the scheme has been successful in implementing improvements to the above properties, and in doing so has assisted in bringing back into use both vacant residential and commercial property, the process needs to be reviewed.
- 3.5** It is considered necessary to amend the scheme based on the experience gained during its first year in operation for the following reasons :-
- the agreement that the Council would appoint one contractor on behalf of all the property owners, through the Council's tendering procedure has meant that individual property owners have had to wait until all of the participants have signed the necessary legal agreement and have forwarded their 20% contribution to the cost of the contract to the Council.
 - individual property owners have expressed their preference to source their own tenders from local contractors to carry out the works specific to their property.

4. PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – 2004/2005

- 4.1** Based on the experience gained during the first year the scheme will continue to include private residential and commercial property on Main Street, and commercial property on Well Road, Auchinleck, (between Main Street and the Community Centre).
- 4.2** The eligible works will continue to be:-
- General repair, replacement of doors and rainwater goods, repair of external stone and brickwork, cleaning of stone and brick work, smooth render, dried dash render, wet dash render, external finishes, external joinery, signage and advertising and security shutters. Re-roofing, replacement windows, and damp proofing are not eligible works.

- The Planning and Building Control Division will provide detailed guidelines for acceptable improvements.

Cost factors and best value shall be borne in mind throughout the assessment and implementation of the scheme.

4.3 An RCP Project Officer should be in post by the date of this Committee, and one of their main responsibilities will be to promote and implement this scheme. However, professional assistance will still be required to assess the following :-

- The appropriateness of the works proposed,
- The cost of the works proposed, and
- The quality of the works once completed prior to payment of any grant assistance.

4.4 The Property Improvement Scheme will only be available to property owners within Main Street and Well Road, Auchinleck. The funds are limited and there will be no guarantee of a grant in any particular case. Grants will be awarded based on date order of completed valid applications. To actively encourage applications for assistance for the improvement of business premises grants are available as follows :-

- business premises – 80% of grant eligible costs
- residential premises – 60% of grant eligible costs

Grants will be offered subject to certain conditions including the following:-

- i) that the work can be completed and invoiced within the financial year,
- ii) that the owner must obtain all necessary consents such as planning permission and building warrants as required,
- iii) that a minimum of 2 competitive tenders are required for the work and are submitted with the completed application form. Applicants may carry out the work on a self help basis in which case two tenders for the supply of materials should be submitted,
- iv) that no work is commenced until a legal agreement confirming the terms and conditions of grant is entered into with the Council,
- v) that any amendment to the agreed works is submitted to the Council for prior approval,
- vi) that the Council's supervising officer(s) may at any time inspect the works in progress,
- vii) that the work is completed to the satisfaction of the Council's supervising officer(s),
- viii) that the grant may be reduced if the grant eligible costs prove to be less than estimated or if the work is not carried out to a satisfactory standard, and
- ix) payment of grant will be made on receipt of invoices either for the requisite materials if the work is to be carried out on a self help basis, or for the completed agreed works, subject to the work having been carried out to a satisfactory standard.

The procedure for the submission, assessment and approval of Property Improvement Scheme grant applications are detailed in Appendix 1 to this report.

5. FINANCIAL & LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The project will be funded by the East Ayrshire Coalfield Area Social Inclusion Partnership. Additional funding will be sought from Community Scotland and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire.
- 5.2** The Council's Legal Services will require to draw up legal agreements between EAC and each property owner receiving a grant within the scheme.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The Property Improvement Scheme contributes to the "Improving the Environment" Action Plan within the East Ayrshire Community Plan. The Property Improvement Scheme is identified in Aim 8 "To deal with empty and run down property".

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1** It is recommended that the Committee:-
 - (a)** note the progress with the development of the Property Improvement Scheme;
 - (b)** delegate the determination of grant applications under the RCP Property Improvement Scheme to the Head of Planning and Building Control based on the amended process and criteria set out in section 4 and Appendix 1 of this report; and
 - (c)** authorise the Solicitor to the Council to enter into any legal agreements necessary for the implementation of the scheme.

James Lavery
Executive Director of Development and Property Services Department

26 April 2004 (SJ/SA)
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1. Report to Development Services Committee “Restoring Communities Programme” – 13 March 2002.**
- 2. Report to Development Services Committee “ Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans & Projects 2003/2004” – 26 August 2003.”**
- 3. Report to Development Services Committee “ RCP Property Improvement Scheme, Main Street & Well Road, Auchinleck.” – 21 October 2003**
- 4. Report to Development Services Committee “Community Environmental Improvement Action Plans & Projects 2003/2004 & 2004/2005.” – 10 March 2004**

For further information on the content of the report contact Colin McKee, Principal Planning Officer Policy and Projects, on 01563 576769

Implementation Officer: Alan Neish

THE RCP PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

1. The applicant contacts RCP Project Officer and is advised of the requirements to submit a completed valid grant application ie:
 - applicant obtains all necessary consents, planning permission, building warrant etc.
 - applicant obtains two competitive tenders for proposed works/materials.
 - Applicant completes the RCP Property Improvement Scheme grant application form.
2. Grant application received by RCP Project Officer.
3. RCP Project Officer checks applications are complete,
 - a) if incomplete, contacts applicant to detail and assist with whatever is required.
 - b) If complete, acknowledge with date received.
4. RCP Project Officer seeks professional advice on the appropriateness/need for the works proposed and the acceptability of the lowest tender in terms of value for money.
5. RCP Project Officer prepares a report on the application for the Head of Planning and Building Control Division. The decision to award a grant is delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control Division, on the basis of the Project Officers' report.
6. If approved Legal Services send out an offer of a grant to the applicant. Otherwise a letter explaining the circumstances will be issued by the Head of Planning and Building Control Division.
7. The payment of grant will only be made on receipt of invoices and only after the RCP Project Officer has received professional advice that the agreed works have been completed to a satisfactory standard.