

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE: 3 MAY 2005**

### **RESTORING COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME (RCP)**

#### **PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME, MAIN STREET AND 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 previous 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 4 May 2004 Development Services Committee noted the progress with the development of the Restoring Communities Programme (RCP) Property Improvement Scheme, agreed to delegate the determination of grant applications to the Head of Planning, Development and Building Standards based on an agreed amended process & criteria, and authorised the Solicitor to the Council to enter into any legal agreements necessary for the implementation of the scheme.

### **3. PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – 2004/2005**

- 3.1** The RCP Property Improvement Scheme was set up to tackle over a period of years 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** Works to the following seven properties were carried out under the Property Improvement Scheme 2004/2005:
- Residential Property, 1 Sorn Road, Auchinleck

- Commercial Premises, The Corner Shop, Sorn Road, Auchinleck
- Residential Property, 2 Mauchline Road, Auchinleck
- Residential Property, 4 Mauchline Road, Auchinleck
- Residential Property, 39 Main Street, Auchinleck
- Residential Property, 41 Main Street, Auchinleck
- Residential Property, 43 Main Street, Auchinleck

**3.3** Whilst the changes to the scheme introduced in 2004/05 have been successful in implementing improvements to the above properties, and has assisted in tackling the poor quality environment in Main Street, Auchinleck, the project is continually under review.

**3.4** It is considered necessary to amend the scheme based on the experience gained during its last year in operation for the following reasons:-

- Predominance of improvements to residential property over commercial premises,
- Awarding of grants based on date order of completed valid applications, rather than on any criteria based prioritisation.

#### **4. PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – 2004/2005**

**4.1** Based on the experience gained during the previous year the scheme will continue to operate as before with the exception of the following changes :-

**(I)** The scheme will be advertised locally and applications will be requested up to a deadline date (anticipated 31 August 2005). After this date applications will be assessed and grants will be awarded based on the following prioritised criteria:-

Priority 1 - Bringing vacant property back into use;  
 Priority 2 - Full redevelopment/refurbishment of existing property;  
 Priority 3 - Renewal of shop fronts;  
 Priority 4 - General repairs; and  
 Priority 5 - Minor repairs.

**(II)** To actively encourage more applications for assistance for the improvement of business premises, grants this year will be available as follows :-

- business premises – 90% of grant eligible costs
- residential premises – 60% of grant eligible costs

up to a maximum of £10,000 per project, depending on funding available.

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

**4.2** The choice of appropriate Contractors will remain as existing and thus in accordance with Councils Standing Orders, Procurement and Best Value.

## **5. FINANCIAL & LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** The project will be funded by the East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership and from existing Development and Property Services budgets.

**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) agrees the amended process, grant levels, 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**

25 April 2005 (CMcK/SA)  
FV-AN

## **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**
- 5. Report to Development Services Committee “ RCP Property Improvement Scheme, Main Street & Well Road, Auchinleck.” – 4 May 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***

## APPENDIX 1

### 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 three competitive tenders for proposed works/materials.
  - Applicant completes and submits 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. **Only Complete applications submitted prior to the application deadline (anticipated to be 31<sup>st</sup> August 2005) proceed to the next stage.**
5. 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 for each application received by the application deadline.
6. **RCP Project Officer prepares a report on the application for the Head of Planning, Development and Building Standards Division based on the agreed prioritized criteria.** The decision to award a grant is delegated to the Head of Planning, Development and Building Standards Division, on the basis of the Project Officers' report.
7. 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, Development and Building Standards Division.
8. 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.