

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 28 NOVEMBER 2006

KILMARNOCK TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION LOCAL CONSULTATION

Report by Acting Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purposes of this report are to :

- (1) explain the background to the various consultation mechanisms with the business community in Kilmarnock Town Centre; and
- (2) seek the approval of the Committee to the development of a clearer and more integrated consultation mechanism between the Council and the town centre business community in Kilmarnock.

2 HISTORICAL POSITION

2.1 Over recent years, there have effectively been 3 different groupings, involving business people, within Kilmarnock town centre. The background and rationale for each is as follows :

2.1.1 Promoting Kilmarnock Town Centre Ltd

Established in the late 1980's and originally known as Kilmarnock Town Centre Management Initiative Ltd, this company was formed as a partnership involving the then District Council, the then SDA and representatives of the local business community. The role of the company was to manage, promote and market Kilmarnock town centre. The company was funded by grants from the Council and the Enterprise Company, annual financial contributions from a few of the larger retailers and the previous owner of the Burns Mall and a limited amount of annual subscription income from some other retail businesses. As a major funder, East Ayrshire Council had 2 places on the Board of the company.

2.1.2 Kilmarnock Town Centre Partnership

It is understood that the Partnership was formed at the initiative of the former Kilmarnock and Loudoun District Council in the late 1980's to act as a strategic consultation mechanism with all relevant interests in matters related to the Town Centre.

From its inception, membership of the Partnership comprised :

- Representatives of the Retail Trades Association;
- Board members of Promoting Kilmarnock Town Centre;
- Elected Members representing the town centre wards;
- Representatives of the Community Councils within the town centre area;
- Officers representing departments delivering services to the town centre business community;
- Representative of Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire.

The administrative servicing of the Partnership was undertaken by Promoting Kilmarnock.

2.1.3 Kilmarnock Retail Trades Association

This membership of this organisation is purely of retailer traders. It is understood that the group is small in numbers and charges a small annual membership fee. There is no representation on this group from East Ayrshire Council. The role of the Association is to represent the joint interests of the retail business community, particularly in discussions with public sector agencies.

3 CURRENT POSITION

3.1 This section summarises the current position with each of the groupings, described in Section 2 above.

3.1.1 Promoting Kilmarnock Town Centre Ltd

Due to a strategic refocusing of priorities at a national level, companies in the Scottish Enterprise Network are no longer able to provide annual core funding to local town centre management projects. As a result, the grant funding previously provided by Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire has ceased.

This position has been consolidated into ongoing budgets as a result of funding reductions; the company has not been able to fund the employment of a full time officer, which has severely limited the ability of the company to deliver its services.

Accordingly, at its meeting on 28 June 2006, the Board of Promoting Kilmarnock Town Centre Limited took the decision to cease trading and wind up the affairs of the company. This is currently in progress.

In the course of its discussion about the future of the company and the importance of consultation between the business community and the Council, the members of the Board agreed personally and on behalf of the businesses which they represent that they would be willing to participate in any revised consultation mechanism which was developed.

3.1.2 Kilmarnock Town Centre Partnership

Over time, the Town Centre Partnership met less frequently and on a more irregular basis. The discussions at the meetings progressively became less strategic and more about issues which were within the operational remit of Council services.

Around 2001, it was recognised that to be effective, the remit of the Partnership had to be solely on strategic issues, with “day to day” town centre management issues and concerns being dealt with through existing mechanisms and channels of communications within the Council.

Accordingly and since then, meetings of the Town Centre Partnership have focussed on consultation about the Council’s proposals for the regeneration of Kilmarnock Town Centre.

It should be noted that there have been no meetings of the Partnership since 2004 as an entity, but rather that members of it have been invited to other town centre regeneration consultation meetings.

3.1.3 Kilmarnock Retail Trades Association

No additional comments to those contained in 2.1.3 above.

4 KILMARNOCK TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION STRATEGY

4.1 The Kilmarnock Town Centre Regeneration Strategy was approved by Committee in December 2005 and was formally and publicly launched in January 2006.

4.2 At a consultation meeting (held on 22 June 2006) with the business community on the progress of the implementation of the Kilmarnock Town Centre Strategy in June 2006, the concept was floated of convening a “Liaison Group”. The idea was well received and 6 people volunteered to participate in such a group, to be administered and facilitated by George Fraser, Senior Policy Advisor.

4.3 The group has subsequently met on a monthly basis and is seeking to extend its membership. The Group has agreed the following initial remit

- To reflect the opinions of the business people of Kilmarnock 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 Liaison Group members, are inhibiting the effectiveness of the Town Centre as a place in which to do business;
- To work with the 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 PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE CONSULTATION MECHANISM

5.1 Kilmarnock Retail Trades Association

Some of the leading members of Kilmarnock Retail Trades Association have also been actively involved in Board membership of Promoting Kilmarnock Town Centre Limited. The clear view expressed by these people is of the necessity to retain the Retail Trades Association as a body independent of the Council in order that it can continue to represent views to the Council concerning issues in which the Council may be involved. It is recommended that the Council should be supportive of this view.

5.2 Kilmarnock Town Centre Partnership / Kilmarnock Town Centre Regeneration Liaison Group

5.2.1 Both of the above groupings currently exist and as the role of the Town Centre Partnership was clearly redefined several years ago as a “strategic consultation mechanism”, there would appear to be duplication in their roles.

5.2.2 The important issue is that there must be an effective consultation mechanism between the Council and the Kilmarnock Town Centre business community. The key principles, which should be adhered to are :

- there should be a single group acting as a consultation mechanism, with no opportunity for confusion or duplication;
- the group should be strategic in its approach whilst allowing the participants to raise other issues of particular concern;
- the group should be inclusive and representative of all relevant interests;
- the name of the group is relatively unimportant, except that it should reflect the purpose and objectives of the group.

5.3 The Role of Elected Members

As noted at 2.1.2 above, to date Elected Members representing the town centre wards have been members of the Kilmarnock Town Centre Partnership, albeit this group has not met on a regular basis.

In light of the changed democratic and accountability structures now operating in the context of the Community Planning and the Best Value regime and indeed, through regular progress reports to the Development Services Committee, it may no longer be appropriate to include Elected Members on the Town Centre Regeneration Consultation Group.

6 THE WAY FORWARD

6.1 It is proposed that the way forward is to :

- (1) agree that there should only be one inclusive liaison group on the Kilmarnock Town Centre Regeneration Strategy.
- (2) take the necessary steps to dissolve the Kilmarnock Town Centre Partnership and integrate its function with that of the recently formed Town Centre Liaison Group, bringing the two Groups together into one with a clearly defined remit;
- (4) agree that the administrative servicing of the integrated group should be undertaken by officers of the Department of Development and Property Services.

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The above proposals will support the achievements of the objectives of the East Ayrshire Community Plan: Improving Opportunities and Improving the Environment Themes.

7.2 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.

8 FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND PERSONNEL AND IMPLICATIONS

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

9 CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

9.1 At its meeting on 4 October 2006, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) considered the proposals set out in this report and has endorsed the proposals for positive recommendation to the Committee.

10 RECOMMENDATION

10.1 That the Committee :

- (1) approves the proposals set out in Section 6 of this report; and
- (2) instructs the Acting Executive Director of Development & Property Services to bring forward a monitoring report on the progress of the consultation arrangements to a future meeting of the Committee.

JAMES KANE

Acting Executive Director of Development and Property Services

2 November 2006

Implementation Officers

ALAN NEISH : Head of Planning, Development and Building Standards

JOHN SPOONER : Business Development Manager