

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL  
COUNCIL MEETING – 3 MAY 2001**

**RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AYRSHIRE ECONOMIC FORUM**

**Report by the Chief Executive and the Director of Development Services**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise the Council of arrangements for the re-establishment of the Ayrshire Economic Forum, and to seek nomination for the new body.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Reports to the Development Services Committee over the last year have reported progress by the Government in promoting a new 'Framework for Economic Development' in Scotland (referred to as the 'FEDS'). One of the key commitments contained in this framework was to establish Local Economic Forums in every part of Scotland to assist in developing a new range of programmes to support the implementation of the FEDS.

**3 PROPOSALS FOR RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AYRSHIRE ECONOMIC FORUM**

- 3.1 The new Economic Forum will replace the forum which has operated successfully in Ayrshire for some time. The previous forum brought together representatives from the three local authorities, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, the Chamber of Commerce and the STUC. Its role was to co-ordinate the development of strategic economic development initiatives. Through this role it contributed to: the successful approval of the Ayrshire Structure Plan, which is underpinned by an economic strategy drawn up through the Forum; the decision of the Scottish Executive to proceed with the M77 and upgrade of the A78; the attraction of additional funding for the 'programme for jobs'; and to strategic initiatives in marketing Ayrshire, air connections, business support services and the launch of the Ayrshire Electronic Community.
- 3.2 The Scottish Executive has recognised the contribution of the Forum in Ayrshire and similar forums in a number of other areas, but is now seeking to integrate their activities into the FEDS, and at the same time extend their coverage to all parts of Scotland. To achieve this Guidelines have been issued which all forums are asked to follow. Key points include:
- a tight core membership of around 12 organisations including the local authorities, business, the local enterprise company, the area tourist board and representatives of higher and further education.
  - the areas should be co-terminus with LEC boundaries
  - the LEC's should be involved in setting up and servicing the Forums
  - the core group should establish mechanisms for involving a wider range of organisations

- the Scottish Executive would ask the Forums to carry out specific key tasks to assist in the implementation of the FEDS
- a ministerial task force would be established to take an over-view of the activities of the Forums and their

In their first year the Forums are being asked to carry out a review of business support programmes and to draw up proposals for improvements if required. Tasks envisaged for future years include issues relating to skills training, trade promotion and tourism services.

3.5 It is anticipated that the Forum in Ayrshire will continue to co-ordinate the development of strategic economic development initiatives as the previous Forum did, as well as over-seeing the operational tasks remitted by the Scottish Executive. The new Forum will, for example, be asked to consider a new Sites and Premises Strategy for Ayrshire which is currently being drawn up by a group representing all Councils as well as the LEC and other interested organisations.

3.3 Detailed proposals for the transition from the former Economic Forum to the new format have been drawn up jointly by the Chief Executives of the core organisations specifically identified in the Scottish Executive's Guidance. Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire has outlined these proposals in letter to the Minister. The membership proposed is:

- 1 elected member from each Council
- 1 trade member from the AATB
- 1 business member from the ACCI
- 1 business member from the LEC Board
- 3 independent business representatives
- 1 representative each from
  - the higher education institutions
  - the further education colleges
  - the Employment Service
- 1 representative of the STUC

It is envisaged that there will be additional officer attendance at the formal meetings of the Forums and that there will be an officer co-ordinating group as well as a variety of working group arrangements to embrace the wider range of organisations with an involvement of each aspect of the Forum's work.

## **4 ACTION REQUIRED**

- 4.4 The former Forum has been wound up. The core organisations are now being asked to nominate their representatives for an inaugural meeting on 11 May. SEA have suggested that it would be appropriate for Councils to be represented by the Leader. Consideration is also being given to allowing the Councils to nominate substitutes. Each Council was represented on the former Forum by the Leader, the Chair of their relevant committee (plus a substitute), the Chief Executive, and the relevant Director.

## **5 FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications from the recommendation in this report.
- 5.2 The Forum will not be a corporate body or have any direct executive functions.

## **6 RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Council consider nomination of a representative on the new Ayrshire Economic Forum.

**David Montgomery**  
Chief Executive  
30 April 2001

**Stephen Chorley**  
Director of Development Services

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 1 Scottish Executive: National Guidelines for Local Economic Forums, March 2001
- 2 Letter from Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire to the Minister for Enterprise, 19 March 2001

For further information on the contents of this report contact Stephen Chorley, Director of Development Services, on 01563 576011

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**AGENDA**