

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE –27 AUGUST 2002

AYRSHIRE ECONOMIC FORUM

“A STRATEGY FOR AYRSHIRE”

Report by Director of Development Services

1 PURPOSES OF REPORT

1.1 The purposes of this report are:-

- (a) To inform the Committee of (i) the work that has been undertaken to date through the Ayrshire Economic Forum regarding the development of “A Strategy for Ayrshire” and (ii) how the Ayrshire Economic Forum propose to develop and deliver the Strategy;
- (b) To seek approval from the Committee for the respective officers of East Ayrshire Council to continue to support the development and realisation of the Strategy.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At its meeting on 9 November 2001, the Ayrshire Economic Forum appointed Councillor David O’Neill of North Ayrshire Council to lead a group to develop a Strategic Action Plan for Ayrshire.

Accordingly, Councillor O’Neill established a working group supported by two senior officers from Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire and North Ayrshire Council. This group was in turn supported by senior representatives from each of the Ayrshire local authorities, the tourist Board and the Joint Structure Plan. Arising from the work of the group, a presentation, outlining the challenge and identifying the opportunities, was made to the Forum on 8 February 2002 and a subsequent presentation detailing early operational requirements was made on 10 May 2002.

2.2 The work of the group highlighted the need to:-

- (i) Develop a collective understanding of the position of the Ayrshire economy and a detailed set of actions that identify the opportunities and challenges which exist in trying to change this position;
- (ii) Develop an explicit approach to media and lobbying to promote Ayrshire’s position;
- (iii) Build consensus for the Action Plan amongst the Ayrshire community as a whole and

- (iv) Learn from others who have successfully undertaken challenges similar to that faced by Ayrshire.

The strategy report considered by the AEF is attached. Its key features are reviewed below.

2.3 Action Plan The Forum has agreed a vision for Ayrshire as an area recognised for its attractive environment and matching quality of life, that is making a major contribution to Scotland's future. A confident community based on world class transport connections of road, rail, air and sea that is economically vibrant, well-balanced and forward looking.

Initial work in developing a collective understanding of the challenges for the economy was based on the establishment and identification of Ayrshire's Key Assets, Aspirations, Achievements, Action Drivers and Targets. Central to this are the five key aspirations of: -

- Developing a balanced economy
- Greater connectivity to markets
- Improving our workforce
- Significantly reducing unemployment levels
- Promoting a pride in Ayrshire

An Outline Action Plan has been prepared which is based around those five key aspirations. The Outline Action Plan (see Annex) aims to develop an opportunities driven approach that builds on Ayrshire's key assets. It is expected that it will form the basis of a more detailed plan that will identify specifically the resources required and the outcomes expected from the co-ordination and delivery of the base line and strategic actions proposed.

2.4 PR Lobbying and Media Strategy The Public Relations staff from each of the Councils and the Enterprise Company have met together to consider the scope of and commission a Media and Lobbying Strategy. The tender documents have been issued to a variety of organisations.

2.5 Consensus Building As part of the consensus building process, presentations have to date been made to the Scottish MEPs in Brussels, the MPs at Westminster, the Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Educational Institutions. Each of these meetings had a different impact and all have been deemed to have been successful.

The Educational Institutions have also undertaken to develop a parallel activity in support of the Forum by identifying the way in which they might better work together.

There are a number of groups to whom presentations are outstanding, such as MSPs and Resident Achievers, and these are planned from September onwards.

An “Opportunities Waiting to Happen” brochure has been developed to support this activity.

- 2.6 Learning from Others – Benchmarking with the Best** In respect of learning from others, DTZ Pbeda has been commissioned to carry out desk top research to identify other regions which have been successful in addressing similar challenges to that which Ayrshire faces. The intention is to identify those areas from which lessons might be learned and to arrange learning tours for Forum members to ascertain which models can be imported or translated into Ayrshire.

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1** The development of the Strategy for Ayrshire requires the active participation of all parties as the proposals present issues and challenges for all the partner organisations. These issues challenge our historic way of doing things in Ayrshire and oblige us to develop new structures and working practices. If there are to be significant changes in Ayrshire’s future, there is a need to further enhance relationships between all aspects of economic regeneration across the county in order to establish meaningful integrated solutions to difficult and enduring social, economic and environmental challenges.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** Nil arising from this report

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The development of the Strategy will continue to require a significant degree of officer support. The commissioning of detailed consultancy studies in support of the development of the Strategy will require financial support, as yet unquantified.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – Nil.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1** That the Committee:-
- (i) Note the current position regarding the development of a Strategy for Ayrshire under the auspices of Ayrshire Economic Forum;
 - (ii) Agree to support the Outline Action Plan for economic development in Ayrshire set out in the Annex to this report, and
 - (iii) Approve continued officer support for the development of the Strategy.

Stephen Chorley
Director of Development Services

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1. Development and Creation of a Media and Lobbying Strategy for the Ayrshire Economic Forum – Invitation to Tender.**
- 2. Economic Performance – Comparator Areas – DTZ Piedad Consulting.**
- 3. Opportunities Waiting to Happen – Ayrshire – Ayrshire Economic Forum.**

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AGENDA