

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE: 24 APRIL 2001

A REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN SCOTLAND

Report by Director of Development Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present to Committee for consideration, suggested comments and observations relating to a major review on the future of strategic planning in Scotland advocated by the Minister for Environment, Sport and Culture.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Mr Sam Galbraith, the previous Minister for Environment, Sport and Culture, during a speech to the Royal Town Planning Institute for Scotland in November 2000, announced a review of structure planning arrangements in Scotland, considering that the current arrangements do not represent current geographical realities of Scotland in the 21st century. An abstract from the Minister's address is appended to this report as Appendix 1. He outlined three options for the future of strategic planning:-

- Revised structure plan areas based, for example, on city regions
- Larger scale planning areas based, for example, on the Central Belt or the area of Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- A national planning framework

- 2.2 In testing the three options outlined above, the Minister has set out four key questions which need to be answered and these are dealt with in Section 3 below.

After carrying out a series of discussions, seminars and workshops with those who have an interest in future strategic planning arrangements, the outcome of the review and conclusions on the way forward will be published during summer 2001.

3. KEY QUESTIONS

- 3.1 Question 1. For which areas should strategic plans be drawn up?

While there may be justifiable reasons for amending the geographical base for structure plan areas in some parts of Scotland, it is considered that the designation of Ayrshire as a single strategic planning, structure plan area, has

been an unqualified success and should remain unchanged in any future review of Structure Plan Areas. The Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan, produced jointly by the three Ayrshire Councils, was approved within a three year time period and has already won two awards for quality planning. It is considered that Ayrshire itself represents a well defined and cohesive geographical unit with closely inter related economic, social and environmental links throughout the various local communities and the rural area. In addition, this geographical cohesion is strengthened and augmented by a series of key partner agencies which share the same boundaries such as Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, the Ayrshire and Arran Health Board and the Ayrshire Tourist Board. Also, specific planning related work such as the local Landscape Character Assessment and the Local Bioveristy Action Plan have also been produced at an all Ayrshire Level.

It is considered that the structure plan regime currently in place for Ayrshire, represents a sound existing base for strategic planning for the Area and that any amalgamation of Ayrshire into a broader city region or central belt area would be a retrograde step which would unnecessarily destroy the strong linkages already established between the various organisations with the same administrative areas, working together to achieve positive economic and social development of the area. There may, however, be scope for some National Planning Framework addressing the broad spatial elements of planning and a vision for Scotland the place.

3.2 Question 2. Who should prepare and approve the plan?

It has been clearly demonstrated by the three Ayrshire Authorities that through the development of close working relationships, and a positive approach to tackle strategic planning issues, structure plans can be produced effectively and efficiently by local councils on a joint basis. It is therefore considered that this function should remain with the Local Authorities. With regard to the approval of structure plans, it is considered important that the plans should remain subject to the approval of the Scottish Ministers.

3.3 Question 3. Should the plan be statutory or non statutory?

In order to maintain the strong link with the statutory development control (development promotion) and local plan processes, it is considered essential that the structure plan process should remain a statutory function. If its statutory status was to be removed it is likely that National Planning Policy Guidance would, itself, require to become statutory to provide a statutory context within which local plans can be produced and planning applications determined. It is considered that National Planning Policy Guidance should remain as Guidance, allowing it to be interpreted flexibly by Local Authorities in response to local circumstances at both Structure and Local Plan levels.

3.4 Question 4. What should its contents be?

It is considered that the contents of a strategic structure plan should remain essentially the same as detailed in the recently revised NPPG1: The Planning System. However, some scope could be made for increased involvement and co-ordination of external infrastructure and other national agencies in the preparation of strategic plans.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5. LEGAL/AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees:-

- (i) to approve the contents of this report and;**
- (ii) to submit a copy of the report to the Scottish Executive as representing the views of East Ayrshire Council on the proposed review.**

Stephen Chorley
Director of Development Services

26 March 2001 (JL/SA)
FV-AN

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

Implementation Officer: Alan Neish

I:/ComReports/Devservices/reviewstratplanning

AGENDA