

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE 18 APRIL 2002

DIGITAL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE/DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report the outcome of the Council's bid to the Scottish Executive Initiative for the funding of Muirkirk as a new Digital Community.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 21st February 2002, the Policy and Resources Committee noted that the Council's bid in respect of the nomination of Muirkirk as a Digital Community had been shortlisted. Subsequently, the Council submitted a more detailed project on 1st March 2002.
- 2.2 The shortlist comprised of six local authority areas, three of which were rural, and three of which were urban. Muirkirk DigiComm was an entrant in the rural category.
- 2.3 'Muirkirk DigiComm' detailed the intent of the Council and its partners to utilise the £1.75million to provide every home within Muirkirk with a personal computer, and use 'broadband' connectivity to offer 24 hour, unmetered, uninterrupted access to the World Wide Web. The project would be managed through the Ayrshire Electronic Community. The Council's bid was structured around the previously successful "Innes New Information Age Town" bid.
- 2.4 The project concentrated on the 3 key benefits. These were the advancement of:
- E-Education;
 - E-Employability, and;
 - E-Commerce.
- 2.5 The partners who supported, and contributed to the design of this bid were, Muirkirk Community Council, Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board, Benefits Agency; Inland Revenue, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, Employment Service, Jobs Action Team, East Ayrshire Coalfield Area Social Inclusion Partnership, Muirkirk Community Learning Partnership, Ayr College, Kilmarnock College, James Watt College, WeSSNET, Muirkirk Primary School, British Telecom, RM Education, Scottish Power and Ennis Information Age Town.

3 OUTCOME OF BID

- 3.1 In a letter received on 27th March 2002 from the Minister for Social Justice, the Council was informed that the Muirkirk DigiComm proposal had been unsuccessful.

3.2 The successful bids were;

- Rural – Argyll and Bute
- Urban – West Dunbartonshire

3.3 A letter has been sent to the Digital Inclusion Unit requesting that the reasons for this decision be explained, in order to inform any potential future developments in this regard.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5 LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal or policy implications arising from this report.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that the Committee :-

- i) note the result of the Scottish Executive's Digital Communities Initiative of March 2002 which does not award Muirkirk the investment of £1.75 million;
- ii) request that the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources engage with the Partners involved in this project to investigate the potential for taking forward elements of this project through other means, and;
- iii) note that a report will be presented to a future meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee advising Members of the outcome of both the Digital Inclusion Unit's response to the Council's request for the reasons for non-success, and, the results of the engagement with Partners as detailed in 6.1.(ii) above.

Fiona Lees

Depute Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Resources

02 April 2002

List of Background Papers

1. Muirkirk Digicomm Funding Bid submitted by the Council to the Scottish Executive, 1 March 2002
2. Letter dated 27 March 2002 from the Minister for Social Justice
3. Letter dated 28 March 2002 from the Council to the Digital Scotland Unit

For further information on this report, please contact John Clayton, Head of Corporate Development and Communication (Telephone : 01563 576091)

AGENDA