

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 28 NOVEMBER 2002

COMMUNITY PLANNING - TOWARDS A COMMUNITY PLAN

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present to committee for consideration and approval East Ayrshire's first Community Plan and provide a progress report on the community planning process within East Ayrshire.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee agreed at its meeting of 14 June 2001 to the establishment of the Community Planning Core Partners' Group, the Joint Officers' Group and procedures to allow the production of the first Community Plan for East Ayrshire. The Community Planning Core Partners at their meeting of 24 October 2001 agreed to remit the Community Planning Joint Officers' Group to take forward the community planning process within East Ayrshire, with the timescale for the overall production of the Community Plan set as January/February 2002.
- 2.2 Although there has been slippage in the anticipated timescale for the production of the overarching Community Plan, significant work with our community planning partners has resulted in tangible project outcomes, for example co-location.
- 2.3 The Joint Officers' Group continue to meet routinely to ensure that progress is made and required actions agreed.

3.0 PROGRESS TOWARDS A COMMUNITY PLAN

- 3.1 A report detailing the timetable and proposed twin track approach, in relation to the preparation of the East Ayrshire Community Plan, was considered at the Joint Officers' Group in May 2002.
- 3.2 This report highlighted the partners intentions to prepare an overarching community plan, which would set out the vision for East Ayrshire and six individual implementation plans which would provide detailed actions against which performance would be measured. The individual implementation plans, would be thematic and tackle the following issues:

- Improving Community Learning

- Promoting Community Safety
- Improving Opportunity
- Improving Health
- Improving the Environment
- Eliminating Poverty

4. OVERARCHING COMMUNITY PLAN

- 4.1 The draft community plan was issued for consultation to a range of partners during the summer of 2002 with returned comments being incorporated into the draft document. The final draft was presented to the Core Partners Group on the 18 November 2002 at which Partner Agencies agreed to endorse the overall plan. The Community Plan will now be presented to all relevant partner agencies for formal approval and endorsement between now and the end of the calendar year, with the Council being asked to formally adopt the plan first as the Lead Agency, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the Community Plan has a twelve-year life span, operating from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2015. A four yearly formal review process will be established with mid term progress reports being presented to the Community Planning Core Partners' Group and appropriate Council Committee.

5. IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLANS

- 5.1 To ensure the effective implementation of the principles contained within the Community Plan and the preparation of Action Plans relating to the six core themes, a number of short-term working groups have been established in order to take each theme forward.
- 5.2 Lead officers have been nominated for each of the working groups, and meetings have been convened with all of the working groups at which point the terms of reference for each group was presented and agreed.
- 5.3 As part of the preparation of the Action Plans working groups are tasked with organising relevant consultation events. To ensure effective communication between working groups and the overall co-ordination of consultation proposals, working group chairs meet routinely with the Council's Manager, Social Inclusion.
- 5.4 The output from each working group will be a comprehensive themed section for incorporation within the full community planning document. It is proposed that Implementation and related Action Plans have a life span of four years, operating initially from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2007. Plans will be formally reviewed every second year with annual progress/ performance reports also being presented to the Community Planning Core Partners' Group and relevant Council Committee.

5.5 It is anticipated that the first three Implementation/Action Plans will be completed by December 2002 with the remaining three having a deadline of March 2003. The Joint Officers' Group are due to meet with Implementation/action plan lead officers at the end of November to discuss the content of the three action plans due for completion in December, namely:

- Improving Community Learning
- Improving Health
- Promoting Community Safety

5.6 All of the draft action plans will be submitted to Committee for formal approval.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING - CONSULTATION/AWARENESS RAISING

6.1 A range of presentations on the community planning process have been carried out by members of the Joint Officers' Group and Lead Officers, including presentations to all of the Council's Local committees and representative forums.

6.2 The themed working groups have also been tasked with ensuring effective community consultation and for raising awareness of the overall community planning process. This is an ongoing process with existing community and voluntary groups participating in targeted activity and focus groups being convened as necessary.

7. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

7.1 Good practice, in respect of Partnership working, already takes place in a range of forms across the East Ayrshire area. To continue to foster this approach and to engage staff in the community planning process, it is proposed to develop a series of systems/events which will ensure the principles of partnership working are further extended.

7.2 As a first stage to this process it has been agreed that all Partner agencies will include a section on Community Planning within their corporate induction process. Further consideration will be given to implementing joint approaches to service delivery and staff support systems.

7.3 To reflect existing good practice it is intended that an overview of the demographics of East Ayrshire and examples of good practice be prepared as a supplement to the Community Plan. The supplement will have a life span of two/three years.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that Members:

- i) endorse the draft Community Plan;

- ii) remit the Depute Chief Executive to make minor textual changes and adjustments as necessary and make arrangements for the publication of the plan;
- iii) note the timetable for the production of Implementation Action Plans;
- iv) endorse the overall approach adopted within East Ayrshire to implement community planning; and
- v) otherwise note the content of the report.

Fiona Lees
Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources
East Ayrshire Council
5 November 2002

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further detail on the content of this report should contact Fiona Lees,
Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Gwen Barker, Manager Social Inclusion

East Ayrshire Community Plan

DRAFT - 15 NOVEMBER 2002

Introduction

Community planning is about a range of partners in the public and voluntary sectors working together to plan, find resources for and deliver quality services that will meet the needs of people who live and work in Ayrshire over the next 12 years. Community planning puts local people at the heart of delivering services. It is not just about creating a plan or a vision but about jointly tackling major issues such as health, transport, employment, housing, education and community safety. These issues need a shared response from, and the full involvement of, not only public-sector agencies but also local businesses, voluntary organisations and especially local people.

The community planning partners in East Ayrshire are committed to working together to make a real difference to the lives of all people in the area. We have already achieved a lot through joint working, but we still need to do a lot more to make sure that everybody has a good quality of life. Together, those who deliver services and those who live in our communities will build on our early success and on existing partnerships and strategies to create a shared understanding of the future for East Ayrshire.

The community plan is a blueprint for how we want to improve East Ayrshire over the next 12 years. The associated action plans will build on the main strengths of the area, its people and the partners to tackle the problems that communities are facing. Community planning offers everyone a unique opportunity to build on the local assets and tackle the challenges facing East Ayrshire.

Our Vision

“East Ayrshire will be a place with strong, vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high-quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people’s needs.”

Our guiding principles

Community planning brings together agencies, organisations and communities to identify and prioritise what needs to be done, and to plan, co-ordinate and deliver action to meet these identified priorities. Our guiding principles (shown below) will direct how we do this and make

sure that the community planning process is consistent. This is only the beginning. By planning together, working together and achieving together, we will:

- promote social justice and social inclusion;
- build sustainability;
- succeed in joint working and involving people;
- make sure our services are good quality and accessible; and
- deliver continuous improvement and best value.

Social justice and social inclusion

We are committed to a future where everyone matters. Social justice and social inclusion are about people and about making sure that everyone, no matter what their life circumstances, has opportunities and choices. To promote social justice and inclusion, our solutions must be comprehensive and co-ordinated so we can tackle the full range of problems and issues that individuals, families and communities face.

Sustainability

Sustainability is at the heart of this plan. We are committed to making sure that the outcomes of social, economic and environmental improvements are sustainable and will stand the test of time. A sustainable community is one which makes sure that today's decisions do not have a negative effect on the future and where actions will have a long-lasting effect. Sustainability is an important part of community life, from health, housing, education, transport and economic development to conservation and waste management. We will make sure that the decisions we make meet the needs of today and protect the environment of the future.

Joint working and involving people

Partnership, based on mutual trust and equality, is the key to community planning. The major problems facing the area cannot be dealt with by public agencies working on their own within their own limited budgets. We need to work together and involve communities, voluntary organisations and the private sector more effectively to get the best value from the public money that is invested in the area and to deliver real and lasting change.

The most important partnership is the one between our partners and the people living in our communities. This plan will only succeed if we help the community to get involved in every stage of the process.

Quality and accessibility

Modernising how we deliver our services means changing our way of working to make sure that we can meet the needs of the people of East Ayrshire. Many of the people who use public services need to access more than one agency at a given time. Making sure our services are high quality, efficient and effective involves joining up our services to make sure that we meet all of the needs a person might have rather than sending people from one agency to another which is how services have traditionally been offered in the past. By planning and working together, we will cut down the paperwork and unnecessary official procedures. By listening to people receiving services and using what they tell us to influence how we develop services, we will

make them the focus of policy-making. Wherever possible, services should be delivered at a place and time that meet the needs of the user, not the provider.

Continuous improvement and best value

It is essential that we learn from our experiences of joint working and build on our successes. We must be able to show that the initiatives that we have carried out have contributed to a better quality of life for everyone living and working in East Ayrshire.

By developing a set of standards that we can measure our performance against, our partners and the people of East Ayrshire will be able to see how we are achieving the targets set out in the action plans which go with the community plan. These standards are measures of our success, which range from economic measures (for example, the average earnings and levels of unemployment in East Ayrshire) to social measures (for example, the levels of reported crime or the incidence of teenage pregnancy). By comparing these with our starting position, we will know whether we are making a real difference. We will report regularly to the people of East Ayrshire on how well we are doing and the progress we are making towards meeting our targets.

The public agencies in East Ayrshire spend millions of pounds each year on services that have a tremendous effect on the wellbeing and quality of life of residents. By working together and combining our resources, we can make sure that our communities benefit as much as possible and that we achieve best value for money.

The Challenges

East Ayrshire covers an area of 490 square miles from Lugton in the North to Loch Doon in the South. It has a population of 120,235 has a mixture of urban, rural and isolated communities. Kilmarnock is the major urban area with a population of over 44,000. The rest of the population live in smaller communities ranging from a few hundred people to approximately 9,000 people in Cumnock.

East Ayrshire has a high-quality environment with good quality services, including health, education, social and leisure services and a strong community spirit. These are valuable assets that we can build on, but we are facing a number of specific challenges. A lot of work is already ongoing through our various plans and strategies to tackle these challenges. The new challenge for us as community planning partners is to make sure that we make the most of efforts, resources and skills through joint working. This plan, together with the associated action plans, provides a comprehensive framework for planning and delivering services across East Ayrshire.

Education and learning

Many service providers give education and learning in East Ayrshire a high priority, and the record of achievement is impressive. However, we recognise that to compete in today's employment market and to take full advantage of the opportunities that information and communication technology gives us, people need new skills. We need to encourage people of all ages to learn new skills and to update their skills throughout their lives. There is a lot of potential in our communities, and we are keen to develop the skills and talents of individuals for personal, community and economic benefit.

However, learning is not only about developing employment related skills. It is also about gaining the necessary skills to meet the needs of individual people and to make sure that everybody has a good quality of life. This means that opportunities must be available to allow everyone to take part in leisure and cultural activities and to get access to the range of new and exciting learning opportunities that are available, for example, through libraries and learning centres.

The economy

The collapse of the coal mining industry in the 1980s was particularly bad in the south of our area. But the whole of East Ayrshire has been affected by the decline of manufacturing industries, with the decline of the textile industry being particularly significant. Today, East Ayrshire Council itself is the main single employer, supporting 14% of the labour market. Although many new employers have been attracted to the area, and the growth in trade will be further supported by the extension of the M77 motorway, we need to make sure that local people have appropriate skills. We also need to promote the quality and skills of local people to make sure that they can make the most of job opportunities. This will in turn, benefit all communities. We will work to make sure that local transport can deal with the likely increase in commuters living in the area.

In East Ayrshire, we have many successful businesses. However, we need to help others to develop their potential, to create jobs, raise income and increase economic growth.

Rural areas

East Ayrshire has many varied rural areas where agricultural and former mining communities exist side by side. While life can be peaceful and large areas of the countryside are very attractive, there is also disadvantage. Rural communities are often cut off from services, job opportunities and activities that people in other areas take for granted. The significant challenge we face to tackle these issues will be to improve the transport system.

Community safety

Many people and organisations are doing good work in East Ayrshire to lower crime rates and reduce the number of accidents, but we still need to do a lot more. Despite falling crime rates, the fear of crime is still one of the greatest worries for local people. We recognise the damaging effect this can have on people's quality of life.

Road safety is a major worry in all communities, particularly in relation to young people and the elderly. Reducing road accidents involves:

- close co-operation between the authorities, schools and local communities;
- actively enforcing regulations;
- and continuous investment in roads and pedestrian footways.

Road accidents have reduced over the last 20 years but an increasing amount of traffic and increases in the speed of this traffic have made further improvements difficult.

Health

Within East Ayrshire, there are significant health inequalities between groups and communities. Our poorer communities suffer the greatest levels of ill health. Although there are some signs of improvement, statistics show that many of our residents have poorer health than across Scotland as a whole, with higher levels of heart disease, stroke and cancer. People under 65 living in the most deprived areas are more than twice as likely to die from heart disease as people living in the most prosperous areas. They are also almost twice as likely to die of cancer. East Ayrshire also stands out as having higher levels of teenage pregnancy, lung disease and breathing problems than other areas.

Poverty and exclusion

Within East Ayrshire, there are communities which have above average levels of inequality and poverty, where many people are not able to take part in society or take advantage of job opportunities. Many people depend on benefits (such as Income Support) or are in low-paid jobs. As a result, they are more likely to suffer poor health, live in poor housing and be more vulnerable to crime.

Also, as a lot of East Ayrshire is rural, many people are often cut off from jobs and services and have little or no transport.

The environment

East Ayrshire has a rich and varied landscape. The area has much to offer in terms of natural heritage and scientific interest, and the built environment has a distinctive local character. Also, many areas benefit from good quality local services, such as sports facilities and libraries, parks, open spaces and path networks make a positive contribution to the local environment in many areas.

The decline of mining, textiles and engineering in East Ayrshire has had a negative effect on our towns and villages. Despite the development which is taking place in many of our communities, the area, like many others in Scotland as a whole, has many empty and run-down properties on our main streets which make the area look unattractive.

We also face challenges in relation to recycling waste, increasing energy efficiency, caring for our natural resources and tackling run-down industrial areas.

Changing population

Over the 12-year life span of this community plan, one of the challenges that we face will be to tackle the reduction in the number of residents of working age and the increase in the older population. The older population will increasingly take up proportionately more resources across the range of services not only for health, social and housing services, but also leisure and cultural services for the increasing number of our retired population who are independent and active.

Our main themes

The strength of the community planning process lies in the way in which it links together social, economic and environmental actions that will improve the quality of life of people who live in East Ayrshire. Together, we have consulted on and developed six themes around which to develop the community plan.

- Improving community learning
- Improving opportunities
- Promoting community safety
- Improving health
- Eliminating poverty
- Improving the environment

Improving Community learning

Community learning is about people of all ages and all sections of the community having access to learning throughout their lives. Community learning makes sure that, as well as gaining skills and qualifications, it also offers the opportunity for individuals and communities to gain in ability and confidence. Community learning builds on the learning that is available in schools, colleges and universities, and offers learning in less formal settings within our communities to young people and adults.

Community learning offers the chance for individuals to develop their potential and improve the quality of their lives. It also offers them the opportunity to take an active part in local community life and in decisions which affect wider society. For communities, it helps them identify their own needs and encourages people to become more active in their local community and society in general. Community learning will eventually help improve the skills, resources, networks, opportunities, confidence and motivation of our communities.

Aims

We are committed to making sure that people have learning opportunities throughout their lives by:

- developing learning as a lifelong activity, within communities;
- encouraging individuals to take advantage of opportunities and improve the quality of their lives;
- making sure that our schools, libraries and other facilities are at the heart of each community
- supporting people gain literacy, numeracy and computer skills; and
- supporting the development and continuation of community based organisations.

Improving opportunities

A healthy and successful local economy is essential for the wellbeing of the people of East Ayrshire and will have a positive effect on the health of the local population. In the past, our economy was dominated by coal mining and heavy industry. The decline of these industries has threatened the life of many of our communities. More recently, parts of East Ayrshire have been successful in attracting new sources of employment. However, we must help the people and communities worst affected by the loss of our traditional industries play a part in the future development of the area. We must give people access to the training and qualification they need to get jobs and help them play an active part in the labour market. Education must also help young people play their part in a successful and competitive economy.

We are committed to developing the economy to offer a broader range of job opportunities to current and future generations. It is important that we recognise the assets of the physical environment within East Ayrshire and develop new industries, such as tourism. Attracting investment will continue to be important, as will helping established companies grow and supporting the growth of new businesses. To meet the needs of a more varied economy,

businesses and organisations need to be original and competitive and must adapt to rapidly-changing demands. Local businesses have an important role to play in improving the economy of the area. It is so essential that we develop stronger links between the public and private sectors. We also recognise the benefit of strong businesses to the development of local economies, and are committed to helping them develop.

As well as developing local job opportunities, we also need to improve access to opportunities outside the local area. To do this we must make sure that East Ayrshire has good transport links and a high quality local transport system. We also need to link East Ayrshire to the Ayrshire economy and to the Scottish and worldwide economies.

Although employment is important to make sure that people have a good quality life and that communities are strong, we must also recognise that there is more to life than work. For many people, including older people, people who are seriously ill or disabled and the parents of young children, work is not always an option. We must make sure that the opportunities and support exist for everyone to get access to and take part in mainstream services such as the arts, sport, literature and heritage. This will improve their wellbeing and develop their personal and social development.

Aims

We are committed to improving opportunities by:

- working with existing businesses to make sure jobs are available and to expand opportunities;
- attracting inward investment;
- understanding employment needs to identify those areas where there is a shortage of skills or where there is likely to be in the future;
- making sure that education providers and businesses work together to give the best start to young people starting work;
- giving local people access to training for work to develop a skilled workforce;
- extending the business and job opportunities associated with tourism and leisure;
- developing a range of job opportunities, including the voluntary sector and social businesses which are designed to assist the community rather than make a profit;
- providing good quality homes and services to encourage inward investment;
- improving how accessible information and services are, in particular by using new technology;
- offering transport solutions for the rural areas of East Ayrshire and making sure that good-quality choices are available; and
- investing in and improving access to leisure and cultural facilities and activities.

Promoting Community safety

All sections of the community say crime and safety issues should be one of the top priorities for action. Although some areas suffer from crime more than others, crime and safety issues have a major impact on the quality of life of all individuals, families and communities.

Although people's fear of crime is often out of proportion to the chances of them being a victim of crime, it can have a significant effect on their quality of life. Fear of crime, for example, may prevent some people from going out. Worries about safety may limit children's independence and opportunities for play, and young people may not use particular facilities for fear of trouble. This means that we must make the streets, public areas, parks and open spaces safe, well policed and well lit.

Antisocial behaviour causes alarm or distress to people and interferes with their right to enjoy their home and environment peacefully. Too much noise, threatening behaviour, harassment and intimidation are all different types of antisocial behaviour and are also likely to increase people's fear of crime. We must have solutions in place to deal with these issues where they arise.

Creating safe places in which to live, work and play is not just about crime and antisocial behaviour. It is about protecting the public from possible accidents at home, on the roads and streets, at work, and in our communities and neighbourhoods. It is also about educating people about preventing fires and road safety and making sure that there are places for children to play safely. During the life of the community plan, we will work to maintain and improve public safety.

Crime and safety problems, such as vandalism or treating accidents that could have been prevented have a direct cost to public services by using resources which could be better used elsewhere. Also our efforts to support and maintain economic growth are affected if investment suffers or businesses close as a result of crime.

Aims

We are committed to creating safe places in which to live, work and play by:

- developing safety initiatives to help people feel more safe and secure;
- promoting road safety and reducing road accidents;
- tackling crime and the fear of crime;
- continuing to support victims of domestic abuse;
- tackling antisocial behaviour;
- maintaining and improving public safety, including using more closed-circuit television (CCTV) and improving street lighting;
- working with young people to reduce the likelihood of them getting involved in crime.

Improving health

Health is much more than just an 'absence of illness'. It is our whole wellbeing and how this affects our quality of life. Our health is affected by many things – our environment, where we live, the quality of our housing, our income, our individual lifestyles, what we eat, the exercise we take, whether we smoke or drink, and the quality of treatment we receive when we become ill.

There are considerable inequalities in health between people living in different parts of East Ayrshire and between different groups of people. We must work to make sure that the fullest range of high quality services is available to improve people's lives and meet the needs of people of all ages. This will help them lead full, active and productive lives. We have already proved that we can provide local access to high-quality front line health services, including doctors, health visitors and dentists and will continue to do so. Evidence of our commitment to promoting both physical and mental wellbeing through health, leisure, cultural and social services can be seen across the area.

We are committed to continuously improving the health of the people of East Ayrshire and to preventing illness, where possible, by helping people make healthy choices. Our priorities include encouraging healthy eating, exercise (including walking, cycling and healthy leisure activities) reducing smoking, and reducing the misuse of alcohol and drugs. We expect to see a

reduction in people dying young from heart disease, stroke and cancer, lower teenage pregnancy rates and a lower death rate in children.

We must also make sure that we tackle the links between housing and health in recognition of the effect that poor housing and a poor housing environment have on people's health.

Aims

We are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of the people of East Ayrshire by:

- reducing risk and bringing about change to tackle the worst health problems;
- tackling drug and alcohol misuse in our communities;
- helping people of all ages make healthy lifestyle choices;
- improving support and care services for vulnerable groups such as older people, carers, homeless people, people with physical disabilities or learning difficulties and people with mental health problems; and
- promoting physical and mental wellbeing by further developing leisure, recreational and cultural activities.

Eliminating poverty

While increasing inward investment, employment and training opportunities will make a significant difference to many people who suffer poverty and disadvantage in our communities, these alone will not get rid of poverty. There are many people whose life circumstances mean that they live on state benefits, including many people with physical disabilities, severe illness or learning difficulties and those who care for them. There are lone parents who cannot work because of childcare responsibilities and the lack of affordable, good quality childcare. There are many people who do work but whose wages are so low that they have a very low standard of living. To tackle these problems, we must aim not just to reduce the unemployment rate but also to make sure that people have useful, sought after skills needed to earn a living wage.

Poverty limits people's ability to get out and about, to take part in social activities, to reach shops and essential facilities and to get to work. Improvements in public transport and help in getting access to transport through reduced fares have an important part to play in helping people overcome the disadvantages of poverty.

Living in poverty creates stress, anxiety, low self esteem and insecurity. People who suffer from poverty are more likely to have mental and physical health problems, have debt problems, and be victims of crime.

Poverty is not only about a lack of financial resources but also about the lack of opportunities and choices. People can be affected by many things, including physical and social isolation, and their age, sex and ethnic background. We must make sure that everyone in East Ayrshire is able to take part in their community activities and get access to the full range of high quality services.

Aims

We will work to tackle poverty by:

- working to attract good quality job opportunities with good wages, together with affordable and accessible childcare, and helping people from throughout the community to get access to these opportunities;

- increasing the employment rates of people who are relatively disadvantaged in the economy;
- supporting the development of credit unions, food co-operatives and other community self-help initiatives;
- supporting carers;
- tackling the links between poverty, poor housing and ill health;
- working to make sure that everybody can get access to the full range of services;
- improving public transport links and extending the benefits of reduced fares; and
- supporting and improving the systems which are in place to take advantage of income from benefits and to provide debt counselling and money advice.

Improving the environment

The environment we live in is the result of decisions that have been taken in the past. The decisions we take today will shape the environment of the future and have the potential to improve the countryside and our towns and villages, making them attractive places in which to live, work and play.

A commitment to lasting development will help us make the right decisions, with the knowledge that we have taken full account of the social, economic and environmental consequences. This approach is more likely to lead to successful and lasting outcomes and will shape the type of society in which we live. How we plan our towns and villages will decide:

- how successful they will be in adapting to changing circumstances;
- how much energy is used
- how efficient and inter-linked the transport system will become; and
- whether we can take advantage of opportunities for economic development.

Also thinking about sustainability focuses on our individual lifestyles and how we can, for example, reduce pollution or how much energy we use, and also on how, as a community, we can promote conservation and improve the quality of the landscape and the natural resources it contains.

We know that developing footpath networks, open spaces and children's play facilities contributes greatly to the satisfaction of residents with their neighbourhood. Investing in leisure, recreational and cultural activities will help develop communities, not only for the benefit of residents but also to attract visitors to the area. With this in mind, improving our gateway towns will also contribute greatly to attracting visitors to the area, while improving the environment in general will contribute to attracting new businesses and protecting existing businesses in the area.

We will promote a wide range of housing which is attractive to people who live in East Ayrshire, and will recognise the needs of older, disabled and homeless people. We must make sure that we produce homes which are highly energy efficient and are designed to provide suitable accommodation for people as they change through their various life situations.

Aims –

We are committed to improving the environment by:

- protecting, improving and using our natural and built environment in an environmentally friendly way, extending woodland planting and nature conservation;
- making sure we manage water resources, including using urban drainage systems more;

- increasing the amount of waste that is recycled and re-used;
- making our homes, factories and buildings more energy efficient;
- promoting a lasting pattern of development;
- working to make sure that we meet the housing needs of everyone who lives in our communities;
- reducing the environmental effect of transport by developing an transport system that meets national, regional and local needs;
- dealing with empty and run down properties;
- putting systems in place to stop littering, graffiti and vandalism and dealing quickly with any problems as they happen;
- developing visitor attractions and encouraging associated business and employment opportunities;
- investing in leisure and cultural activities; and
- developing and maintaining open spaces, footpath networks and children's play facilities.

Making the vision a reality

This plan means nothing unless the people living in our communities are able to see a real difference in their quality of life. To make sure that this is the case, we must build on and develop our ability to work together in a meaningful way which brings about change. To make our vision a reality, we must:

- make sure that our partnership works as effectively as possible;
- listen to, communicate with, and involve the community; and
- agree joint priorities and action plans to deliver our broad aims.

In this way, we will dedicate our joint resources to delivering shared goals, having a real and positive impact in our communities and making the best use of public money.

Effective partnership working

Partnership working involving the public, private, voluntary and community sectors already has a strong base in East Ayrshire and we can point to significant practical successes. A range of effective partnerships already exists, which can clearly show that partnership working can bring about change and make a real difference in East Ayrshire. Through these groups, we are already working on significant issues of quality of life. We will commit ourselves to building on this base and to making sure that a strategic approach to policy making and delivering services is continuously developed across the area.

Listening to, communicating with and involving the community

We are committed to listening to people and involving them in the decisions which affect them. We already have a good track record in getting local people involved in the decisions that affect their area and their lives.

We recognise that to bring about real and lasting change, the people and communities of East Ayrshire must be at the heart of the community planning process, and must be fully involved and represented. We have put systems in place to tell people about what is happening and, more importantly, to make sure that they have an opportunity to play an active part in achieving our vision.

Joint priorities and action plans

By sharing resources, planning together and agreeing priorities and, above all, by making sure that services meet the needs of the people and communities, we will make even more efficient and effective use of the resources which are available.

Our plans for the next 12 years

We have set out our vision for East Ayrshire from 2003 to 2015. Each priority in our vision has an agreed action plan which we will review every four years. We will show we have made progress on the action plans and outcomes by producing performance reports and detailing our achievements against targets. In this way, we will monitor our overall success in achieving our vision.

A summary of the main statistics for East Ayrshire and examples of good practice, which highlights the success of the community planning approach and the effectiveness of partnership working is also available.

We have also set out our aspirations for East Ayrshire by 2015, we will monitor our progress in meeting these aspirations on a regular basis.

OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR 2015

- To ensure every child is able to realise their full potential
- Reduce the proportion of children living in workless or low income households
- Reduce unemployment to at least the same or less than the West of Scotland average
- Increase the business birth rate by 30%
- To regenerate communities and attract 300 new inward investment jobs each year
- Reduce victim crime
- Increase detection rates
- Reduce inequalities in health within East Ayrshire
- Improve life circumstances by addressing the factors that contribute to ill health
- Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads by 40% and the number of children killed or seriously injured on the roads by 50%
- Reduce the number of fatal fires by 5% year on year
- Increase the number of people who can more actively participate in their daily life by being able to read and use numbers effectively
- Increase the number of opportunities for people to become involved in their community.
- Increase the number of people who can more actively participate in their daily life by being able to use information communication and technology
- Secure a University of Ayrshire working with Ayrshire Economic Forum partners
- Sustain existing community based organisations and develop new organisations based on community need
- Reduce the proportion of older people with low incomes
- To improve the natural and built amenities for residents and visitors through investment in leisure, recreational and cultural activity
- To promote sustainability by protecting, conserving and enhancing the character, appearance and amenity of the natural and built environment, for future generations.
- Raise the level of vocational qualifications to above the Scottish average