

Report

Report to:	Community Wealth Building Commission
Date of Meeting:	12 March 2024
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Town Centre Update
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide an update on town centre activity

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Commission is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the work being undertaken in town centres across South Lanarkshire be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The nature of town centres across the UK remains in a transitional stage. The range of issues involved in the challenges town centres are facing are broad and complex. Factors such as the Covid-19 pandemic, internet shopping, growth of out-of-town shopping malls, changes in retailer's business models and consumer expectations have resulted in a decline in town centre footfall.
- 3.2. Some of the issues are local and specific to individual towns, however, many are issues seen across the country influenced by wider economic patterns, consumer behaviour and corporate decisions.
- 3.3. Supporting our town centres remains a Council priority and we continue to work closely with the appropriate groups and organisations in each town through a partnership approach to achieve our common goals.
- 3.4. Local communities remain supportive of their town centres and have a desire to see them thrive. The way in which they use their town centres is, however, very different to that of a generation ago. It is broadly accepted that the traditional function of a retail town centre needs to change to meet the needs and expectations of modern communities. Therefore, there is a collective need to establish a new role and function for our town centres to ensure that they can continue to thrive and remain relevant in the years ahead.
- 3.5. Officers are working on a range of projects designed to help transition our town centres into this new role.

4. Hamilton Town Centre

- 4.1. Hamilton is a town centre with strong assets and a definable place quality. This is evident through the strong civic presence, business base, historical architecture and investment to date.

These provide the foundations for Hamilton to reassert its role as a strong and vibrant town centre. Recognition of the change in retail requirements allows focus on other key aspects of the town centre including leisure and cultural offering, services and town centre living. As one of Lanarkshire's largest towns, Hamilton is well placed to provide a variety of functions to a large catchment area.

The current commercial backdrop has generated the need to review a number of prominent town centre sites as a whole and create a masterplan which meets the needs of today and tomorrow.

- 4.2. Threesixty Architecture is appointed to carry out masterplan work. The process has involved an intense period of activity over the last 6 months with a series of workshops with Threesixty Architecture along with officers from across the Council. These sessions have been led for the Council by the Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources) with support from officers from Enterprise and Sustainable Development, Housing, Estates, Planning and Roads.
- 4.3. The vision for the town centre is to repurpose underperforming areas into high quality, high-density, mixed-use developments which the residents of Hamilton can be proud of. This is an opportunity for innovative place-making solutions which will attract developer interest. The vision and framework produced has identified where investment will have the greatest benefit and demonstrate the ambition for the town centre to the community and investors. It sets the context for public and private sector investment over the next 15+ years. The masterplan reflects aspirations for a resilient, mixed-use economy which repositions the centre to meet the needs of 21st century living in a high quality and sustainable manner.
- 4.4. The development of the masterplan is a unique opportunity to deliver transformational change to the town centre. The plan will reduce the centre's reliance on retail and focus on the needs and wants of the users of today and the future. The masterplan process is a detailed and complex exercise bringing together a range of solutions which balance the ambitions of the community with the challenging commercial environment. A summary of the masterplan is attached at Appendix 1 and illustrates the changes proposed to the centre. These proposals are ambitious, however, without significant intervention the town centre will fall into decline.
- 4.5. The masterplan was approved at Executive Committee of 21 February 2024. Officers will begin the public consultation process on 18 March 2024 with a 3-week in person consultation taking place throughout the town centre and a 6-week online consultation process.
- 4.6. Officers continue to support Hamilton Business Improvement District with a programme of initiatives designed to drive footfall into the town centre while it undergoes a period of transition. This includes events such as Lanarkshire Pride and a full event programme.

5. East Kilbride Town Centre

- 5.1. East Kilbride Shopping Centre has gone through a challenging period over the last 18 – 24 months. Along with the challenges faced around Covid-19 and the changes in shopping patterns, the centre has been called in by the bank, who funded the previous purchase and has subsequently been put into administration on 16 November 2022.
- 5.2. With each change of ownership, a new team of asset managers has taken responsibility for the centre and in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council, a masterplan for the centre has been produced. A period of consultation was undertaken in September and feedback was largely positive. Officers are continuing to work with asset managers to secure the next steps for the centre.

6. Rutherglen Town Centre

- 6.1. The draft Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan (Appendix 2) was granted committee approval. Officers will now undertake a period of consultation over the forthcoming months. The strategy will be updated to reflect consultation feedback and a final draft will be presented to for committee approval.

7. Lanark Town Centre

- 7.1. Lanark Business Improvement District is currently undergoing a renewal ballot to secure a further 5-year term. The ballot closed on 29 February 2024 with the count taking place on 1 March 2024.
- 7.2. Work to upgrade the Tolbooth area and create an attractive plaza is currently out to tender. This project has been funded by the Place Based Investment Programme.
- 7.3. A masterplan for Lanark Racecourse has been approved.

8. Town Centre Living

- 8.1. One of the keys to supporting and regenerating our town centres is increasing the amount of town centre living. In many of our towns this is at a very low level relative to other towns and historic rates, and there is potential for some of the less commercially viable parts of town centres to be considered for residential development. An internal officer working group has been established and their recommendations will be presented to the appropriate committee in due course.

9. Other Town Centre Activity

- 9.1. Officers continue to work across all town centres with local communities on projects designed to improve the vitality and viability of our town centres.

10. Employee Implications

- 10.1. There are no employee implications as a result of the proposals set out in this report. The development and implementation of the masterplan will be led by officers within Enterprise and Sustainable Development Services in consultation officers across Planning, Roads, Property, Housing, Legal, Finance and Procurement Services.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1. The costs for the Council in preparing the Hamilton Masterplan are funded through the Place Based Investment Programme.
- 11.2. Future investment by the Council in the town centre will be subject to a Full Business Case, funding availability and separate committee approvals.

- 11.3. The masterplan is intended to support future external funding bids. All external funding opportunities will be explored.
- 11.4. All other town centre costs will be met through existing funds or external funding opportunities.
- 12. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**
- 12.1. The masterplans and all other town centre work have sustainability at the forefront and projects will be taken forward in line with the Council's sustainability objectives.
- 13. Other Implications**
- 13.1. The risks associated with not supporting the masterplans is that Hamilton and East Kilbride town centres will face further decline if no action is taken. This will result in a process of managed decline rather than investment for growth.
- 13.2. The Council could face reputational damage if it is not seen to actively support and encourage investment in the town centre.
- 13.3. Redevelopment of the town centre allows the Council to respond to the demands for both affordable housing and the continued demand for private sector housing.
- 14. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**
- 14.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore, no Impact Assessment is required.
- 14.2. Consultations are conducted by Economic and Sustainable Development Services with a range of other Council services who have an ongoing role in town centres. This consultation and cooperation will continue throughout the duration of the initiative.

David Booth
Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)
South Lanarkshire Council

22 February 2024

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

Values

- ◆ Focused on people and their needs
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ Ambitious, self-aware and improving
- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ Excellent employer

Priorities

- ◆ We will work to put people first and reduce inequality
- ◆ We will work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places
- ◆ We will work to recover, progress and improve

Outcomes

- ◆ Our children and young people thrive
- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ Thriving business, fair jobs and vibrant town centres
- ◆ Caring, connected, sustainable communities
- ◆ People live the healthiest lives possible
- ◆ Inspiring learners, transforming learning, strengthening partnerships

Previous References

- ◆ Executive Committee – 21 February 2024

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Hamilton Town Centre Masterplan Executive Summary
- ◆ Rutherglen Town Centre Draft Strategy and Action Plan

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:- Victoria Eccles

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