

Report

Report to:	Community and Enterprise Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	7 November 2023
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ inform the Committee of the work undertaken to prepare the consultative draft Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the consultative draft Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan be approved, and
- (2) that the arrangements for a period of consultation, as outlined in section 5 of the report, be approved.

3. Background

3.1. The town centre strategy and action plan for Rutherglen follows four previous strategies for Hamilton, Blantyre, Cambuslang and Larkhall. These strategies seek to engage with local businesses and communities throughout South Lanarkshire to create a dynamic action plan to tackle issues within the various town centres and help repurpose them for the future.

3.2. The nature of town centres across the UK is in a transitional stage. The range of issues town centres are facing are broad and complex. Factors such as the economic downturn, the COVID-19 crisis, online shopping, the 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. That said, Rutherglen is performing better than some towns within South Lanarkshire.

3.3. Supporting our town centres remains a Council priority and the Council will continue to work closely with the appropriate groups and organisations in each town through a partnership approach to achieve common goals. Local communities remain supportive of their town centres and have a desire to see them thrive.

4. Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan

4.1. South Lanarkshire's town centres support a diverse range of economic, social and civic functions. In common with the rest of the UK, town centres have felt the effects of the issues highlighted at paragraph 3.2 above.

- 4.2. Despite these challenges Rutherglen Town Centre continues to perform relatively well and retains numerous assets that provide a solid foundation that people will continue to wish to visit and spend time in.
- 4.3. The future of all town centres is dependent on reacting to changing behaviours by both consumers and retailers recognising that town centres can no longer place such heavy reliance on their retail offer. Rutherglen does already support a broad range of activity including local services, café culture, an evening economy and town centre living.
- 4.4. The consultative draft Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan (Appendix 1) sets out a range of initiatives which the Council will pursue with partners to support the vitality and viability of the town centre. The private sector has a key role in providing shopping services and leisure offers that will attract and meet the needs of the local community. Private sector support coupled with strengthening links between local businesses and the community will provide a strong base from which to drive town centre activity forward.
- 4.5. The Strategy recognises a series of objectives for Rutherglen which are consistent with the activity being promoted by Scotland's Towns Partnerships (STP) and others, namely, a collaborative approach across all sectors is the only way to bring meaningful and sustainable regeneration.
- 4.6. The Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan uses a similar approach undertaken in previous town centre strategies. The process has continued to evolve and improve by using a range of information gathered through engagement and research undertaken in partnership with the Improvement Service's Shaping Places for Wellbeing Team. The Strategy provides an agreed approach to the issues faced by the town centre and will inform future decision making to help achieve sustained long-term improvement.
- 4.7. A place and wellbeing assessment has been carried out which enables officers to take a systematic approach to identify impacts and make recommendations for consideration to maximise benefits to the wellbeing of people and place and minimise negative impacts. The place and wellbeing assessment provides a report with issues categorised under a set of Place and Wellbeing Outcomes; these fall into five overarching themes with relevant sub themes under each. These themes in turn produce a set of outcomes from which actions are identified.
- 4.8. 2026 marks the 900th anniversary of the Charter of the Royal Burgh of Rutherglen, the oldest Royal Burgh in Scotland. The town centre will be a key focus of celebrations to mark this occasion and a steering group has recently been established to work on this initiative. The Strategy and Action Plan will support and compliment the growing programme of community led events leading up to the Rutherglen 900 celebrations.
- 4.9. Subject to approval by the Committee, officers from Enterprise and Sustainable Development Services will implement the plan and liaise with other Services and partner organisations to deliver the outcomes agreed.
- 4.10. Finally, the Strategy presents a Town Centre Action Plan which captures the priorities for Rutherglen and illustrates where resources and activities should be focussed. The action plan will remain a live document with projects and priorities being delivered on an ongoing basis.

5. Next Steps and Timescale

- 5.1. Following Committee approval, it is intended that the consultative draft Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan will be published and made available for consultation both online and in person during February and March 2024. Following consideration of the feedback received, a finalised Strategy will be prepared and presented to Community and Enterprise Committee in June 2024.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. The development and implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan will be taken forward by officers from Enterprise and Sustainable Development Services.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. Implementation of the Strategy will focus on the co-ordination of activity and events that will be funded through existing resources. The financial resources required to deliver the objectives of the Action Plan will be considered on a project-by-project basis. In addition, the Strategy provides a basis to support funding bids from a range of sources, however, it is important to note that much of the success of the plan will rely on the support and investment from the private sector and the buy-in from the community by increasingly using their town centre.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. The recommendations in this report and the content of the Strategy and Action Plan aim to align with the Council's climate change and sustainability policies and bring forward meaningful change in the town centre in support of these aims.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. The risks associated with not supporting the proposal is that Rutherglen Town Centre will not have a co-ordinated approach to the challenges it faces. The support and partnership working within Rutherglen Town Centre could be lost, leading to a loss of activity. The Council's reputation could also be damaged if it is not seen to actively support and encourage business initiatives and investments in Rutherglen Town Centre.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. 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.
- 10.2. Consultation on the content of this report has been undertaken by Enterprise and Sustainable Development Services with a range of other Council Services and the Shaping Places for Wellbeing Steering Group who have an ongoing role in delivering services and initiatives in our town centres. The consultation and co-operation will continue throughout the duration of the initiative.

David Booth

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

16 October 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ Focused on people and their needs
- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ We will work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places
- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ Thriving business, fair jobs and vibrant town centres

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Rutherglen Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan (Appendix 1)

Contact for Further Information

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

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