

Report

Report to:	Community and Enterprise Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	30 October 2018
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

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

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ update the Committee of the outcomes of the Hamilton Town Centre Strategy Consultation
- ◆ request that the Strategy is now approved

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the outcome of the consultation process approved at the Community and Enterprise Resources Committee of 6 March 2018, as detailed in section 4, be noted;
- (2) that the Hamilton Town Centre Strategy, as amended, detailed in section 5 and Appendix 2, be approved; and
- (3) that the Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources) report back to a future meeting of the Committee on proposals for the establishment of an appropriate forum to bring together business, community and residents' interests to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.

3. Background

3.1. In line with town centres across the country, Hamilton Town Centre has been materially affected by changes in economic conditions, demographics, the progressive rise of the internet and the rise of convenience culture. In response to these national changes, the Scottish Government commissioned the National Review of Town Centres in 2013 which set out key recommendations for re-energising Scotland's town centres. The actions and recommendations from this review fell into the following 6 key themes:-

- ◆ Town Centre Living
- ◆ Vibrant Local Economies
- ◆ Enterprising Communities
- ◆ Accessible Public Services
- ◆ Digital Towns
- ◆ Pro-active Planning

At the centre of these recommendations, is the "Town Centre First" policy which recognises that the health of Scotland's town centres must be put at the heart of the decision making process.

- 3.2. In response to the National Review of Town Centres, Planning and Economic Development Services prepared a draft Hamilton Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan setting out a range of initiatives which the Council wish to pursue in order to meet the challenges facing Hamilton town centre. The action plan considers potential activity shaped at revitalising the town centre in three distinct themes:-
- ◆ Potential Development Opportunities
 - ◆ Car Parking, Transportation and Access
 - ◆ Events, Promotions and Initiatives
- 3.3. The draft action plan went out to public consultation from 30 April to 26 August 2018 as agreed at the Community and Enterprise Resources Committee of 6 March 2018. Officers from Planning and Economic Development Services completed face to face consultations in the Regent Shopping Centre in May 2018 and gave a presentation to a meeting of the South Lanarkshire Access Panel held in June. The consultation was live for completion online during this time. South Lanarkshire's Corporate Communications team provided support to advertise the consultation and efforts were made to attract a wide cross section of the public to complete the questionnaire. It was identified early on that young people were underrepresented and additional efforts were made to bring the survey to their attention through additional social media activities and liaising with Education Resources to target groups e.g. Universal Connections who meet over the summer period. The consultation generated 1245 responses when it closed on 26 August 2018.
- 3.4. The results of the consultation were presented at a public event held in Hamilton Town House on 11 September 2018. The event was open to all and approximately 60 members of the public and business community were in attendance.
- 3.5. Feedback given at the presentation was closely aligned to the feedback received through the wider consultation exercise as set out below.

4. Consultation Feedback

- 4.1. The consultation exercise attracted in excess of 5,000 comments. The main themes of the comments, alongside feedback gathered at the presentation, are as follows:
- ◆ Prominent buildings which are in a state of disrepair make Hamilton an uninviting place to visit.
 - ◆ The retail offer in the core town centre does not meet the needs of shoppers.
 - ◆ Parking payments are not popular.
 - ◆ Town Centre Shopping Patterns do not meet the needs of today's consumers (no late night opening in the traditional town centre and Sunday opening is sporadic).
 - ◆ It is difficult for many to access and make their way around the town centre. A shuttle bus (Quarry Street - Palace Grounds loop) would be beneficial.
 - ◆ A town centre residents' association would be beneficial.
 - ◆ "Keith's Building" (Cadzow Street) should be added to the strategy.
 - ◆ The town has a wealth of history which should be celebrated.
 - ◆ More family friendly entertainment, events, restaurants and things to do would be welcomed.
 - ◆ There are no alcohol free places for young people to go after 7pm.
 - ◆ Non-commercial social areas, clubs and events that engage the community are desired.
 - ◆ More marketing and information is required about the large amount of things that are happening in Hamilton such as sporting and social clubs.

- ◆ SLC need to communicate about developments and the progress of the strategy more regularly.
- ◆ Under “Potential Development Opportunities”, finding a use for the former Bairds retail unit was ranked as the highest priority with developing the Hamilton Town Hotel and the redevelopment of the Vogue Cinema site in second and third place respectively.
- ◆ Opinion was split as to whether there was support for bringing more residential property into the town centre. On reviewing the comments, however, it appears there is confusion with some respondents thinking that residential property would be at the expense of retail provision. This is not the case.
- ◆ Under “Car Parking/Transportation and Access”, a review of parking arrangements was ranked highest with reintroduction of traffic to Quarry Street and a review of town centre accessibility by car ranked second and third respectively.
- ◆ Opinion was split over the reintroduction of traffic to Quarry Street (55% support/45% do not support). Those who are not in support cite pollution and public safety as the main reason behind their response.
- ◆ Under “Events/Promotions/Initiatives” 63% state that events would make them more likely to visit the town centre. 88% feel that there is not enough for young people to do.

4.3. At the public meeting, it was noted that, given the current shift in consumer habits, the future of town centres will benefit from a holistic approach being taken with a viable town centre having multi-faceted uses which support the surrounding community. The audience was taken through the main feedback from the consultation (the full results were provided on handouts at Appendix 1) and information was then provided on current and proposed developments within the town centre. It was noted that while Hamilton Town Centre faces challenges, the recently approved planning permissions from both Wetherspoons at the former Bairds’ property and Premier Inn at the former Town Hotel Site, alongside developments at the Raith Interchange, Hamilton Racecourse, Community Growth Areas and the University of the West of Scotland all illustrate an increased level of interest and confidence in the Hamilton market. This provides a solid basis to take forward the strategy.

5. Finalising the Strategy

5.1. Following the completion of the consultation, consultants Ironside Farrar, alongside officers from Economic Development Services, amended the Strategy and Action Plan in order to reflect the outcomes of the consultation. The priorities identified in the consultative draft strategy are, on the whole, in line with consultation feedback, however, amendments to the strategy have been made as follows in order to reflect public feedback:-

- ◆ Projects to develop the former Bairds Unit on Quarry Street, the former Town Hotel on Townhead Street and the former Vogue Cinema Site have been prioritised in line with consultation feedback.
- ◆ Developments at Hamilton Racecourse and the University of the West of Scotland will be added to the Action Plan.
- ◆ The Council has recently completed a period of prioritised maintenance and will continue to monitor key areas within the town centre.
- ◆ Keith’s Building will be added to the Action Plan as a site which should be given consideration.
- ◆ Developing town centre living will be prioritised.
- ◆ Reopening Quarry Street to traffic will be subject to an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order.

- ◆ The possibility of the introduction of a shuttle bus by Hamilton Business Improvement District to connect the top and bottom areas of the town centre will be explored.
- ◆ The Council will continue to explore a range of parking options including undertaking an exercise to bring forward a cashless parking App to increase flexibility in payment for users.
- ◆ The Council will continue to work with town centre representatives to explore parking initiatives which support business, increase flexibility and ensure effective management of car parking.
- ◆ Signage throughout the town centre will be reviewed.

5.2. In summary, the Strategy is a holistic range of measures aimed at revitalising a variety of aspects within the town centre. With this in mind, the success of the strategy is dependent on the actions of the Council in partnership with the private sector, the community and the third sector. In this respect, an issue of how the governance in implementing the Strategy would be established was raised. In this regard, it was noted that the Council works closely with the Hamilton BID. However, it is recognised that the BID does not cover the whole town centre area nor directly represents residents/ community interests. In turn, to ensure that the strategy takes an inclusive approach any forum structure put in place should reflect the town centre as a whole. At this point in time, it is not clear which groups would be representative of residents/ community and other business interests in addition to the BID which the Council will continue to actively engage with. As such, it is proposed that this matter be progressed by officers and a further report be brought back to Committee to bring forward proposals. This should not cause any undue delay in implementing the Strategy, however, it is important to ensure that any forum structure is appropriate.

6. Next Steps

6.1. On agreement of the finalised strategy, it is proposed to undertake a period of publishing and promoting the Strategy throughout Hamilton, establish the forum structure set out in paragraph 5.2 and continue with the delivery of projects currently underway while carrying out the preparatory work for the delivery of the Action Plan.

7. Employee Implications

7.1. The implementation of the Action Plan will be taken forward by officers within Planning and Economic Development Services.

8. Financial Implications

8.1. Implementation of the Action Plan will focus on the coordination of activity and events that will be funded through existing resources. There are aspects of the action plan, however, which do not have funding in place both within the Council and across partners. The strategy provides a basis to support funding bids which support change and development in the town centre. Much of the success of the Action Plan will be dependent on the support of the private sector, the community and third sector.

9. Other Implications

9.1. There is a risk that if the Council does not maintain its support for town centre regeneration activities, the physical environment will deteriorate, businesses will find trading conditions become harder, with the potential closure of some businesses and subsequent job losses.

9.2. Failure to maintain this kind of activity will result in a failure to meet a range of Council objectives and policies including those detailed below and the Council's reputation and credibility may also suffer.

9.3. There are no issues in terms of sustainability arising from the recommendations made in this report.

10. Quality 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. Consultations have been co-ordinated by Economic Development Services with a range of other Council Services who have an ongoing role in delivering services and initiatives in our Town Centres. This consultation and co-operation will continue throughout the duration of the initiative.

Michael McGlynn

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

27 September 2018

Links to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Improve the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ Support the local economy by providing the right conditions for inclusive growth
- ◆ Improve health care and wellbeing

Previous References

- ◆ Hamilton Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan Committee Report (6 March 2018)

List of background papers –

- ◆ Hamilton 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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