

Report

Report to:	Hamilton Area Committee
Date of Meeting:	8 February 2023
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Update on Town Centres
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ update members on the activity currently being undertaken in town centres across the Hamilton area

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the current activity across town centres be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The nature of town centres across the UK is in a transitional stage. The range of issues involved in the challenges town centres are facing are broad and complex. Factors such as the economic downturn, internet shopping, the growth of out of town shopping malls, changes in retailers' business models and consumer expectations have resulted in a decline in 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. Supporting town centres remains a Council priority and officers continue to work in partnership with groups and organisations in each town to achieve our common goals.
- 3.3. The role town centres have in our communities is significant and, therefore, their role cannot be overstated. Town centres support and contribute to people across our communities whether this is to access essential services, visiting for shopping or enjoying leisure time.
- 3.4. Around 70% of businesses and jobs in the economy are located in town centres and they are the principal location for leisure and hospitality. They retain a vital social importance as a meeting, events and performance space.
- 3.5. Across the 10 towns defined in the South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan (LDP) there is active and ongoing engagement with the most appropriate groups in the town. These range from town to town and include Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Development Trusts, Community Councils and private property owners.

- 3.6. Town Centre strategies and action plans have been prepared and approved for Hamilton, Cambuslang, Larkhall and Blantyre with work now underway in Rutherglen. Similar plans are being progressed by the communities in Lanark and Carluke along with the master planning work by the owners of East Kilbride.
- 3.7. These strategies and action plans are closely aligned with the Government approach to town centres captured in the New Future for Scotland's Town Centres report and action plan.
- 3.8. Officers in Economic Development are working with all key stakeholders across our towns and have commissioned 2 key pieces of work to set the direction of the Council's work around town centres going forward. These will inform and align with existing and emerging funding opportunities around town centres.
- ◆ Town Centre Visioning – this will set out how the Council delivers on the strategic aims and objectives at a local level. As noted above, while all towns have similar challenges, the solutions are not always the same. This work will set out how the Council, communities and partners should deliver meaningful and sustainable change within our town centres through a series of projects and action plans.
 - ◆ Transition to net zero – town centres are major contributors to pollution and although a number of early wins have been achieved, the ways to deliver long term meaningful and sustainable reductions are complex and not always palatable to business or customers. This work will set out a practical approach to working towards net zero across our towns.

4. Town Centre Activity

4.1. Hamilton

The town centre strategy and action plan were put in place in October 2018 and, given the continued change in consumer behaviour, the impact of the pandemic and the increased focus on the climate emergency officers have begun a review and update of the strategy and action plan.

- 4.2. This work is at a very early stage and will go through a similar process used for the preparation of each of the previous strategies. The aim will be to present a consultative draft to the Community and Enterprise Resources Committee in early summer 2023. This will capture the strategic work set out at section 3.8 of this report, a review of the previous strategy and initial suggestions for the action plan moving forward. Officers will consult with a range of partners and interested parties in the preparation of this initial draft and will look to hold a full consultation of the draft document over the summer period of 2023.

- 4.3. There are a number of ongoing projects linked to the previous strategy which are at various stages of delivery. The success of those projects which have been delivered and continual engagement to deliver those which are outstanding will be key to the future success of Hamilton.

4.4. Blantyre

The Blantyre town centre strategy and action plan were approved at the Community and Enterprise Committee in October 2022 following an extensive period of work and consultation. Officers are now liaising with the community to deliver on the objectives set out in the report.

4.5. Larkhall

The Larkhall town centre strategy and action plan were approved at the Community and Enterprise Resources Committee in May 2021. The completion of this work has assisted the community in securing town centre capital funding to deliver a range of town centre project and improvements. These projects are close to completion and the groups are working on their next round of bids.

- 4.6. As can be seen from above, there is significant and ongoing activity across the town centres in the Hamilton area and officers in Enterprise and Sustainable Development would be keen to explore further opportunities with groups across our communities.

5. **Employee Implications**

- 5.1. There are no employee implications from the information set out in this report

6. **Financial Implications**

- 6.1. There are no financial implications from the information set out in this report. All projects and spend referred to will be subject to separate approvals as appropriate

7. **Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

- 7.1. Climate change and working to net zero is at the heart of all the work on town centres as we seek to deliver sustainable town centres which support liveable neighbourhoods.

8. **Other Implications**

- 8.1. All town centres face a challenging set of circumstances. It is essential the Council plays a full and active role in the future of our town centres. Not doing so will result in continued decline and greater demands on limited resources.

9. **Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 9.1. Our town centres have to be available for all across our communities. We continue to work and consult with a broad range of groups across our communities and as noted above the work involved in improving our town centres will be subject to wide consultation.

David Booth

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

24 January 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

Values

- ◆ Ambitious, self-aware and improving
- ◆ Fair, open and sustainable

Priorities

- ◆ We will work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places
- ◆ We will work to recover, progress and improve

Outcomes

- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ Thriving business, fair jobs and vibrant town centres

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

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

Iain Ross, Project Manager, Enterprise and Sustainable Development

E-mail: Iain.ross@southlanarkshire.gov.uk