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| Report to: | Community and Enterprise Resources Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | 6 March 2018 |
| Report by: | Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources) |

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| Subject: | Hamilton Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan and Town Centre Audits |
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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 Hamilton Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan.
- ◆ seek Committee approval to consult on the consultative draft Plan
- ◆ inform the Committee of the next steps in implementing the consultative draft Plan.
- ◆ agree to commission Scotland's Towns Partnership to produce a town centre audit and action plans, in consultation with community groups as appropriate, for Blantyre, Cambuslang and Larkhall

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the consultative draft Hamilton Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan be approved for an 8 week period of consultation as described in section 6;
- (2) that following the consultation exercise, the Hamilton Town Centre Strategy be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for approval;
- (3) that the Head of Planning and Economic Development be authorised to make drafting and technical changes to the plan prior to its publication; and
- (4) that Scotland's Towns Partnership be commissioned to produce a town centre audit and action plans, in consultation with community groups as appropriate, for Blantyre, Cambuslang and Larkhall

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 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. In the case of Hamilton, the key partner is the Business Improvement District (BID) which went through its re-ballot process in autumn 2017.
- 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. There is, therefore, 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.

4. Hamilton 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, however, our town centres have felt the effects of both the economic downturn and changes in shopping patterns.
- 4.2 Despite these challenges, Hamilton Town Centre retains numerous assets that provide a solid foundation which will allow the centre to adapt to societal changes and provide a centre that people wish to visit and spend time.
- 4.3 The future of all town centres is dependent on reacting to changing behaviours by both consumers and retailers and recognising that town centres can no longer place such heavy reliance on their retail offer. Town centres need to diversify to give users the broadest range of reasons to visit and stay in the town centre. Retail remains a fundamental part of a healthy town centre, however, residential development, leisure activity, café culture, evening economy and local services for local communities have an increasing role and importance within the town centre mix.
- 4.4 The Consultative Draft Hamilton Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan (appendix 1) sets out a range of initiatives which the Council wish to pursue with partners to support this outcome. The private sector has a key role in providing a shopping, service and leisure offer that will attract and meet the needs of the local community. In addition, the strengthening of links with the University of the West of Scotland, local businesses and communities and building the town centre local residential base can support vitality, place making and create additional demand for goods and services.
- 4.5 The Strategy is informed by Scottish Towns' Partnerships Your Town Audit (appendix 2) which is a framework which has been developed to measure and monitor the performance of Scotland's towns and town centres using a series of Key Performance indicators. The results allow more meaningful comparison of towns based on their similarities and challenges and helps practitioners develop more meaningful solutions.
- 4.6 The Strategy considers the national and local policy context for the improvement of our town centres and considers the key challenges and areas of opportunity for the town centre. Recognising these challenges while focusing on the areas of opportunity are key to the successful delivery of the Strategy.

- 4.7 The Strategy recognises a series of objectives for which Hamilton should aim, and are consistent with the activity being promoted by Scottish Towns Partnership (STP) and others, namely a collaborative approach across all sectors is the only way to bring meaningful and sustainable regeneration.
- 4.8 Finally, the Strategy presents a town centre action plan which captures the priorities for Hamilton and illustrates where resources and activities should be focused. The action plan will remain a live document with projects and priorities evolving over time. This is summarised in the following section.
- 4.9 The Action Plan considers the potential activity under 3 main headings these are:

- ◆ **Potential development opportunities** – there are a number of sites or properties within the town centre which lend themselves to redevelopment. The prevailing economic conditions make delivery challenging, however, a strategic partnership approach across the town and sectors gives the greatest prospect to reverse this trend.
- ◆ **Car Parking, Transportation and access** – successful town centres need their customers to be able to access and navigate the town centre easily. Hamilton is the 4th largest town and 8th largest settlement in Scotland. Demand for car parking is considerable from a variety of users and it is essential that parking is managed effectively, as it is across all comparable sized towns. Feedback from the consultation process will help inform our strategy going forward.

Around 50% of users travel to the town centre by public transport and we aim to build on the investment carried out by the Council, SPT and Scotrail in recent years to maintain the high standard of service.

Effective and clear signage considerably helps users in the town centre navigate their way into the town and thereafter around the town. The current signage will be reviewed to ensure it is fulfilling these requirements which, in turn, may address some of the perceived challenges around access and connectivity.

- ◆ **Events Promotion and Initiatives** – our works with the BID, Healthy High Streets, the young people of Hamilton and many others will shape the way in which we use, promote and grow the town centre in years to come. Good progress has been made in this area and the BID run a series of events annually which continue to grow and improve.

- 4.10 The Strategy has been drafted by officers within the Planning and Economic Development Service to capture the ongoing activity of the Council and Partners. In addition, officers have sought input from Scottish Town Partnership, Ironside Farrar Consultants and EKOS Economic Consultants, all of whom have involvement in similar plans across the country, thereby ensuring that the development of the plan is informed by best practice.

5. Town Centre Audits

- 5.1 As noted in section 3 above, the challenges facing our town centres reflect changes in the wider economy and shopping patterns. At the same time it is important to recognise and understand the specific issues facing each town centre and a means to assist in this is to undertake a Town Centre Audit, as has been the case for Hamilton (see appendix 2). As such it is proposed to commission Scotland's Towns Partnership to produce a town centre audit and action plans, in consultation with

community groups as appropriate, for Blantyre, Cambuslang and Larkhall. Once these audits and action plans are complete it is proposed to report back to Committee to provide updates.

6. Next Steps and Timescale

- 6.1 Following Committee approval, it is intended that the Hamilton Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan would be published and made available for consultation during March and April. The consultation will have three main elements as follows:-
1. Partner and BID Engagement sharing the plan with partners for initial feedback on the content
 2. Stakeholders engagement to be facilitated by STP and partners
 3. Public engagement organised through a consultation event and to allow the community to consider the proposals and feedback on the strategy.
- 6.2 Following consideration of the comments received, a finalised Strategy would be prepared and presented to the Community and Enterprise Resources Committee.
- 6.3 In respect of town centre audits, officers will commission Scotland's Towns Partnership to produce a town centre audit and action plan, in consultation with community groups as appropriate, for Blantyre, Cambuslang and Larkhall in the coming months.

7. Employee Implications

- 7.1. The development and implementation of the plan will be taken forward by officers from Planning and Economic Development Services.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. 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 relate to support and investment from the private sector and buy in from the community by continuing and increasingly using their town centre.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. The risks associated with not supporting the proposal is that Hamilton Town Centre will not have a coordinated approach to its response to the many challenges it faces. The support and partnership working within Hamilton Town Centre could be lost, leading to a loss of activity in the town centre. The Council's reputation could also be damaged if it is not seen to actively support and encourage business initiatives and investments in Hamilton Town Centre.
- 9.2. There are no issues in terms of sustainability arising from the recommendations made in this report.

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. 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)

19 February 2018

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Values/Ambitions

- ◆ 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

- ◆ 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:-

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