

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Director of Strategic Change and Communities
to Cabinet
of 28 November 2023**

Subject: Ayr Town Centre Framework

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the progress of the development of a Town Centre Framework for Ayr.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:

2.1.1 agrees to start public consultation between November and January on the Draft Town Centre Framework (following recent Members/officers briefings) that sets a strategic Delivery and Action Plan for Town Centre Projects. Once complete, the final framework will be presented to Cabinet in March 2024 for approval;

2.1.2 agrees that officers will prepare a package of works for the development of the Ayr Southern Gateway/ Robert Burns Square/ A70 realignment and report back to Cabinet with developed proposals by April 2024; and

2.1.3 otherwise notes the contents of the report and supports the approach to the Town Centre Framework and next steps as set out in this report.

3. Background

3.1 The Council commissioned consultants to prepare an Ayr Town Centre Framework. The draft framework summarises the strategic priorities for the Town Centre and sets out a Delivery and Action Plan focussed on strategic projects and programmes that the Council can help to support and enable.

3.2 The Draft Town Centre Framework projects form part of a developing strategy to rebalance, regenerate and repopulate the town centre to support growth, make the centre more vital, vibrant and successful and reassert Ayr's role as the region's primary centre.

3.3 The Draft Town Centre Framework is based on four key catalysts that will support growth, regeneration and enable transformational change:

1. Infrastructure First

Creating an integrated public transport Interchange.

2. Active Travel and Mobility

Improving accessibility and mobility and supporting active travel choice.

3. Quality Placemaking

Improving the quality, liveability, and appeal of the town centre.

4. Town Centre Vibrancy

Encouraging more footfall and reasons to use and visit the town centre

3.4 Ayr Town Centre like many Town Centres continues to face major challenges due to changing consumer behaviours, E-commerce and on-line shopping, Covid impacts and the costs of operating within the High Street environment. The Town Centre First policy and the 'New Future for Scotland's Town Centres' (2021) looks to address these challenges through a range of measures and recommendations including supporting local economies, investing in place-making, town centre living, and local place planning to support and drive Town Centre regeneration.

3.5 A new Town Centre Framework can positively contribute to the regeneration of Ayr Town Centre and provide a key document in support of external funding. Subject to the future approval of the Framework in March 2024, these include a new Transport Interchange (Rail/Bus Station Proposals); Hourstons and Arran Mall Care Village; Accessible Ayr; The Esplanade; and the development of the Kyle quarter. The Framework and projects can form the foundation for transformational change linked to a wider existing council programme of activity capable of securing external funding and investment support.

4. Proposals

4.1 A Draft Town Centre Framework is currently being finalised following Officer Workshop and Members Briefings. It is proposed to take this Draft Framework to public consultation. This will run from November 2023 to January 2024 and finalise the Framework for approval by Cabinet in March 2024.

4.2 It is further proposed that the area known as the Southern Gateway/Burns Statue Square is further developed to consider outline designs and costings for progress during 2024. This will be subject of a Cabinet paper in April 2024.

4.3 The primary outcome of these proposals is to increase footfall, extended dwell time, secure higher town centre spending, extend the town centre catchment and increase the opportunity for town centre living that collectively will support an additional demand for goods and services. Actions to strengthen demand will support confidence in the activities and business that make our town centre successful and encourage further public, private, and third-sector investment across the town centre.

4.4 The Draft Town Centre Framework has been developed in consultation with Officers and Members. The intent is now to extend engagement to wider stakeholders, residents and the public with a drop-in Event Consultation and on-line Engagement in advance of finalising the framework. Key dates include

Completion of Draft Town Centre Framework	3 November 2023
Officers Workshop	6 November 2023
Members Briefing	w/b 13 November 2023
Public Consultation (8 Weeks)	w/b 27 November 2023
Finalisation of Town Centre Framework	March 2024

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report. Though any future works identified would be subject to tender rules and procedures and subject to approval.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications from the development of the town centre framework, future projects will be subject to consideration as costs are identified.

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Risk

8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations*

8.1.1 Projects and programmes identified through the framework are subject to public consultation. Careful consideration will be required to manage expectations and deliver the project portfolio.

8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations*

8.2.1 The risk associated with rejecting the recommendations is the missed opportunity to advance key strategic and project objectives within Ayr Town Centre and to provide a document that will form the basis of any future external funding bids,

9. Equalities

9.1 As part of developing the design proposals for implementation of any projects in the Town Centre Framework an Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken reaching out to accessibility groups, hard to reach groups and people with protected characteristics.

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - The Scottish Government Gateway will be contacted in terms of any potential SEA Requirements and the assessment of environmental impacts (SEA / EIA (Economic Impact Assessment)) and reporting.

11. Options Appraisal

- 11.1 The development of the Town Centre Framework included a review of project options. The Officer Steering Group reviewed options and the scope of individual projects, and these will be further reviewed through the consultation and engagement process.

12. Link to Council Plan

- 12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Priorities 1, 2 and 3 of the Council Plan: Spaces and Places/ Moving around and the environment (Outcome 1), Live, Work, Learn (Outcome 2) and Civic and Community Pride (Outcome 3).

13. Results of Consultation

- 13.1 The Town Centre Framework will be completed following comments recently received from both an Officers Workshop and Members Briefing. Amendments will be incorporated in advance of public consultation.
- 13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Bob Pollock, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

- 14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Director of Strategic Change and Communities will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Cabinet in the 'Council and Cabinet Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

Implementation	Due date	Managed by
Implement the recommendations within this report	29 March 2024	Assistant Director - Communities
Provide a report to Cabinet seeking approval of the Town Centre Framework	31 March 2024	Assistant Director - Communities

Background Papers **None**

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