

THE FIFE COUNCIL - KIRKCALDY AREA COMMITTEE – REMOTE MEETING

20 October, 2020

2.00 pm – 5.05 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Neil Crooks (Convener), Lesley Backhouse, Alistair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Rod Cavanagh, Judy Hamilton, Zoe Hisbent, Gordon Langlands, Kathleen Leslie, Carol Lindsay, David Ross, Richard Watt

ATTENDING: Scott Blyth, Lead Consultant, Car Parking Strategy & Operations, Lesley Craig, Technician Engineer, Traffic Management (South Fife), John Mitchell, Service Manager, Sustainable Transport & Parking, Roads & Transportation Services; Donald Grant, Community Manager (Kirkcaldy), Communities and Neighbourhoods; Paul Coleman, Lead Officer (Safer Communities), Dawn Jamieson, Team Manager (Safer Communities), Joan Lamie, Housing Manager - Kirkcaldy, Housing Services; Michelle McDermott, Committee Officer, Lesley Robb, Lead Officer - Committee Services, Legal & Democratic Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Inspector Gordon Anderson, Police Scotland; Graham Hogg, Station Commander, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

The Convener, in terms of Standing Order 3.8., agreed that an item of business relating to The Proposed Waiting Prohibition: East Toll R/A and Primary School Access Road Burntisland be considered as a matter of urgency, in order to address safety issues brought to the attention of Officers by Members. This item would be considered following consideration of Supporting The Local Community Plan – Kirkcaldy Area Local Budgets 2020/21 item and, in terms of Standing Order 3.9., the remaining items on the published agenda would be taken out of order and considered following the urgent item of business.

227. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Decision

In terms of Standing Order No. 7.1., Councillors Lesley Backhouse and Ian Cameron declared an interest in para 230, as they were both Board Members of Fife Cultural Trust.

228. MINUTE

The Committee considered the minute of the meeting of the Kirkcaldy Area Committee of 8th September, 2020.

Decision

The Committee approved the minute.

229. NOTICE OF MOTION

Motion/

Motion

Councillor David Ross, seconded by Councillor Alastair Cameron moved as follows:-

Kirkcaldy Area Committee agree to the development of a new Kirkcaldy Town Centre strategy which captures in one place the various strands of activity which have developed in recent years.

We also agree to directly fund a member of staff dedicated to this work stream both in terms of coordinating and enabling delivery. We believe this officer should be funded using the former Area budget allocation to Kdy4All which ceased trading in March 2020.

We believe:

- Town centres will no longer be based on large national retailers.
- Communities still need a focal point where people can come together for a range of purposes, social, economic, cultural, leisure etc. and the town centre should continue to perform that function.
- The town centre should be the focus and the critical mass to provide activities, facilities and services for a wide community that would not be viable or for other reasons cannot be provided at a more local neighbourhood level.
- Our consultations confirm that people need to be attracted by the offering in the town centre when it is no longer a hub for major retailers.
- The restrictions necessary around Covid19 will continue to adversely affect activities in and around the town centre in the short to medium term.
- The overall aim is to create a vibrant and viable town centre that is sustainable over the long term as a focus for social, economic, cultural and leisure activity.

We agree that there are strong supporting documents like the Town Centre Framework 2015 which remain relevant but need updated and provide a platform for this piece of work.

The Committee agree that the following five pillars are a foundation for progress but not exclusively:

1. Town Centre Housing

A comprehensive town centre housing strategy is required to provide more housing so that more people will live in and around the town centre and make use of its facilities, and so that existing housing is seen as attractive and desirable, encouraging people to invest in it.

2. Retail Offering

The retail offering in the town centre can no longer be based on major retail anchor stores and has to take account of the growth in on-line shopping. The growth of small specialist shops in our town centre has been significant. Supporting them with an on line platform (Shopappy Kirkcaldy) is one example of how new thinking and activity can help the overall economic wellbeing of businesses. Browsing and ordering online from local High Street businesses and in some cases going to the shop to collect is working. This needs to be supported by appropriate approaches to rent, rates and the provision of suitable premises and we should view empty units as opportunities not lost causes.

3. Activities and Events

This was highlighted as an area with growth potential to increase footfall. We have established venues like the Leisure Centre, Kirkcaldy Galleries and Adam Smith Theatre and King Live lounge plus our many restaurants and bars. Regular events such as the Artisan's Market, Farmers Market and the Beach Highland Games increase footfall and these are areas of growth potential. The Waterfront also provides opportunities for informal leisure and recreation but has far more potential than has currently been realised.

4. Environment

Encouraging people to visit the town centre requires an attractive environment that provides the appropriate physical capacity to accommodate the activities and facilities that will draw people in, be that housing, appropriate retail space or space for formal or informal activities and events. Much has been done to improve the physical environment over the years and that work is continuing with remodelling of the Postings steps and the Esplanade roadway, and this needs to continue to be tied in closely with the other elements of the strategy.

5. Accessibility

Finally, if people are to be encouraged to visit the town centre then it has to be accessible. Being easily accessible on its own isn't enough. When we help create reasons for people to visit the town centre getting there and being there must be safe, welcoming and accessible.

Accessibility must encompass public transport and active travel access, but car parking pricing and more importantly availability and appropriateness of car parking provision are central to accessibility.

Lack of appropriate car parking for the Leisure Centre for instance puts it at a competitive disadvantage compared to local private gyms that have free surface car parking beside their premises. This is made worse by the Covid restrictions which mean changing facilities cannot be used.

The Area Committee believe progress of a Town Centre strategy requires to be community led and acknowledge the Council cannot itself deliver all these elements of the strategy.

We welcome the establishment of Love Oor Lang Toun as a new Community Interest Company looking to galvanise and enable town centre development and activity.

We commit to supporting these five pillars of focus and acknowledge the Council has a key leadership role in bringing people together around this strategy and does have key levers that it can use to help implement the strategy in terms of infrastructure and environmental improvement, planning conditions, housing, parking etc.

We agree that the next steps should be to:

1. Agree and start to build consensus around this strategy;
2. Begin the development of a practical action plan to implement each element of the strategy, not in isolation but as a holistic approach recognising the interconnection of each element – building on and drawing together all the work that is already happening or is planned;
3. Appoint an officer dedicated to implementing this workstream;
4. Establish some form of delivery vehicle or task group that will provide a clear focus for this work and that will have an oversight of the whole strategy and the ability to push forward on the action required to implement it.

Amendment

Councillor Kathleen Leslie, seconded by Councillor Richard Watt moved an amendment as follows:-

Kirkcaldy Area Committee believes that the development of a long-term strategy for Kirkcaldy Town Centre is desirable but that the development and implementation of such a strategy is impossible until the economic and social impacts of Covid-19 have become clearer. Committee further believes that allocation of scarce budgetary resource at this time is unwise.

Committee believes that a truly holistic approach to this question should take into account the whole of the Kirkcaldy Area including Fife Central Retail Park and Burntisland and Kinghorn. Failing to recognise the impacts of developments outside the town centre have been a major contributory factor in the decline of the High Street.

In the meantime, Committee believes that Council Officers should concentrate on short term achievable objectives to ameliorate the situation, concentrating on defraying business rates and parking charges. The reduction or elimination of parking charges would have an immediate impact on footfall, thereby improving the trading prospects of small scale town centre businesses and the Leisure Centre.

Roll Call

For the Motion - 10 votes.

Councillors, Backhouse, Alastair Cameron, Ian Cameron, Cavanagh, Crooks, Hamilton, Hisbent, Langlands, Lindsay and Ross.

For the Amendment - 2 votes.

Councillors Leslie and Watt.

Decision

The Motion was accordingly carried.

Councillor Richard Watt left the meeting prior to consideration of the following item.

230. PLACEMAKING & CAR PARKING OPTIONS REVIEW

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Assets, Transportation and Environment to agree the outcomes from the Placemaking and Car Parking Options Review/

Review for Kirkcaldy and the use of the £28,000 allocated to the Area Committee for devolved parking trials.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

1. to the outcomes of the Placemaking and Car Parking Options Review for Kirkcaldy and that these recommendations would be presented to the Economy, Tourism, Strategic Planning and Transportation Sub-Committee as part of the consideration for devolved car parking;
2. that the following opinions, expressed by the Kirkcaldy Area Committee, also be presented, for consideration by the Economy, Tourism, Strategic Planning and Transportation Sub-Committee:

If local budget decisions were under the control of the Kirkcaldy Area Committee, the Committee would recommend the following:

- Disposal of one or both of the multi storey car parks, which would achieve a saving in non-domestic rates and provides a development site for the emerging Town Centre strategy;
 - Not introducing car parking charges at the Railway Station;
 - Continue to support reduced car parking season tickets
 - Support the principle of free after three or similar free parking initiatives;
 - Remove the parking charges on a Sunday;
 - In terms of the new parking created by the Phase 1 works at the Waterfront, consider parking time limitations and charging options to maximise churn in the vicinity; and
 - Further examination of the advantages and disadvantages of the confusing current wide variety of parking time restrictions in and around the town centre as part of the emerging Town Centre Strategy; and
3. to support the ongoing suspension of parking charges in the Postings Car Park up to and including the 3rd January, 2021, through the £28,000 funding allocated to Kirkcaldy Area Committee, as part of the devolved car parking trial.

231. SUPPORTING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY PLAN - KIRKCALDY AREA LOCAL BUDGETS 2020/21

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods informing Members of the availability of local funding and requesting Member agreement to the allocation of spending for the Kirkcaldy Area Local Community Planning and Anti-Poverty Fund Budgets.

Decision

The Committee agreed to the proposed notional allocations, as outlined in sections 2 and 3 of the report.

232. URGENT ITEM: PROPOSED WAITING PROHIBITION: EAST TOLL R/A AND PRIMARY SCHOOL ACCESS ROAD, BURNTISLAND

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Assets, Transportation and Environment detailing proposals for the introduction of waiting restrictions in the vicinity of East Toll roundabout and on the primary school access road, Burntisland.

Decision

The Committee:-

1. agreed to the promotion of a Traffic Regulation Order to amend the restrictions, as detailed in drawing no. TRO/20/28 (appendix A to the report), with all ancillary procedures: and
2. authorised Officers to confirm the Traffic Regulation Order within a reasonable period, unless there were objections.

233. SAFER COMMUNITIES TEAM UPDATE

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Housing Services providing Members with an update on the operational activity of the Safer Communities Team within the Kirkcaldy Committee Area, during the 12 month period 1st April, 2019 to 31st March, 2020.

Decision

The Committee noted the content of the report and commented on the activity to date.

Councillor Rod Cavanagh left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

234. OPERATIONAL BRIEFING ON POLICING ACTIVITIES WITHIN KIRKCALDY AREA

The Committee considered a report by the Community Inspector, Kirkcaldy and Burntisland Ward Areas, Police Scotland providing elected Members with information on matters impacting on, or involving Police Scotland, which have relevance to community safety in the Kirkcaldy and Burntisland ward policing area during the period 1st April, 2019 to 31st March, 2020.

Decision

The Committee considered the content of the report and commented on the update provided.

The meeting adjourned at 4.21 pm

The meeting reconvened at 4.28 pm

Councillor Judy Hamilton left the meeting prior to consideration of the following item.

235. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - KIRKCALDY AREA ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered a report by the Station Commander, Kirkcaldy Community Fire Station, Scottish Fire and Rescue providing an update on incident information for the period 1st April, 2019 to 31st March, 2020 and allowing the Committee to scrutinise the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Kirkcaldy Area against its key performance indicators.

Decision

The Committee considered the content of the report and provided comment on the progress across a range of key performance indicators detailed in the report.

Councillor Kathleen Leslie left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

236. AREA HOUSING PLAN UPDATE

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services providing Members with an update on progress in delivering service priorities and performance information for the financial year 2019/20.

Decision

The Committee noted:-

1. the work progressed through the Area Housing Plan for the financial year 2019/20;
2. the expenditure for the Housing Revenue Account Locality Managed Budget for 2019/20, as outlined in appendix 2 to the report; and
3. a revised Kirkcaldy Area Housing Services Plan for 2021/23 would be presented to the Committee once there had been the opportunity to consult on future priorities for the Kirkcaldy Area.

237. KIRKCALDY AREA COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Decision

The Committee noted the content of the Kirkcaldy Area Committee Forward Work Programme 2020.