

AYRSHIRE JOINT PLANNING STEERING GROUP

16 December 2009

Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit: Work Programme

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To advise Steering Group members of the main items of work undertaken by the Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit (AJPU) and priorities for the next six months.

BACKGROUND

2. At the last meeting Members of the Steering Group agreed how the shared planning service would operate in principle. An interim list of potential general topics was identified pending further discussion with council officers, particularly relating to progress with local development plans. To date, work has focused on providing support and comment to the emerging local development plan process and on primary data sources necessary and on identifying new national policy initiatives that will impact on plans or wider council policy in the future. All of the reports presented today focus on various aspects of that work. This report, as well as providing an initial overview, also describes emerging national initiatives likely to impact on local development plans and a final section sets out aspects of a future work programme for the next 6 months.

WORK PROGRAMME TO DATE

3. Prior to planning reform the context for local development plans was set by the joint structure plan for Ayrshire. This has now been replaced by a strategic vision statement in each of the three new local development plans which, whilst generated at the local level, still needs a broader background context, particularly from the wider suite of government policy and initiatives currently being proposed. The key purpose of the work over the last 6 months, therefore, has been to provide the context for local development plans, to prepare primary data and to articulate the Ayrshire case to Government and national agencies in developing future policy.
4. Where a substantive body of information relevant to the councils planning process is available, or where work has been completed, a separate paper has been prepared. The reports can therefore be grouped by function.

Support for Local Development Plans

- Wind farm Guidance (**Item 5**);
- Retail and Shopping Survey (**Item 6**);
- Glasgow Prestwick Airport Figures (**Item 7**);
- Prospects for Future Housing Development (**Item 8**);
- Garden and Designed Landscape Survey (**Item 9**).

Future Scanning and the Presenting the Ayrshire Case

- Central Scotland Green Network (**Item 10**);
- Climate Change (Scotland) Act and the Climate Change Delivery Plan (**Item 11**);
- South of Scotland Regional Aviation Solution (**Item 12**);

Project Development

- Proposed Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere (**Item 13**)

EMERGING NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Marine Spatial Planning

5. In the next few years councils with coastlines will be expected to play a significant role in the delivery of marine spatial planning. The Marine (Scotland) Bill was laid before Parliament on 29 April 2009 and the Bill's Stage 1 debate took place in Parliament on 29 October. A consultation on the key principles of a Bill was carried out by Government in the latter part of 2008.
6. At that time the Ayrshire Councils response was largely positive about the principle, but was concerned about some detailed elements: the lack of guidance on the establishment of statutory Scottish Marine Regions (SMRs), the responsibility for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) given to SMRs for delivery without clarity on links to terrestrial planning policies, and the whole issue of staffing and financial resources. It is clear these issues, particularly the establishment of SMRs and resourcing are on the table for future debate. It is expected the Bill will be enacted next year, and in the coming years councils will be expected to play a proactive role in developing the SMRs. Ayrshire has a substantial part of the economy linked to coastal locations which would suggest close attention be paid to how the interface between ICZM and local development plans will be achieved.

7. In this regard, a draft Marine Spatial Plan for the Firth of Clyde, prepared by Government through a project team under the auspices of a Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment Initiative has set a context for marine planning on the Clyde. This current project tests how a marine spatial plan could be prepared once the new Act is in place, but the Government is hoping that the plan might be taken forward as a voluntary working arrangement prior to the Act coming into force. This is still the subject of internal Government discussion but over the coming months the outcome will be reported to Councils.

River Basin Management Planning

8. River basin management planning will be put in place to meet the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive and will come into force in Scotland shortly. Its aims are to improve the ecological quality of all rivers, lochs, estuaries, coastal waters and ground waters where improvement is needed, whilst also avoiding any further deterioration in ecological quality. The key objective is to achieve good ecological status of all waters by 2015. Ecological quality takes account of the whole water environment including chemical quality of the water, the plants and animals present in the water environment and its physical characteristics including riparian development.
9. The Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act places a requirement on Scottish Ministers, SEPA and responsible authorities (including local authorities) to integrate and co-ordinate the exercise of their respective functions to improve water quality, and, once introduced, all public bodies must have regard to river basin management plans. This will impact both on development management and the local development plan. Further consultation on the Clyde area plan process is scheduled for early 2010 primarily to develop co-ordinated partnership action.

Forestry Policy

10. Forestry, woods and wood processing are an important part of the Ayrshire economy and a major component of the landscape. During 2009 future forestry has been the subject of intense discussion and debate with earlier proposals to sell off large tracts of forestry land. This proposal has now been dropped, but the Government has indicated a determined push to increase Scotland's forestry cover to 25%. This will require a major shift in current planting rates to be achievable - from 2/3000 hectares per year to 10/15,000 hectares per year. Government proposals will emerge shortly to assist that process, although it should be stressed this is no longer just about planting large areas of single species conifers. The preferred method for delivery is through Indicative Forestry and Woodland Strategies prepared by councils in conjunction with the Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). In a separate exercise FCS are examining the potential for the possible release of forests in their ownership for future wind farm development.

FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

11. The reports presented at today's Steering Group, and the various topics covered by this report, will be a component part of the work of AJPU over the next six months. A crucial part of that work is to ensure an Ayrshire presence at the table when these various major initiatives are being developed and thus ensure a smooth transition into local development plan policy development. In time, these initiatives will emerge from Government as either legislation or initiatives and it will then be for councils to decide, either individually or collectively, how best to approach the individual topic and to prioritise.
12. The future work programme will therefore be built up from four key sources:
 - a continuation of the current data work on retail analysis, co-ordination of the housing land audit, developing habitat data, aviation policy support and windfarm/renewable energy project support;
 - support for councils local development plan process and other initiatives;
 - specialist advice for public local inquiries;
 - preparing for Monitor 2010;
 - identifying and presenting an Ayrshire case on topics of future concern through future scanning on a wide range of external initiatives; and
 - targeted project development on specific initiatives.

In addition in discussing the reports today the Steering Group may feel that other specific tasks should be added to the list. A full scale review of the first years' work of AJPU will be undertaken for the next Steering Group meeting.

13. There has been a request to bring forward two further work programme elements during 2010. The National Planning Framework Action Programme identifies the delivery of enhanced facilities and improvements in surface transport and other infrastructure at Glasgow Prestwick Airport as a joint exercise led by Infratil, the owners of the airport, and South Ayrshire Council. As the study is likely to have wider implications than the immediate area of the airport, and that AJPU has extensive experience of strategic transportation, aviation policy and airport development, South Ayrshire Council has asked that the study is led by AJPU.
14. As part of the preparation of East Ayrshire Council's Local Development Plan work in 2010 assistance has been requested to provide expertise to the housing needs assessment required as part of the plan. This would utilise the current expertise available in AJPU to prepare this work and discussions are ongoing as to the nature and extent of that work.

CONCLUSION

15. The shared service arrangement through the Ayrshire Joint Planning Service is still bedding down as councils respond to the planning reform agenda and to changed economic circumstance and there are several emerging issues at a national level where an Ayrshire dimension will be required. With further restraint on local government the opportunity to sustain a shared approach to common issues and concerns presents

considerable strengths, and the shared service approach has gained considerable interest both at Government level and with other Scottish councils. From today's meeting a report will be circulated with the draft minutes identifying the key tasks for the next six months.

RECOMMENDATION

16. The Steering Group is asked to approve this report and the further discussion of the reports from today's meeting as the basis of the work programme over the next six months with a recommendation to circulate immediately a list of the priority tasks for the next six months and to prepare a full review of the work of AJPU for the next meeting.

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