AYRSHIRE JOINT PLANNING STEERING GROUP 30 APRIL 2009

Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit: Working Arrangements

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To advise the Ayrshire Joint Planning Steering Group of the progress in developing a work programme for the Ayrshire Joint Planning Unit.

BACKGROUND

- 2. With the signing of the Minute of Agreement, the officers of the three councils have been working to develop how the shared service might function at an operational level to maximise staff resources. As will be noted from the Minute of Agreement, the Steering Group will be presented with papers from the Technical Management Team. These will arrive either as a result of the Support Team working in conjunction with staff in the three councils or work directly generated by them.
- 3. With this being the first meeting of the Steering Group, together with the pace of change being brought about by planning reform, and the councils at the very earliest stages of their new local development plan process, an interim work programme has been devised. This brings forward work already identified as required from the approval of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan together with new areas of work beginning to emerge. However, part of the purpose of the Steering Group is to discuss and identify any further work necessary as a priority.

WORK PROGRAMME

4. The Minute of Agreement (see Item 3 Appendix) in paragraph 15 identifies thirteen specific tasks to be discharged by the Support Team through the Steering Group. As noted in Item 3, tasks can be grouped into five key areas of work. The following sections give a brief summary of progress in each area and can be elaborated as necessary during the meeting.

Strategic Direction

Vision Statements

5. With each council moving towards the production of LDPs, each with a separate vision statement, there is a need to reconsider the extent to which the principles that have driven the Ayrshire vision as promoted by the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan over the last 12 years. The Support Team has considerable expertise in putting together visioning work of this nature and thus early work is required to support the

development of vision statements for each council. This work is already underway with North Ayrshire Council, and has been identified for South Ayrshire Council as well, both to be completed during 2009. East Ayrshire Council already has an agreed vision statement built into the finalised local plan.

Future Scanning

6. Planning is a complex process affected by a wide range of influences. These influences arrive from many different sources, yet many are fundamental to the delivery of the planning process. Monitoring these changes over time allows not only a deeper understanding of the physical, economic and social characteristics, but also allows Ayrshire to be measured against other parts of Scotland and the UK. At an early stage it was recognised that one of the key functions of the Support Team would be for a single source to identify and advise the three councils on the impact of these influences. Monitor 2008 (see Item 6) is the product of this work and has been agreed to be continued on a two yearly cycle with the next in 2010.

Topic and Specialist Support to Local Development Plan

7. A key aspect of the Support Team's work will be the development of a series of topics on which councils will require input in new LDPs that are best seen in an Ayrshire context and where savings can accrue through utilising the joint service as a single supplier. An initial list of topics where the Support Team will supply planning input is as follows:

Wind Farms Agriculture Renewable Energy Biodiversity

Ecosystem Approach Climate Change Adaptation

Aviation Forestry
Retail Impact Assessment Minerals

Joint Waste Facility Planning Small Town Initiative Development

River Basin Management Planning
Landscape/Green Network Development

Marine Spatial Planning
Planning and Flood Risk

8. In addition there are a number of topics that could be developed once a clearer direction is established on local development plan preparation, where response to government would be better articulated on a joint basis, or where initial scoping is necessary to identify potential future work. For most of the subjects identified above work is already ongoing.

Data Management and Co-ordination

9. There is a need to simplify the sources of data for planning purposes through an improved web based mapping system. The purpose will be to maintain a wide range of continuously updated data to support the new LDPs and compare Ayrshire progress against targets and indicators with other areas of Scotland. To comply with e-planning, this data should be accessible to all planning officers through an inter/intranet website available at their desk.

- 10. This is a development of the current web-based system already in existence through Joint Structure Plan Committee's former website, but will now focus on the new information systems technology beginning to emerge and will seek to link directly with, rather than replicate, existing data sources. This work is being progressed through a short term topic group. A new Ayrshire Joint Planning Steering Group web site is currently under development.
- 11. Two specific areas of work are currently underway. The Support Team has for many years monitored house building across Ayrshire. The councils recognise that an up to date sequence of housing information is vital to the proper planning in the area and the process of co-ordinating that data on a joint basis will continue (see Item 7). A similar situation pertains to retail data and a shopping survey is currently underway across Ayrshire that will update an earlier survey carried out in 2003. Results of both monitoring exercises will be presented to the next meeting of the Steering Group.
- 12. The Minute of Agreement also recognises that the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) provides substantive background to the planning system. The dissemination of natural environment data and monitoring progress of actions agreed by councils in the LBAP has therefore been included in the work of the Steering Group. The lack of online data in Ayrshire is currently the subject of an exercise between councils.

Strategic Action Plans and Supplementary Guidance

- 13. The approved joint structure plan contains a number of proposed action plans. Whilst some are no longer relevant and others subsumed within the new local development plans, there are a small number where a joint initiative with one or more council is underway, or remains relevant. These are identified with their current progress as:
 - Wind Farm Guidance (complete, see Item 5)
 - Future Waste Plant locations (planning advisory role underway to Joint Board)
 - Proposed Biosphere (study underway with South and East Ayrshire Councils and Dumfries and Galloway Council)
 - Action on Investment Corridors/Business Improvement Districts (underway with East Ayrshire Council)
 - Central Scotland Strategic Green Network (Ayrshire representative on scoping study underway as part of a wider National Planning Framework initiative)
 - Glasgow Prestwick Airport Environs (scoping underway jointly with South Ayrshire Council for Supplementary Guidance)
 - Minerals including Opencast Coal (scoping study underway for possible Supplementary Guidance)
 - Indicative Woodland Strategy (Ayrshire representative on advisory body for new national planning policy on woods and forests)

Strategic and Specialist Support for Development Management

14. The approved Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan remains in force until the new Local Development Plans are approved. As such, policies in the plan will remain as the basis for development management in the medium term. The Support Team has provided a service to councils to support their decision taking on individual planning

applications in the past and it is intended this should remain. This includes advice and assistance up to and including appearance at planning enquiries.

CONCLUSION

15. The three Ayrshire councils have had a productive shared planning service since 1996. With the reform of the planning system it is recognised that there are many benefits in terms of best value in continuing this arrangement, even though the statutory requirement to do so has gone. A more broadly based approach to a shared planning service will also require more integrated working amongst staff if it is to be successful. Whilst some topics lie directly within the remit of Support Team others will have only elements of a topic, and new topics will undoubtedly emerge. An effective internal management system is therefore being developed to ensure that staff are fully engaged with the new system. The function of the Ayrshire Joint Planning Steering Group to oversee the shared service agenda and to discuss and agree its priorities will be fundamental to the success.

RECOMMENDATION

16. The Steering Group are asked to approve the work identified in this report as the basis for taking forward a shared planning service.

Ian Johnson Manager

Person to Contact: Ian Johnson 01292 673767