

**DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL.**

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,  
on 21st June 2011 at 10.00 a.m.

- Present: Councillors John McDowall (Chair), Eddie Bulik, Stan Fisher, Ann Galbraith, John Hampton, Mary Kilpatrick, Mairi Low and Mike Peddie.
- Also Present: Councillors Peter Convery and Margaret Toner (Portfolio-holders) John Allan, Bill Grant and Philip Saxton.
- Attending: L. Bloomer, Executive Director – Development and Environment; M. Newall, Head of Planning and Enterprise; C. Cox, Planning Manager; M. Hastings, Enterprise Manager; K. Briggs, Principal Solicitor; and J. McClure, Committee Administrative Officer.

**1. Item for Call-in – Draft Tourism Strategy for Ayrshire and Arran to 2016 for Industry Consultation.**

Reference was made to the Minutes of the Leadership Panel of 14th June 2011 (Page 377, paragraph 16) when that Panel, having considered a report of 1st June 2011 by the Executive Director – Development and Environment, had decided

- (1) to approve the draft Tourism Strategy for Ayrshire & Arran until 2016 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (2) to authorise the Chief Executive to finalise the draft for industry and stakeholder consultation during July and August, with the aim of finalising the strategy by end of September 2011.

The Panel was advised that the report had been the subject of a call-in (issued) for the following reasons:-

- (a) further explanation of the term “engineering” with regard to tourism;
- (b) further explanation of this Council’s role in the tourism strategy e.g. why has East Ayrshire got “food and drink”;
- (c) absence of mention of caravans, both static and touring;
- (d) heritage – clarify the statement that this market was “static”;
- (e) DSS Accommodation v Tourism – the direction of this Council and other Councils relative to the competing nature of accommodation, e.g. as is mentioned in the said report, that it was noted that accommodation was poor. It is noted that there is conflict between the demands for DSS/ homeless accommodation in bed and breakfast in relation to the same premises or similar premises providing tourist accommodation. Whilst it is a very sensitive subject, clarity or some form of delineation is required in relation to these two very important but yet conflicting aspects of a modern society; and

- (f) Ancestral Tourism – within the draft report under “Future”, the objective is to hold the Council’s current share. It is felt by the signatories to the call-in that this element of the draft report clearly lacks ambition and to make a statement to simply hold the current share should be replaced with a more ambitious statement that would expand the Council’s current market share of ancestral tourism.

The Chair invited Councillor Grant to explain his reasons for the call-in and, thereafter, the Panel heard him advise:-

- that, whilst he welcomed the draft Strategy and applauded the endeavours of all of the officers involved from the three local authorities, he felt that the document could have been more positive and that the Council should be promoted further;
- that he was concerned at the omission from the document of any caravan parks or camping sites within South Ayrshire as these sites generated income for the area;
- that he felt that Ayr Racecourse and Ayr Flower Show should be included in the document as they brought tourists to Ayr and the surrounding area;
- that the stretch of road known as the electric brae should be included in the Strategy and capitalised on as it was a wonderful optical illusion and the only one of its kind;
- that, instead of utilising Glasgow’s approach to hospitality, the Strategy should make mention of Ayr College which had produced excellent chefs and front of house staff;
- that point 10 of the Strategy entitled “Heritage” stated that the market was static however, he felt that this was not the case due to the museums, country houses, parks, heritage centres, etc. and the significant investment which had been made in heritage in Ayrshire;
- that, whilst he appreciated that the Council had difficulties with housing and acquiring accommodation for homeless persons, accommodation in this area was the largest element of spending for visitors, however, visitors had expressed dissatisfaction at the quality of the accommodation available; and
- that, with regard to ancestral tourism, stating that the objective was to hold the current share lacked ambition and vision and that the Council should be striving to increase its share and the Executive Director – Development and Environment outlined that this was a growing market and that the intention was for this Council to hold its percentage share of that market.

Councillor Allan similarly expressed his concerns and his support for the Call-in and advised:-

- that on landing at Prestwick Airport, visitors were greeted with a sign stating “Gateway to Scotland” when it should be endeavoured to keep visitors in Ayrshire and that officers should work in conjunction with the airport authority and port authority to achieve this;
- that various sites of historical interest connected with Robert Burns were only known to local people and should be more widely promoted with signage;
- that funding should be sought to re-open Barnweil Monument, St. John’s Tower and Wallace Tower which were all presently closed; and
- that the use of podcasts on websites would be advantageous to bringing tourists to the area.

The Executive Director – Development and Environment and the Enterprise Manager then responded to the statements made and questions raised by Councillors Grant and Allan.

Following a full discussion, comments were made and various questions were raised by Members of the Panel regarding the apparent lack of vision in the document; the need to attract tourists by means of cycles tracks, walking routes, etc; level of accommodation available; Houses of Multiple Occupation; the letting of accommodation to DSS tenants; saving the area’s heritage; and the opening of Ayr High Street to traffic at all times.

**Decided:**

- (i) following review, that the decision of the Leadership Panel in respect of this matter be confirmed and implemented; and
- (ii) that the Executive Director – Development and Environment would forward the Panel’s comments relating to:-
  - caravans and camping;
  - joint working with colleges;
  - the high quality of much of our accommodation; and
  - clarification that the market referred to in the offers and opportunities section was the Scottish market rather than the South Ayrshire market,

to the Chief Executive for his consideration when agreeing the Strategy with the Chief Executives of the other two Ayrshire authorities.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting.**

The Minutes of the previous meeting of 24th May 2011 (issued) were submitted and noted.

### 3. **Enterprise Service Review.**

Reference was made to the Minutes of 22nd February 2011 (Page 169, paragraph 6) and there was submitted a report (issued) of 8th June 2011 by the Executive Director – Development and Environment advising on the outcomes from the Enterprise Service Review.

Following questions from Members of the Panel relating to various issues arising from the Review, the Executive Director – Development and Environment and the Enterprise Manager responded accordingly.

#### **Decided:**

(1) to note the following main conclusions of the Enterprise Review:-

- that the Service should place some priority on:
  - (a) specific sectors – i.e. tourism (including associated elements of food and drink, retail and events/festivals), renewable energy and niche strengths, such as aerospace engineering;
  - (b) local businesses with high growth potential, including exporting and funding support;
  - (c) selected infrastructure and investment areas, including the airport, the ports, Ayr town centre, and support for inward investors (existing and new); and
  - (d) sourcing external funding to enable additional economic and community development,
- specifically, in relation to the questions posed by this Panel, namely:
  - (a) that there was scope to improve the operation of the grants schemes within the Service;
  - (b) that the Performance Indicator Framework had been improved;
  - (c) that better joint working on events across the Council was already underway with a structural review proposed by Spring 2012;
  - (d) that better integration of employability activities and the Workforce Plus Group that Enterprise supported was already underway, with a structural review proposed within twelve months;
  - (e) that there was some, but limited, scope to attract more resources from, for example, the European Union, into Enterprise work; and
  - (f) that overall effectiveness could be increased by prioritising; and
- that costed proposals for further economic development activity would be brought forward, as requested by Council, within the context of the wider budget proposals; and

(2) to agree that the report be referred to the Leadership Panel for approval.

4. **Performance Update on the Planning Service 2010/11.**

There was submitted a report (issued) of 6th June 2011 by the Executive Director – Development and Environment providing an update on performance within the Planning Service on a range of performance indicators for the period from 31st March 2010 to 1st April 2011.

Following questions from Members of the Panel relating to various issues on the performance of the Planning Service, the Planning Manager responded accordingly.

**Decided:** to note the performance update on the planning service for 2010/11 as outlined in the report.

The meeting ended at 12.05 p.m.