

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Coatbridge Town Board

Does this report require to be approved? Yes No

Ref PH/CB/LTPfC

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Town centre working group

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Executive Summary

This paper proposes that the Coatbridge Town Board approves the establishment of a town centre working group to identify local issues, generate ideas and advise the Board on potential interventions which it may wish to support in and around Coatbridge Main Street.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board acknowledges:

- Its aspirations for the Main Street to be a more active and attractive place with a greater mix of uses and events
- Stakeholder engagement which identified improving the Main Street as a key priority for the people of Coatbridge
- Initial engagement with retailers

It is further recommended that the Board approves:

- The establishment of a working group comprised of key town centre businesses to support the development of proposals for activities and improvements in and around the Main Street
- That Roddy Cameron is invited to Chair the working group

1. Background

- 1.1 One of the Coatbridge Town Board's key priorities for the Long-Term Plan for Coatbridge is to improve the Main Street and ensure that it becomes a vibrant heart for the town again.
- 1.2 This objective is informed by and aligns with the key priorities identified by Coatbridge residents and visitors during engagement work carried out over the summer months.
- 1.3 During development of potential projects which the Town Board may support through the Investment Plan, NLC officers have begun reviewing options for potential improvement works, activities and interventions in the Main Street. It is clear however that many, if not all, of these projects can only be delivered with the support (or direct

involvement) of town centre businesses. It is also clear from early engagement with town centre businesses that many have a passion for the town and recognise their shared interest in its success but that no vehicle currently exists to channel their collective enthusiasm, ideas and resources.

2. Report

- 2.1 This paper provides the Coatbridge Town Board with a proposal to establish a working group comprised of town centre businesses and key interests, with a view to developing proposals for activities and interventions for the Board's consideration.

Background and proposal

- 2.2 One of the three key themes identified in the UK Government's Long-Term Plan for Towns programme, for which it expects towns to respond to, is the regeneration of high streets and town centres. The regeneration of the Main Street is also a key priority for Coatbridge residents.
- 2.3 In Jump Research's formal survey of 751 residents, more than half (52%) identified 'high streets, heritage and regeneration' as the most important of the three themes while the primary issues raised by respondents to open questions related to perceived challenges on the Main Street (with "dirty", "rundown", "shop closures" and "shops" identified as the top four 'least positive' aspects of Coatbridge). Respondents were also asked to provide their own suggestions for potential improvements, with almost three-quarters (73%) of these relating to the town centre theme.
- 2.4 Page Park's parallel engagement study found similarly, with challenges around the Main Street (particularly related to its amenity, community safety and a lack of attractions) a key finding from qualitative engagement with a range of groups.
- 2.5 The Town Board has agreed, in its draft vision for Coatbridge, for one of its three key objectives to directly relate to the role of the Main Street:
- "Coatbridge's Main Street will become a vibrant heart of the town, better connected to its key assets and neighbourhoods and providing a hub for civic, community and social life."
- 2.6 NLC officers have engaged with a number of town centre businesses, including through a drop-in event and informal discussions. This engagement has found that businesses on and around the Main Street broadly share the more widely held concerns about its perceived rundown nature, the lack of vibrancy and activity in the traditional town centre and challenges around connectivity.
- 2.7 Following initial engagement with town centre businesses and approval from the Town Board Chair, NLC has appointed Roddy Cameron to join the Coatbridge Town Board. Roddy is the proprietor of R. Cameron Jewellers (formerly Cameron and Cosh) and is both a long-standing presence in the town centre (having operated on the Main Street for 42 years) and a well-known and widely respected figure among town centre businesses.
- 2.8 Roddy and council officers have jointly visited a number of businesses to establish whether there is any interest in working together, to identify activities and projects which may deliver on the Board's priority for town centre regeneration. This engagement has found interest from a number of businesses in doing so, and in potentially establishing

a new structure (for example, a Business Improvement District) that could enable or deliver town centre activity.

2.9 It is proposed that a town centre working group, comprised of businesses operating in and around the Main Street, is established and that all businesses are formally contacted and asked to express interest in joining this group. The remit of this group will be to:

- Identify local issues and challenges.
- Identify and develop proposals for activities, events and interventions that could be undertaken to deliver on the Long-Term Plan for Coatbridge's priority for the Main Street.

2.10 This group will act as a reference for the Town Board but it is not, at this stage, proposed for it to be formally aligned within the Town Board structure. Separate proposals around 'delivery phase' governance will be brought forward to future Town Board meetings.

2.11 It is further proposed that this group should be peer-led and, in the first instance, Roddy Cameron is invited to chair the group.

Recommendations

2.12 The following recommendations are made for Board approval:

- That a working group comprised of key town centre business is established, to support the development of proposals for activities and improvements in and around the Main Street
- That Roddy Cameron is invited to chair the working group
- That all businesses within the retail core of the Main Street (including Academy, Church and St John Streets and Sunnyside Road) are informed and are invited to provide nominations for membership

3. Measures of success

3.1 That a forum for town centre businesses is established to inform the development of the Long-Term Plan for Coatbridge and associated Investment Plan.

4. Supporting documentation

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