

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE - 20 JANUARY 2009

SUBJECT: MONIFIETH TOWN CENTRE – ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENTS

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

Abstract: This report seeks Committee approval in principle for a range of environmental enhancements in Monifieth town centre and agreement to undertake public consultation.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:-

1. approves in principle the range of environmental enhancements in Monifieth town centre, as outlined in this report;
2. agrees to public consultation being undertaken on the proposed enhancements;
3. agrees to more detailed designs and cost estimates being prepared following the public consultation process; and
4. awaits a further report on the matter in due course.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Over the past few years, officers of the Council have been in discussion with various parties regarding a possible redevelopment of Monifieth town centre. However, the key private sector interests have now concluded that the redevelopment of their holdings in the town centre is not commercially viable at the present time.
- 2.2 In the absence of development proposals coming forward from the private sector it is felt that the Council should seek to improve the image and appearance of the town centre through a range of environmental enhancements.
- 2.3 Although the footways on each side of Monifieth High Street and the carriageway itself have been resurfaced relatively recently, there is still a perception that the appearance and quality of the town centre is poor and in need of further investment. The area lacks any particular character or focal point; the dominant use of the area is vehicular traffic to the detriment of other users in particular pedestrians causing the pedestrian environment to be unattractive and disjointed. The street furniture comprises a diverse range of styles and quality and in places intrudes into the pedestrian space. Non-statutory signage is uncoordinated and in places compounds the lack of space for pedestrians.

3 ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS

- 3.1 An analysis of the problems points to two main contributory factors:-

- the boundary between the street and the car parks to the south is ill defined and inconsistent and visually the street space appears to leak into the car parks. Contrast this to the north side, which has for the most part clearly defined edges formed by buildings with little visual leakage into spaces behind; and
- vehicular traffic requirements have become dominant to the detriment of other vulnerable users particularly pedestrians. Over recent years practitioners of streetscape design have recognised the need to reconsider the hierarchy of uses to afford more vulnerable users of a street higher priority in terms of how the space is allocated and designed. New guidance for practitioners in Scotland (Designing Streets (Scotland)) is about to be published which suggests that striking a better balance in special streets such as “High Streets” can provide a more attractive environment for shoppers, both resident and visitor.

3.2 As a consequence of these factors there is a lack of co-ordination of the management of the public realm both by public agencies and private owners, which detracts from the attractiveness of the High Street as an area that people use. This is reflected in the uncoordinated signage and street furniture again both in the public realm and in the private areas.

4 OUTLINE PROPOSALS

4.1 Referring to the principles of the new guidance (Designing Streets) the proposed environmental enhancements in the town centre aim to:-

- improve the appearance and quality of the streetscape and address the ill defined edge along the south of the street;
- redress the perceived imbalance between pedestrians and vehicles;
- provide a town centre identity unique to Monifieth;
- enhance the image of Monifieth as a retail and service centre.

4.2 To achieve these aims a set of proposals comprising various components have been prepared at an outline level of detail. Drawings of these outline proposals are available in the Members’ Lounge and will be on display at the Committee meeting. In summary, they comprise:-

- construction of a boundary treatment along the south edge which separates the street from the spaces to the south including vertical features to provide a sense of closure including where possible street trees;
- the installation of a suite of high quality street furniture coordinated with the boundary treatment;
- selective interpretation of the history of Monifieth as part of the wider Monifieth Town Trail through, for example, the provision of interpretative boards at key locations along the High Street;

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- consideration of upgrading the utilitarian street lighting by introducing feature lighting at focal points and incorporating decorative lighting columns to match the street furniture together with modern lanterns to improve colour rendition and, if possible, reduce energy costs;
 - the creation of Gateways (decorative entrance) features at each end of the town centre to help define the core retail/service centre;
 - consideration of a signalised junction at the High Street / Reform Street junction which would accommodate pedestrian crossings on all three legs together with consideration of the installation of a third pedestrian crossing point close to Union Street. This could involve relocating the taxi spaces and deletion of a number of parking spaces;
 - consideration of the road layout at the petrol station and library to improve the provision for pedestrians which could involve the introduction of one-way traffic south along Wellbank Place;
 - the widening of the footway at various points along the south side of the High Street by incorporating the adjacent landscape strip into the existing footway to create opportunities for landscaped and seating areas and allow the existing footway to be an un-fettered route for pedestrians. This may require the adoption of the strip as part of the road and would necessitate the agreement of the relevant land owners;
 - pavement build outs at bus stops and crossing points on the north side of the High Street.
- 4.3 The outline proposals form the basic framework for the management of the public realm but the way in which the spaces within that are treated and the level of intervention can vary. Where appropriate, a number of alternative proposals have been developed but these will ultimately depend to a large degree on the available finance.
- 4.4 The suite of street furniture encompassing bins, seats, signage, and possibly lighting apparatus, offers the opportunity to develop an identity for the high street. An existing railing at the library has been selected as the basic format for the structures and can also provide a motif for all elements.
- 4.5 It must be recognised that whilst the proposals offer many advantages for pedestrians and the visual aspects of the High Street there will be disadvantages for vehicular traffic:-
- a reduction of parking bays if additional pedestrian facility introduced;
 - more frequent stop start manoeuvres particularly if Reform Street junction is signalised and bus boarders positioned on build-outs are introduced;
 - increased trip times through the High Street, which might impact on commuters.
- 4.6 The proposed enhancements are conceptual at this stage and more detailed designs and cost estimates will have to be prepared. It is suggested that, subject to

Committee approval, in principle, public consultation is undertaken during February and March 2009. The consultation would take the form of presentations to the Monifieth Community Council and the Monifieth Landward Partnership together with an un-staffed exhibition in the Library and / or Access Office. Residents and local shopkeepers would be encouraged through press articles etc. to visit the exhibition and submit their views on the outline proposals. The feedback from the consultations will be taken into account during the preparation of the detailed designs and cost estimates.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The budget available for the environmental enhancements in the Financial Plan 2007/2011 is £250,000 of which £225,000 is allocated in 2009/10. It will not be possible to estimate the cost of the outline proposals with any accuracy until more detailed designs are prepared following the consultation process.

5.2 Preliminary indications, however, are that the available budget may not be sufficient to meet the cost of the full package of works as now determined by reference to the new guidance for practitioners in Scotland (Designing Streets (Scotland)). Should this prove to be the case, the package of works will be adjusted to contain it within the available budget. In view of this, the public consultation will note the limited overall funds available and, given the possible need for rationalisation, will seek to determine the relative priority of each of the proposals. This will be reported to Committee once the public consultation has been undertaken and detailed designs and cost estimates prepared.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

7 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

8 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

8.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus.

10. We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need

- Good quality housing is available throughout Angus.
- Crisis response for homeless households is provided.

12. We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations

- The importance and benefits to society of the environment is recognised.

9 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Neighbourhood Services, Head of Finance, Head of Law & Administration and Head of Community Services have been consulted during the preparation of this report.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 There is a perception that the appearance and quality of the town centre in Monifieth is poor and in need of further investment. The area lacks any particular character or focal point, the pedestrian environment is disjointed and the street furniture comprises a diverse range of styles and quality.
- 10.2 The outline environmental enhancements seek to address these issues and to enhance the image of Monifieth as a retail and service centre.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

P&T/RM/IAL
8 January 2009

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