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**To: Leadership Board**

**On: 18 September 2019**

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**Report by: Chief Executive**

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**Heading: A Vision for Paisley Town Centre and progress report of Paisley Town Centre Action Plan 2016-2026**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Leadership Board on progress in delivering the Paisley Town Centre Action Plan 2016-2026 and on the development of a long term Vision for Paisley Town Centre as an exemplar project supported by the Scottish Government and Scotland's Towns Partnership.
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## **2. Recommendations**

2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- (i) notes the progress on the delivery of the Paisley Town Centre Action Plan 2016-2026;
  - (ii) note that the Paisley Vision study was presented to and fully supported by the Paisley Partnership Board in July 2019; and
  - (iii) note that the Paisley Vision Report will be used as a basis for future consultation and feasibility testing for future Paisley town centre regeneration projects.
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### **3. Background**

- 3.1 In 2015 an Action Plan was prepared for Paisley Town Centre to reflect the emerging context of a wide-ranging programme of regeneration activity including the City Deal projects, new town centre housing development, Russell Institute restoration and the bid for UK City of Culture 2021. The purpose of the Action Plan was to set out a framework for 2026 for the planned and potential town centre investment by identifying strategic activity areas to deliver transformational change. The Action Plan provides the platform for activity and investment for all potential stakeholders and partners to achieve the repurposing of the town centre.
- 3.2 A draft Action Plan was prepared following a programme of stakeholder consultation and strategic Activity Areas were identified to deliver transformational change. The Activity Areas are:
- Gilmour Street Gateway
  - Paisley West End
  - High Street & University Campus
  - Abbey & River Precinct
  - Improving Connections
- 3.3 The Action Plan identified short, medium and long term objectives over the 10 year period 2016 to 2026 and was approved by the Leadership Board on 30 November 2016.

### **4. Current Context**

- 4.1 Significant progress has been made in delivering the objectives of the Action Plan in its first three years. The momentum created by the bid process for the UK City of Culture 2021 as well as the Council's commitment to a significant programme of cultural infrastructure investment, are key interventions and mobilisers of change for the town centre. In addition, a number of new projects and initiatives have emerged since the preparation of the Action Plan.
- 4.2 This report reviews the Action Plan, identifying progress to date and refreshes objectives and timescales for delivery for each Activity Area.

### **5. Highlights and Achievements**

- 5.1 A large number of the short term actions identified in the Action Plan have either been completed or are making good progress. Below are highlighted some of the key achievements during this period.

- **Gilmour Street Gateway**

A draft masterplan for County Square has been prepared as part of the Council's planned investment in new event spaces and public realm and led to a consultation process to gather views from key stakeholders and the public about the future plans for the area in March 2019. Discussions are ongoing with surrounding property owners and Network Rail have recently committed £300k to improving shopfronts and removing vegetation along the Old Sneddon Street frontage of Gilmour Street station. FRCS Board 4 Sept 2019 approved the appointment of a design team to work up detailed proposals for County Square.

- **Paisley West End**

The redevelopment of the former Co-op site is complete in partnership with Sanctuary Housing and now provides 39 new, modern affordable houses and flats in the West End. Following well attended and positive community consultation events, a phased delivery programme for the remainder of the Council approved West End masterplan area has been developed in partnership with Sanctuary housing and Scottish Government funding has been secured. Discussions with Council tenants on relocation options and the negotiation for purchase of private properties to facilitate the masterplan is now underway.

- **High Street & University Campus**

The Learning and Cultural Hub at No 22 High Street is now on site and making good progress with an agreed work programme. The TH/CARS2 project focussed on improving properties on High Street/New St/Shuttle St/George Place is now in its third of five years with several shopfront and building fabric projects being supported. The High Street area has been the particular focus of new work supported by Scottish Government. This is set out in section 6 below.

- **Abbey & River Precinct**

In recent years this area has seen some of the biggest public events of their kind and attracted large numbers of visitors to the town. A masterplan for enhancing the public space around the Abbey and Town Hall has been developed as part of the planned cultural infrastructure investment and consulted on widely in order to gather views about this much-loved part of the town. The heritage and history of the Abbey and Abbey Drain has been celebrated with the Big Dig 2019 and Abbey Drain Doors Open Day 2019. The former Institute nightclub has been demolished to pave the way for a proposed new residential development and the Kelvin House site is now being actively marketed for development by the Council.

- **Improving Connections**

A masterplan showing a series of improvements to four key gateway town centre road junctions (previously identified and approved by Board in September 2018) has been developed and consulted on. The plan aims to improve access to the town centre and safety for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.

## **6. A Vision for Paisley Town Centre to 2030**

- 6.1 In 2018 the opportunity to work with the Scottish Government and Scotland's Towns Partnership arose as they wished to commission a study using Paisley as an exemplar of the possible interventions required to overcome the many issues facing traditional town centres, including: weak or no demand for floorspace, the growth in popularity of online retail purchases, the physical configuration of traditional centres.
- 6.2 The focus of the study is the High Street – the area most frequently cited as an indicator of decline in the local context. The exemplar commission was intended to offer lessons for other Scottish town centres to learn from and to explore whether the demise of town centres as we have known them was inevitable and likely to continue or whether a different scenario could be set out
- 6.3 The objective of the study was to consider how physical and spatial interventions in and around Paisley High Street could set out a regeneration vision to 2030. The Town Centre Action Plan was the starting point for this commission. This recognised the considerable consultation and broad framework of priorities and actions within it and to avoid unnecessary research and duplication of existing projects and strategies. The study also utilised the consultative feedback gathered during Paisley's bid for UK City of Culture to understand the strength of feeling and hopes for the future that local people have for their town centre.
- 6.4 In January 2019 a team led by Three Sixty Architecture were appointed for the six-month commission that has involved a process of stakeholder engagement, rigorous testing by a panel of national regeneration and development experts and market testing of the physical interventions proposed within the vision. The final part of the commission was a presentation of the Vision to the Paisley Partnership Board in June 2019.
- 6.5 The result is the Paisley Town Centre Vision and creates a basis on which stakeholders could begin to re-think some of the key buildings and spaces around Paisley High Street
- 6.6 The Vision sets out in detail specific physical interventions to rebalance and repurpose Paisley's High Street and the surrounding streets in order to achieve a step change for the town and a pathway to sustainable regeneration. The Vision also indicates possible projects to repopulate the High Street by repurposing existing underused space and where new attractors such as work and studio space, a food market or a cinema could be situated.
- 6.7 The proposals could be viewed as dramatic. As much freedom as possible was given to the consultant team to tackle identified issues in as imaginative a way as possible and to bring in ideas from best practice in town centre regeneration from around the UK. They therefore include ideas for the radical reworking of property and spaces in order to create new streets and to resize properties where overprovision of floorspace has led to high vacancy levels. The outcome of the study is therefore a vision for a very different Paisley town centre, one that would in many ways be unrecognisable from the current offer.

- 6.8 It should be noted that whilst the approach to preparing a Vision to examine the long term potential of Paisley Town Centre is endorsed by Renfrewshire Council, the ideas and specific proposals for individual buildings and land included in the Vision do not represent Council commitments. The content of the Vision document emerged from numerous sessions with stakeholders where ideas and thoughts were gathered about the “art of the possible”.
- 6.9 The Vision has been jointly commissioned and its outputs are jointly owned with Scottish Government and Scottish Towns Partnership as an exemplar project. It is not possible to publish the Vision at this time. Part of the agreed joint commissioning of a pilot study for town centre regeneration is that the resulting report would be firstly launched (and published) at the Scottish Towns Conference in November 2019. The Conference will see Scottish Ministers launch the Paisley Vision as an exemplar for other Scottish town centres to refer to. Following the Conference, which it is hoped will generate positive media coverage for the town and the Council’s regeneration approach, the Vision will be made available to all interested stakeholders.
- 6.10 The Vision for Paisley document will be presented to the Council’s Leadership Board at this meeting (with an invitation sent to all elected members) and the document will be available to view in person by elected members from the date of this Board by request to the Council’s Head of Regeneration.
- 6.11 Renfrewshire Council owns only a very small number of the properties within the Paisley Vision area, and almost none of the ones for which the Vision document expresses ideas about future change. Whilst the Council wishes to support ambition and investment in all its town centres it should be noted that each of the proposals and ideas in the Vision will require to be tested against a range of criteria including: property ownership, deliverability, funding, economic feasibility as well as community and stakeholder support.
- 6.12 The Council hope that the Paisley Town Centre Vision can become a baseline document for the commencement of discussions about how a nationally significant, historic and popular town centre can be transformed to play an active role in the area for many generations to come. Following the Towns Conference, it is hoped the Vision can form the basis of an ongoing conversation with all stakeholders about Paisley’s future and the appetite for and feasibility of the large scale change it proposes. The hope is that new proposals will emerge which can form detailed regeneration projects to repurpose parts of the existing Town Centre.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1. The regeneration journey of Paisley High Street is underway with good progress being made across all areas of the Town Centre Action Plan. Significant investment in Paisley Museum, the Learning and Cultural Hub, Paisley Town Hall, proposals for improved public spaces are all moving ahead as work continues with the Business Improvement District (Paisley First) to deliver new initiatives such as a pilot project for free car parking.

- 7.2 As presented to the June 19<sup>th</sup> Leadership Board support for Town Centre regeneration continues across Renfrewshire with investment from the Scottish Government Town Centre Capital Fund being implemented across a range of Renfrewshire's town centres.
- 7.3 The ground work for the future direction of Paisley town centre's regeneration journey is now in place with the development of the Paisley Vision study. The Board is asked to note its support for the continued delivery of the Paisley Town Centre Action Plan and for the preparation of the Paisley Vision study as the basis for future consultation and feasibility testing for new regeneration projects.
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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None at present beyond those already identified in approved Council budgets. Further reports will follow with costs of elements of the Action Plan and Paisley Vision when these are in a position to be implemented.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** –No significant requirements
3. **Community Planning** –  
  
***Reshaping our place, our economy and our future:** – the Action Plan and Vision will significantly support the objectives to develop Renfrewshire's economy, including its town centres as thriving places, supporting local places, businesses and communities.*  
***Building strong, safe and resilient communities** - working in partnership with public and private sector stakeholders and organisations to achieve positive outcomes.*
4. **Legal** – No implications at this time
5. **Property/Assets** – The Action Plan and Paisley Vision will lead to a number of specific property and land interventions. The details of these will be brought back to Board (as appropriate) in due course.
6. **Information Technology** – No significant implications.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** - None
9. **Procurement** – None

10. **Risk** – Any significant risks to the local authority will be monitored as the Action Plan is implemented and reported back to the appropriate Board
11. **Privacy Impact** – None.
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – None.
13. **Climate risk** - The concentration of investment in town centre locations that tend to be the most accessible to those modes other than the private car should over time lead to a lower impact on the climate generally.

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**List of Background Papers:**

- (a) *Leadership Board Report (14 September 2016) - Paisley Town Centre 10 year Action Plan*
- (b) *Leadership Board Report (30 November 2016) - Paisley Town Centre 10 year Action Plan / Renfrewshire Strategic Economic Framework post consultation update*
- (c) *Leadership Board Report (19 June 2019) Scottish Government -Town Centre Capital Fund*

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AM/SMcM  
10 September 2019

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