

# Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Board

## NOTE OF MEETING – 15 May 2026

### Draft pending formal approval

#### Present:

Fiona McKenzie (Chair)  
Lillian Jones MP  
Councillor Douglas Reid  
Councillor Graham Boyd substituting Councillor Barry Douglas  
Barry Morton substituting Angela Cox  
Billy Bowie  
Craig Hume  
Joseph McLachlan  
Chief Inspector Stuart Dougan

#### Apologies:

David Cameron  
Chris McMail  
Eddie Fraser  
Angela Cox  
Lynne McNiven  
Councillor Barry Douglas

#### In Attendance:

Norman Gill, Karen Purves, Pamela Clifford, Barbara McNaughton

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed those in attendance and introductions were made.

**Actions Arising:** N/A

#### 2. Chair Update

- The Chair thanked everyone for their continued commitment.
- Today marks an important moment in the journey of We Make Kilmarnock. The strategy has now been formally approved and “strongly endorsed” by the UK Government — a significant milestone not only for Kilmarnock, but for the wider recognition of community-led regeneration as a credible national model for change.
- The Chair noted the following:-
  - That what began as a local ambition has become something that is now informing thinking far beyond our town. In recognition of the progress made here, I have recently been invited to deliver a series of sessions for the 169 incoming Chairs of Phase 2 Pride in Place areas across the UK, sharing the learning, principles and approach that have emerged through We Make Kilmarnock. That recognition matters because it validates something we have consistently said from the start: this is not regeneration being done to communities — it is communities being enabled to lead their own renewal. Community-led and Council-enabled. That distinction remains fundamental. The grassroots work has continued throughout this process. Relationships with local people, organisations and places have been strengthened. Momentum has been built carefully and

responsibly, balancing ambition with realism while preparing for visible delivery. But as we have always acknowledged, strategy means very little without implementation. We now move decisively into the delivery phase and that requires all of us to think carefully about where we are best placed to contribute the greatest value.

- As Board members, our role is not to operationally meddle in delivery. Our responsibility is to create the conditions for success: to champion the vision, protect the integrity of the model, remove barriers, build partnerships, and ensure accountability. Because this next phase is about communities themselves driving change. Building social capital. Creating opportunities for voluntary and community-led action. Reducing dependency on services by strengthening local capability and confidence. Looking first to communities for solutions and trusting people to do the right thing.
- That shift also requires each of us, individually and collectively, to continually reflect on where our own skills, energy and leadership can have the greatest impact — whether that is within this Board structure, within delivery partnerships, within communities themselves, or increasingly in helping shape how this model can influence wider systems and places beyond Kilmarnock.
- If we truly believe this approach works, then part of our responsibility is ensuring it becomes bigger than any one individual, organisation or Board. There is already visible momentum building. Our third free Kilmarnock Fair Festival takes place on Saturday 27th June and will act as a launchpad for wider community involvement and participation. I would encourage everyone to come along, spend time in the We Make Kilmarnock tent, help generate enthusiasm, and encourage others to become actively involved. Come rain or shine, it promises to be a fantastic day and a real celebration of local pride and possibility.
- So, there is much to discuss today — not just about projects and actions, but about how we collectively steward this next chapter responsibly and successfully. Because this is now bigger than a strategy document. It is a long-term cultural shift in how change happens. And our success will depend on all of us playing the right role, at the right time, in service of something larger than ourselves.

**Actions Arising:** N/A

### **3. Actions from Previous Meeting**

- Minutes passed.
- KP stated the clean up of the bins will be carried out.

**Actions Arising / ongoing actions:** KP will double check progress of bins

### **4. Masterplan Update**

PC provided an update as follows:-

- The evidence and brief documents are the foundation of the Masterplan and these will be within the Council report in June. The first phase will concentrate on the northern part of the town due to the Foregate works.
- There are lots of good news stories happening within the town and we need to ensure we are promoting these.
- An ambassador group will represent their street within the town centre and consists of retailers who will feed into the Kilmarnock Business Association.
- The Repurposing and Retrofit panel visited the former ABC cinema. It has been stripped of all assets and is a large empty space. PC noted in large towns in England, it would potentially be used as a street food market place. The panel are starting to receive national recognition.
- Presented at the KFC Business Breakfast and was well received.

- Engagement was done at Ayrshire College and further sessions with the HIVE group, students and staff will be done over the coming weeks.
- Scottish Water gave a presentation at EAC Headquarters which was interesting and partnership working will take place on future works.
- Visit to Kirkcaldy Property Network and they are interested in coming to Kilmarnock. When they do, introductions will be made with the Board.
- Received an invitation to the Ayr Neighbourhood Board which KP will attend.
- Visited Laurieston Housing in Glasgow and an invitation extended to them to come to Kilmarnock.
- Town centre living is challenging so pleased that Architectural Scotland are on board with Scottish Government in that regard. PC has made a commitment to letter the new Scottish Government Minister for Housing to come to Kilmarnock.
- The tender for Foregate Square is due at the end of May with work starting in October.
- Poets Corner is due to start work shortly. BM stated that writers' groups and the Burns Club is interested in this.
- The above points raised discussion with GB raising concerns that Ayrshire360 communications is too bitty / the college event highlighted the need for the Palace to connect to the town centre and Scottish Water confirmed run off is the main problem within the town centre with too many flat roofs and not enough green space. CH sits on the SEPA Board and confirmed that interventions are not cheap to do so early contact with the Water Environment Fund is essential.
- Discussion around fire site at King Street. PC confirmed there is a legal holdup due to insurance and that the land is owned by the owners.

**Actions Arising:** N/A

## **5. Workstream Update**

### **5.a Town Centre (Shop Development Grants)**

- NG gave an overview of the grant and that they are meant to be flexible, simple and not purely about shop fronts but internals as well. Clarified that Hurlford and Crookedholm are within the boundary so would qualify.
- BM suggested it should be called Town Centre Property Development Grant. Board agreed.
- Exceptional circumstances would allow premises to be offered above the £10k threshold. JM suggested if there is an oversubscription then rateable value and length of time of vacancy could be used as additional scoring points.
- If the owner is doing the work themselves, money for materials and potential Ayrshire College student input would be offered.
- A caveat would be added to allow clawback if someone sells the property within a set time.
- GB asked for strict signage compliance and PC agreed the importance of this, but guidance needs to be kept simple.
- Vape shops and pop-up shops would be excluded from applying. There will be due diligence in guidelines and one criterion will be the business must be under HMRC/Companies House.
- LJ enquired if £350k would be enough and would this help increase footfall in the town centre? NG confirmed that this was a pilot to test footfall rates and further money would be available in later years. It would also focus on the Town Centre.
- We Make Kilmarnock Board would score and approve/reject applications.

**Actions Arising:** NG and KP to take forward

### **5.b Town Centre (Shop Front Pilot)**

- BM suggested a name change to Retail Showcase Grant. Board agreed.

- NG confirmed this grant would be looking at a block of shops rather than individually and due to forthcoming works at the Foregate Square, the Foregate shops would be the first pilot then potentially St Marnock Street shops. To date, 4 owners have replied with permission for a survey to be carried out on the Foregate building in the first instance to ensure structural integrity. Once survey is complete, a business case will be produced for the Board.
- PC confirmed that there will be strict guidance and criteria.
- LJ asked how much this pilot feeds into the Board's vision and NG confirmed that the questions within the application will ensure that it meets the relevant criteria.
- JM suggested turnover of SME's could be used as a guide but to be careful not to exclude large businesses if they are a key player within the town.

**Actions Arising:** NG and KP to take forward

**5.c Public art**

- Business case to be produced.

**Actions Arising:** NG to take forward

**5.d Brighten Up / Tidy Up**

- KP stated that materials have been ordered and should arrive imminently.

**Actions Arising:** NG to take forward

**5.e Fair Festival**

- Organisation of the event going well. It was raised that the website requires to be updated.

**Actions Arising:** NG to take forward

**6. Accountability Governance**

- KP stated that East Ayrshire Council will perform the legal and regulatory functions of the We Make Kilmarnock and is in the document on rules, responsibility and processes which has been shared with NG, FM and JM. This is currently being scrutinised and a bespoke plan put in place.
- JM praised the Board for being ready so quickly and confirmed that a grant is the best way to go. JM is the first line of defence and will ensure a light touch. One weeks' notice for pre-approved decisions is required and a fast-track procurement route has been put in place.
- LJ queried the funding levels and other partnership funds such as Impact Economy and Foundation Scotland. KP confirmed an extra £50k capacity. First tranche of revenue funding received, and the Board are still awaiting capital funding.

**Actions Arising:** LJ will send partnership funding links to NG

**7. Decisions required**

**Resourcing model**

NG stepped out of the room.

- LJ asked in future for a face-to-face meeting regarding increase of money and should not be done via email.
- Discussion around technical support, skill set and recruitment process. Fiona stated she needs support as she cannot manage to be as operational as before. All agreed that the name "consultant" is deemed to have negative connotations and should be changed to "staff".

- JM confirmed this is a temporary contract of around 12 – 18 months. KP will ask the UK Government for permission of 3 consultants and confirmed they will be classed as East Ayrshire Council employees.
- Board agreed with all principles and to proceed.
- NG returned to the room.

**Actions Arising:** KP will ask UK Government regarding temporary contract of 3 consultants.

**8. AOB**

- BM shared his report on the topic of Feeling of Safety and Belonging. BM also shared his ideas on a public art trail consisting of the Kilmarnock Pie and highlighted that Red Bull events could be a major attraction into the town.
- DR reiterated that it was important to coordinate events and to press ahead with derelict sites.

**Please note change of date of Next Meeting: 24/07/2026**

**[KILMARNOCK TOWN BOARD WEBPAGES- EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL WEBSITE](#)**

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