

Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Board

Draft Note of meeting – 04 September 2026

Present

1. Fiona McKenzie (Chair)
2. Lillian Jones MP
3. Alan Brown MSP
4. Councillor Douglas Reid
5. Councillor Barry Douglas
6. Barry Morton
7. Craig Hume
8. Joe McLachlan
9. Chief Inspector Stuart Dougan

Apologies

1. Billy Bowie
2. David Cameron
3. Chris McMail
4. Lynne McNiven

In attendance

1. Norman Gill
 2. Karen Purves
 3. Siobhan McGale
 4. Alan Foster
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1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Fiona welcomed those in attendance and introductions were made.

Board action:

None

2. Chair Update

- 2.1 The Chair expressed the Board's sadness in learning of the fire in Rowallan Business Park yesterday affecting Revitalize Fitness & Spa and numerous other businesses and sent the Board's sympathy and support to everyone affected.
- 2.2 As intimated at the August meeting, the Chair noted this would be her final time joining as a board member and as Chair but before finishing wanted to say something about what happens next.
- 2.3 The Chair set out that there is now a gentle but very real groundswell of activity beginning to build on the ground. Conversations are turning into connections, connections into opportunities and, increasingly, opportunities into action. That is exactly where we need to be.
- 2.4 The Chair also recognised the very exciting Kilmarnock Town Centre Masterplan, which represents another significant step forward for the town. Much of what is emerging through that work has been influenced and enabled by the conversations, relationships and shared ambition developed through We Make Kilmarnock. That is something to be proud of. It demonstrates that our impact should never be measured only by what this Board directly delivers, but also by what our work helps to influence, unlock and make possible. The Chair set out that she was genuinely excited about the opportunities it presents.
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- 2.5 As the Board moves into this next phase, the Chair set out that we also need to think carefully about its own development. We will need to identify new members who bring the right experience, connections and, importantly, commitment to the principles of We Make Kilmaronck. And, of course, we will need to identify our next Chair. To support that transition, I would like to propose that we appoint a Vice Chair who can work alongside the incoming Chair, take point on this next chapter and help provide continuity as the Board develops its role from strategy creation into oversight, convening and enabling delivery.
- 2.6 And the Chair wanted to reinforce one thing personally. Stepping away from this Board will allow her to become more involved in We Make Kilmaronck, not less
- 2.7 The Chair set out that she has been necessarily constrained by the responsibilities of being Chair and by the important distinction between governance and delivery. The Chair set out that once she is no longer sitting as Chair, she intends to be far more practically and entirely voluntarily involved wherever she can add value, first and foremost as someone who lives here, cares passionately about Kilmaronck and believes deeply in what we have created together. The Chair set out that she knows this strategy inside out, and knows many of the people, organisations and opportunities that can help bring it to life. The Chair hopes to use those relationships, her experience and energy to connect, convene, unblock, encourage and help make things happen.
- 2.8 Because WMK now have an extraordinary opportunity. WMK have UK Government investment. WMK have a local authority with an essential role in enabling and supporting the work. And, most importantly, WMK has communities with the assets, ideas, relationships and ambition to lead it.
- UK Government funded. Local authority enabled. Truly community led.
- That isn't simply a description of We Make Kilmaronck. It is the principle WMK now have a responsibility to protect as we move from strategy into delivery.
- The Chair set out that she is leaving the Board with enormous optimism.
- 2.9 The Board can now move to its next level, with new voices and new leadership. And the Chair set out her intention to move to where she can roll up her sleeves and make the greatest contribution.
- Different roles. Same purpose.
- And an absolute determination to do everything we can, together, to turn the vision we have created for Kilmaronck into reality.
- 2.10 Board members and attendees thanked the Chair for her valued contribution to the Board since its inception.

2a. Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair set out the importance of putting some additional leadership capacity in place to provide continuity, maintain momentum and support the Board as it moves into its next

chapter. The Terms of Reference allow the Chair, in consultation with the Council and the MP, to appoint a Vice Chair.

The Chair set out that this has been discussed with the Leader of the Council and that she would also consult with Joe McLachlan, as Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Council, and with Lillian Jones MP before any appointment is formally made. Subject to completing those conversations, the Chair indicated her intention to appoint Board Member Barry Morton as Vice Chair. The Chair set out that BM would not be a candidate to become the next Chair.

The Vice Chair role will be to provide continuity through this period of transition, support the work of the Board, help maintain the momentum we have built and, importantly, support a considered and transparent process to identify the right person to lead the Board through its next chapter.

The Chair set out that BM is particularly well placed to do that. He understands the journey we have been on, he is committed to Kilmarnock, and he brings the experience, energy and passion that will be valuable as we consider what this Board now needs.

The appointment of the next Chair will follow the proper process set out within our governance arrangements. BM's role would be to help support that process, not to be its outcome.

Subject to completing the required consultation, the Chair set out her hope that colleagues will support both the rationale for appointing a Vice Chair and BM taking on that responsibility.

2b. Process for appointing Chair and additional Board Members

KP (as Secretariat) set out the content of the Board's Terms of Reference in respect of Board members and the Chair viz:

The Council is responsible for the appointment of an independent Chair of the Board, following consultation with the local Member of Parliament.

The Chair is invited by East Ayrshire Council, in consultation with the MP and should be a respected figure in the Kilmarnock community and have an obvious passion for the town.

The chair, in consultation with the Council and the MP, may appoint a Vice Chair. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair will assume the responsibilities.

As the Board has not had a Vice Chair to date and as the Chair has stepped down, it was agreed that the former Chair, MP and Council convene to discuss the appointment of a Vice Chair and additional Board Members and that the Council and MP take forwards processes to appoint a new Chair.

It was noted that the Terms of Reference does not specify how this should be carried out but that other Boards in Scotland have advertised for new Board members.

Board action:

Meeting to be arranged between JMcl, FMck, LJ to discuss succession planning.

2c. Actions from previous meeting

Barry Morton will be permanently representing Ayrshire College on the Board instead of Angela Cox.

Board action:

Amend Board membership – KP - complete.

FMcK will stand down after next Board meeting. Proposal for Vice Chair position to be created with aim for appointment by September and discussions around new Chair to commence – FMcK / KP- ongoing.

3. Resourcing

3.1 KP presented an update to the resourcing position. As NG has resigned from his position as Programme Manager, it is recommended that the previous proposal to work towards staff positions being transitioned to the Council be expedited for the Programme Manager post. The Board agreed the recommendations set out in the paper to:

- agree the proposed direction of travel;
- agree to support the phased transition outlined;
- confirm that maintaining clear community leadership should be a central principle in developing the future staffing model; and
- agree that more detailed proposals for the Programme Manager role, recruitment arrangements and future delivery structure are developed on this basis.

Board action:

KP to progress staffing arrangements.

4. Masterplan Update

4.1 SMcG presented on the Masterplan which was approved by Council on 27th August 2026. For the benefit of any readers the Masterplan is available to view here: [Kilmarnock Town Centre Masterplan](#).

4.2 JMcL & DR stated that the Council is open for business and that the masterplan provided a focus for ideas. The masterplan is not a Council document; it is a shared statement of ambition.

4.3 SD commented that BIDS are good from a safety perspective as they provide a forum to get information out quickly in response to any shoplifting etc.

Board action:

None

5. Workstream Update

5.1 a. Shop Development Grants

- Initial Comms anticipated to go out mid-September with launch being October.
- Potential applicants will make an expression of interest and then receive an information pack and be asked to attend a webinar before making a formal application.
- We expect to close the fund by end of November and WMK Board will be presented with recommendations for approval at the meeting on 22nd January 2027.
- Discussion around vacant buildings and the impact they have on how safe people feel (SD).
- Discussion on the prospects of town centre living and the modernising of Compulsory Purchase Order legislation and the new Programme for Government.

5.2 b. Retail Showcase Grant (Shop Front Pilot)

- 11 out of 14 surveys have now been completed.
- Final three will be done shortly and communications issues with owners are progressing.
- Next stage will be to produce designs and seek retailer views.
- DR- shopfront planning policy will also be key to the success. KP made commitment to review Council's planning guidance on shopfronts.
- Discussion around visual merchandising and its importance – KP to determine whether there is a guide / project that could be looked at to assist traders with visual merchandising.

Board action:

KP - look at potential for visual merchandising project.

KP - review of shopfront guidance to be progressed when feasible.

5.3 c. Public Art

- AF has met with Hugh Mulgrew who is keen to get started on his own premises. This will give us a good test case as will require cherry picker and road closures. Further meeting being planned to discuss the next steps.
- Work starting to identify owners of other buildings discussed for possible colour blocking.

Board action:

AF - continue to progress proposals for Sandbed Street.

5.4 d. Brighten Up / Tidy Up

- First project (Kay Park Church) now complete.
- Next project to be decided but keen to get this underway soon. Areas have already been identified.
- Review of procurement process and H&S to be done.
- Discussions ongoing on how to expand the volunteer network.
- Discussion around tidying up of various sites and owner responsibility – land adjacent to Tesco at Glencairn, owned by Tesco, land owned by Parks of Hamilton
- Discussion on tidy up of Johnnie Walker's grave.

- JMcL raised awareness of the paper presented to Council at the end of August on civic pride through which council agreed to more than 250 new bins, 19 more staff and additional funding into civic pride of £1.5m.
- Comms to go to Board members around scheduled times for brighten up / tidy up activity.

Board action:

AF – create WhatsApp group for brighten up / tidy up.

5.6 e. Street Furniture

- Business Case being prepared and will be circulated to board for approval.
- Walkaround of staff to take place to agree what needs replaced and what furniture needs added, if any.

Board action:

AF/KP – walkaround to be planned to scope street furniture project.

5.7 f. Alliances

- Still on track

5.8 g. Alliances

- MMcM attending a number of strategic forums (e.g. East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Association and East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership) and following up with local TARA's and Locality Planning Forums.
- MMcM facilitating 1-2-1 meetings with key community stakeholders within the Alliance areas (currently 20+ individuals).
- Engaging with community groups and voluntary organisations who want more info on WMK (currently 10+ organisations)

6. Role of Centrestage in WMK

- Although the Chair is resigning from the Board, Centrestage sees a continued role in assisting WMK going forward including in terms of continuing to host the staff and progress the Fair Festival

7. Decisions Required

7.1 Resourcing paper AGREED.

8. Any other competent business

8.1 **Please note change of date of Next Meeting: meeting was scheduled for 11/11/2026 revised date to be agreed.**

Subsequent date following revised November meeting (TBC) 22 January 2027

Further information

Visit the [East Ayrshire Council: Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Board](#) webpages.