

Kilmarnock Neighbourhood Board

Note of meeting – 24 July 2026

Present

1. Fiona McKenzie (Chair)
2. Councillor Douglas Reid
3. Councillor Barry Douglas
4. Joe McLachlan
5. Barry Morton (Deputy for Angela Cox)
6. Stuart Dougan (Deputy for Susie Chow)

Apologies

1. Angela Cox
2. Lynne McNiven
3. Chris McMail
4. Susie Chow
5. David Cameron
6. Lillian Jones MP

In attendance

1. Pamela Clifford
 2. Norman Gill
 3. Karen Purves
 4. Barbara McNaughton
 5. Martin McManus (for item 5g)
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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 thanked everyone for their continued commitment to We Make Kilmarnock and reflected that everything achieved over the past two years has only been possible because of the passion, expertise and determination around the table. Every organisation and every individual have brought something unique and together created something far greater than the sum of our individual contributions.
- 2.2 Last month's Kilmarnock Fair Festival was a wonderful reminder of exactly what this partnership is all about. Delivered by an incredibly small staff team, supported by dedicated volunteers and partners, it celebrated our town in the best possible way.
- 2.3 UK Government funding has finally been secured. After such a long and challenging journey, there was a real sense of optimism and most people understood what it had taken to reach this point and, more importantly, what this investment could make possible.
- 2.4 The Chair also wanted to table the Board's congratulation to MP Lilian Jones on her wedding.
- 2.5 Barry Morton will be permanently representing Ayrshire College on the Board instead of Angela Cox.
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2.6 Action: Amend Board membership - KP

2.7 The Chair wanted to share a personal decision as follows:-

It has been a true privilege to serve as Chair of this Board. Together, we have developed what I believe is one of the most ambitious community-led regeneration strategies in the UK. We have brought together communities, businesses, anchor institutions, the voluntary sector and public bodies around a shared vision for Kilmarnock—one that is ambitious, inclusive and rooted in the strengths and aspirations of our people.

When I accepted the role of Chair, it was always with the intention of leading the Board through the strategy development phase and seeing it through to UK Government approval. At the time, we believed that journey would take only a few months. Instead, changing political circumstances and revised funding processes meant it became more than two years, and I wouldn't change a moment of it. But leadership also means recognising when the needs of a partnership evolve. So, today, I want to let you know that I will be stepping down as Chair and, in due course, from the Board.

I want to be absolutely clear that this is not me stepping away from We Make Kilmarnock. Quite the opposite. This is a deliberate repositioning to maximise the contribution I can make to the success of this work. As we move from developing strategy to delivering it, my greatest value will not be in chairing meetings. It will be in working alongside communities, partners and projects to help turn our shared ambition into reality—connecting people, unlocking opportunities, removing barriers, attracting investment and supporting delivery from the grassroots upwards. Leadership isn't about the seat you occupy. It's about doing whatever best serves the mission.

The success of We Make Kilmarnock has always rested on one fundamental principle: community-led and council-enabled. Those words are much more than a slogan. They describe the partnership we have worked so hard to build. These Boards are not intended to become an extension of local government. Their purpose is to provide independent community leadership—to convene partners, build trust, encourage new ways of making things happen and create the conditions in which collaboration can flourish.

Our Council is an indispensable strategic partner and enabler. This Board brings something different. It creates the space where communities, businesses, anchor institutions and public bodies come together as equal partners around a shared vision for place.

I was therefore particularly encouraged by the recent communication from UK Government Minister Nesil Caliskan, which reinforces exactly this approach. I have copies for your interest. The emphasis on empowered neighbourhood governance, genuine partnership and local leadership gives me confidence that the model we have championed from the outset is not only right for Kilmarnock but represents the future of successful place-based regeneration.

As implementation gathers pace, I believe the Board's role becomes even more important—not because it should deliver everything itself, but because it should continue to convene, influence, champion and hold all of us collectively to the vision we created together.

Good governance requires Boards to provide strategic leadership, constructive challenge and oversight—not to drift into operational delivery. Equally, those of us who are able to contribute beyond the Board have a responsibility to do so wholeheartedly. That is the repositioning I am making today. I will do everything I can to ensure a smooth transition to a new Chair, and I will

continue to support both the Board and my successor in whatever way is most helpful.

The foundations have been laid. The strategy is in place. The funding has been secured. Now our collective task is to turn ambition into action and strategy into lasting change for the people of Kilmaronock. And perhaps that is the true measure of this Board's success. If, in years to come, We Make Kilmaronock is judged to have succeeded, it won't be because this Board delivered everything itself. It will be because this Board created the conditions in which communities, businesses, public bodies and the voluntary sector were able to achieve far more together than any one of us could ever have achieved alone. That is what community-led and council-enabled really means. I genuinely believe that fresh leadership around this table, alongside my continued commitment beyond it, gives We Make Kilmaronock the strongest possible platform for success.

Thank you for your trust, your challenge, your friendship and, above all, your belief in what we have built together. Leadership has never been about holding a position. It has always been about serving a purpose. Positions are temporary. Purpose is permanent. We have a plan. And now it's time to make it happen. Let's not just say it. Let's do it.

Action:

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

3. Actions from Previous Minutes

- 3.1 LJ to send partnership funding links to NG. LJ has feedback to NG
- 3.2 KP to ask UK Government regarding temporary contract of 3 staff. KP has clearance for this.
- 3.3 NG to produce a business case on Public Art and Frame suggestions. Hugh has contacted PC for a meeting, and this will be fed back into the business case.

Board action:

NG will circulate the business case once it has been developed.

4. Masterplan Update

- 4.1 PC confirmed that the Masterplan and vision is programmed to be taken to the August Council meeting and then there will be a period of public consultation. The Masterplan team are looking at how other councils are consulting to look at best practice. PC made it clear that everyone has a role to play in the Masterplan and this is just the start of the journey of regeneration.
- 4.2 PC, Cllrs Reid and Cowan and Colin Blair met at the former GPO building. PC hoping to start a small working group to look at town centre living and will invite the new Minister for Housing to visit. Town Centre living is extremely hard to get to work, and Scottish Government need to get involved.
- 4.3 There has been no recent movement on further sessions of the Repurposing and Retrofit Panel due to no response being received from the landlords approached. It may be that CPOs need to be revisited and again, Scottish Government need to be involved. DR stated he is impressed

with Colin Blair and Hugh Mulgrew and the speed that they work at and suggested that the doors of landlords should be knocked on if they are not responding.

- 4.4 PC raised the fact that business rates are not helping business growth and has investigated research done by academics at Robert Gordon University that supports this case. Scottish Government input would be required here as well.
- 4.5 An action PC is going to take forward is arranging a further housing developers roundtable to look at town centre living.
- 4.6 BM raised the Kilmarnock Regeneration Task Force and asked if this group had been disbanded or will continue. JM confirmed that the group was paused at the moment until after Council on the 27 August and then will be reinstated and this will be an opportunity to look at the governance of the group.
- 4.7 PC thanked Fiona for her support over the years.

5. Workstream Update

- 5.1 NG gave an overview of the business case.

- 5.2 **a. Events**

- Kilmarnock Fair Festival was a success. There was really good engagement and anti social behaviour is the top priority for members of the public. Traders with stalls did well.
- PC agreed that it was a great day and good engagement. Communication is key and should be modernised to get as much diversity as possible. BD agreed that it was important to get as many differing views as possible and TikTok should be looked at to engage the younger generation. BM stated that the 3D model of Kilmarnock used at the Ayrshire College engagement events attracted people to the table and got conversations flowing.

- 5.3 **b. Town Centre (Shop Development Grants)**

- NG gave an overview. Some discussion around vape shops and not having access to grants.

- 5.4 **c. Town Centre (Shop Front Pilot)**

- A business case will be brought back to the group once the survey is completed at the Foregate.

- 5.5 **d. Public Art**

- No further movement at the moment.

- 5.6 **e. Brighten Up/Tidy Up**

- Materials now in place and work will start in the next couple of weeks.

- 5.7 **f. Street Furniture**

- Still on track

5.8 g. Alliance Funding

- MM was welcomed to the meeting and he gave an overview of the alliances. He will be engaging with alliances to discuss their involvement, direction of travel and building trust and this will all feed back to the Board.
- FM thanked MM for his work so far.
- Board agreed that MM should attend meetings going forward.

5.9 h. Anti Social Behaviour

- NG gave an update on the radios. SD gave his view on the success of the initiative and is keen to expand to outlying areas and BD requested the Co-op in Hurlford receives a radio. NG agreed this was a good example of partner investment and asked if participating shops could get a window sticker saying they are part of the scheme and it could also act as a deterrent. SD will arrange an event with retailers and possibly the Fiscal around Sept/Oct time to promote the radios in the lead up to Christmas. Board agreed the funding of £10,000 to expand the scheme.

Board action:

- MM to attend future meetings.
- SD will arrange retailer event

6. Decisions Required

- None

Board action:

Not applicable

7. Any other competent business

- 7.1 NG confirmed that he will also be leaving the Board with his last meeting in September.
- 7.2 Proposed dates agreed except for 11 November which will fall on Remembrance Day. New date to be confirmed.

Further information

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