



**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 18
JANUARY 2022**

SUBJECT: TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PLANS

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to approve the draft Town Centre Improvement Plans for Aberlour, Buckie, Dufftown, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth and for them to be made available for consultation before being reported back to a future meeting of this Committee.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (E) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to exercising the statutory functions of the Council as a Planning Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) **considers and agrees the draft Town Centre Improvement Plans (TCIP) for consultation; and**
- (ii) **agrees that consultation responses and final TCIP are reported back to a future meeting of this Committee.**

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 A Masterplan was recently approved for Elgin City Centre at the meeting of this Committee on 16 November 2021 (para 12 of Minutes refers). While the Elgin City Centre Masterplan set out significant transportation improvements, many of the other issues are common across most of the town centres, namely vacant and derelict buildings; active travel improvements; public realm improvements; greening, signage improvements and heritage trails. This report presents a series of TCIP, as set out in **Appendices 1-6**, aiming to support the regeneration of town centres in Moray. The TCIP set out a range of proposals, including bringing vacant and derelict sites back into use,

improving active travel connections, greening and other streetscape improvements in order to create vibrant; attractive; green; healthy, safer and inclusive town centres.

- 3.2 The detailed proposals for each town centre can be found in Appendices 1-6 to this Report, which will be made publicly available for consultation if approved by this Committee. A summary of the proposals for each town is set out below:

Aberlour

- Remove pedestrian and cyclist barriers in and around the Square to create an inclusive environment that is easy and safe for all abilities and ages to move around;
- Support the enhancement of Alice Littler Memorial Park to become a green, vibrant and inclusive place for everyone;
- Provide further opportunities for electric vehicle and bike charging points, cycle parking and storage; and
- Investigate the feasibility of providing public Wi-Fi in the town centre.

Buckie

- Enhance Cluny Square for people and civic use;
- Improve pedestrian and cycle infrastructure to support active travel and enhance the pedestrian experience;
- Provide additional electric vehicle charging points to promote environmentally conscious travel;
- Transform vacant sites and buildings to provide residential opportunities at OPP2 Blairdruff Street and OPP3 Barron Street;
- Develop a shopfront improvement scheme to enhance visual appearance of traditional shopfronts and reflect the town`s historic character;
- Create an attractive town centre by showcasing key buildings and embracing Buckie`s coastal and fishing heritage through the enhancement of the public realm and lighting strategy; and
- Improve digital connectivity and investigate the provision of public Wi-Fi in the town centre.

Dufftown

- Support the refurbishment of the Clock Tower;

- Redevelop the Old Bank as mixed use or residential development and consider opportunities for reuse or redevelopment of other vacant buildings around the Square;
- Improve public realm at the Square to create a more accessible, pedestrian friendly and attractive environment;
- Develop a shopfront improvement scheme for premises on Balvenie Street, Fife Street and Conval Street to enhance visual appearance of traditional shopfronts and reflect the town`s historic character;
- Provide additional electric vehicle charging points, bike hire and cycle storage; and
- Investigate the feasibility of providing public Wi-Fi in the town centre.

Forres

- Support the refurbishment and regeneration of Forres Town Hall to create a multi-purpose community hub;
- Repurpose and regenerate key vacant buildings on the High Street, such as the former Clydesdale Bank at Mercat Cross, the former Tesco site at Caroline Street, the Auction Mart at Tytler Street; and edge of the town centre, such as the former Pedigree Cars showroom, Victoria Hotel and Nicholson building to enhance the character of the historic High Street whilst creating living spaces close to shops and services, and to create a more appealing and attractive entrance into the town centre;
- Develop a shopfront improvement scheme to support the growth of local businesses, enhance visual appearance and reflect the town`s historic character;
- Promote active travel by exploring opportunities for creating safe cycle routes and enhancing the pedestrian experience;
- Provide additional electric vehicle charging points to support the transition to electric vehicles;
- Increase landscaping through the High Street through the introduction of street trees to connect Grant Park via the High Street to Castlehill and embed food growing opportunities;
- Improve public spaces around the Mercat Cross and Tolbooth Street exploring the creation of a more pedestrian friendly, flexible and accessible space to gather and host events;
- Improve the visitor experience, embrace the heritage of the town centre and support businesses by public realm improvements and enhancing key routes into the High Street through lanes linking into car parks; and

- Investigate the feasibility of providing public Wi-Fi in the town centre.

Keith

- Enhance Reidhaven Square for people and civic use;
- Improve the visual appearance, showcase and embrace Keith`s built heritage through enhancement of the public realm, interpretation panels and lighting strategy to create an attractive location for businesses to locate and grow;
- Improve the signage within the town centre providing clear directions to attractions, amenities and create a stronger link between the Strathisla Distillery and the town centre;
- Develop a shopfront improvement scheme to ensure that traditional shopfronts are retained and improved to reflect the character of the town centre;
- Support the redevelopment and enhancement of Longmore Hall; and
- Investigate the feasibility of providing public Wi-Fi in the town centre.

Lossiemouth

- Regenerate the Esplanade and Clifton Road by improving and redesigning the public realm to enhance accessibility, encourage active travel and create an attractive seafront;
- Create a cycle hub, which would become a focal point within the Esplanade area, to support active travel and provide cycle parking, e-bike charging and cycle repair station;
- Redesign the Old Station to encourage more activity and use, including replacement play parks;
- Revitalise James Square to a vibrant, multi-functional space to become a key community asset and explore food growing opportunities;
- Redesign Queen Street with new paving, planting and pavement widening to create a more pedestrian friendly environment;
- Improve the Gregory Place Car Park to make it safer, more accessible and attractive to use;
- Provide a refreshed and consistent approach to signage and waymarking; and
- Investigate the feasibility of providing public Wi-Fi along the Esplanade.

- 3.3 It is intended that having agreed TCIP, which have been subject to public consultation, will put the Council in a better position to secure external funding towards town centre regeneration.
- 3.4 The consultation, which is intended to generate further discussion and ideas, will be carried out virtually with a series of meetings to be organised with local community councils and other interest groups. Bookable 1-2-1 sessions will also be available and will be advertised via e-mail invites and through social media.
- 3.5 The consultation will be supported by online interactive story mapping, which will allow people to click on mapped points to find out more information about each project and to submit comments online. Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) for some projects will also be developed to help visualise the proposals, and these are anticipated to be ready late February 2022 to then be included within the consultation.
- 3.6 The consultation will begin on 18 January 2022 and will run for nearly 8 weeks ending on 14 March 2022. Comments will be collated, analysed and reported back to a future meeting of this Committee in summer 2022.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The proposals are intended to support the economic recovery and diversification of town centres as well as support healthy living and climate change mitigation.

(b) Policy and Legal

Progressing the TCIP proposals supports delivery of the Moray Local Development Plan (MLDP) 2020 and town centre regeneration aims set out in national policy. Once approved the draft and final versions of the TCIP will be material considerations for development management purposes.

(c) Financial implications

None at this stage. The final TCIP will include costed Delivery Plans with potential funding sources identified, including external funding.

£200,000 in 2021/22 and 2022/23 has already been identified as part of the Economic Recovery Plan which was agreed at the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee on 6 October 2020 (para 9 of Minutes refers) to be available towards works to improve and adapt town centres resulting from masterplanning.

(d) Risk Implications

None.

(e) Staffing Implications

None.

(f) Property

A number of properties referred to within the TCIP are owned by the Council.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

The consultation will inform the EIA that will be carried out on the final version of the documents.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

The draft TCIPs set out in this report strengthen local town centres, provide improvements to active travel, propose redevelopment of vacant & derelict buildings to encourage town centre living and therefore reduce car reliance helping to minimise carbon emissions. The proposals also include greening of the town centres by improving soft landscaping such as planting and exploring food growing opportunities to further enhance biodiversity. In addition, there might be opportunities to progress the decarbonisation of public buildings as part of the TCIP to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 as per Moray Council timescale or at the very latest have zero emissions heating by 2038 as per Scottish Government timescale. Following consultation on the TCIP, a carbon and biodiversity assessment will be undertaken to accompany the final Plans.

(i) Consultations

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Legal Services Manager, the Development Management and Building Standards Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Consultancy Manager, the Senior Engineer Transportation, the Principal Climate Change Strategy Officer, the Principal Development Officer and Tracey Sutherland (Committee Services Officer) have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report asks the Committee to approve the Town Centre Improvement Plans (TCIP) for Aberlour, Buckie, Dufftown, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth as set out in Appendices 1-6. The Plans set out a range of proposals including redevelopment opportunities, refurbishment of buildings, streetscape improvements, active travel connections and greening of town centres.**
- 5.2 It is proposed to carry out an extensive 8 week consultation on the draft Plans before reporting the consultation responses and final TCIP, including costings and timescales for projects, back to a future meeting of this Committee.**

Background Papers:
Ref: