

Greenock Town Centre Regeneration Forum (GTCRF)

Minute of Meeting

Held Wednesday 20 November 2024 at 1pm by hybrid format within the Municipal Buildings Customer Services Meeting Room 4 (CSC MR4) and via Microsoft Teams Videoconferencing.

ATTENDING

Cllr Clocherty (Chair)	Inverclyde Council - Ward 4
Cllr Brennan	Inverclyde Council - Ward 4
Cllr Brooks	Inverclyde Council - Ward 4
C Jewell	Business/Trader Representative
Insp. P Thompson	Police Scotland - Inspector Community Policing
R Ahlfeld	Inverclyde Community Development Trust - Chief Executive Officer
L Cushnaghan	Oak Mall - Manager
S O'Dowling	Oak mall - Duty Manager
S Arkinson	Oak Mall Retail Consultant - Reith Lambert
S Vernal	River Clyde Homes - Housing Services Manager
N McIlvanney	Inverclyde Council - Head of Service, Regeneration, Planning and Public Protection
E Montgomery	Inverclyde Council - Head of Physical Assets
E Baird	Inverclyde Council - Regeneration Manager
R Braddick	Inverclyde Council - Service Manager, Corporate Policy, Performance and Communications
S Christie	Inverclyde Council - Cultural Services Manager
E Dickie	Inverclyde Council - Team Leader, Communications and Tourism
J Horn	Inverclyde Council – Physical Regeneration Manager
G Leitch	Inverclyde Council - Team Leader, Consultancy
M McNab	Inverclyde Council - Service Manager, Public Protection
AM Bagstad (Minute)	Inverclyde Council - Committee Officer

1.0 **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interests**

1.1 Cllr Clocherty welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Cllr Clocherty, Cllr Brennan, Cllr Brooks and AM Bagstad present, all other attendees accessed the meeting remotely.

1.2 Apologies received from E Cannon, Cllr Crowther, A Johnston, A McDonald, Cllr T McVey, R Orr and M Thomson.

1.3 There were no declarations intimated.

2.0 **Approval of Minute and Matters Arising**

2.1 A draft Minute from the meeting held 28 August 2024 were distributed prior to the meeting.

2.2 Matters arising covered under today's Agenda.

3.0 **Police Scotland Update**

3.1 Town Centre (TC) Community Police feedback was provided as follows:-

- **Cathcart Street** – It was noted that good partnership working with removing several antisocial tenants/residents from the Cathcart Street area, have resulted in a reduction in crimes.
- **Westburn Buildings (WBB)** – It was advised that River Clyde Homes (RCH) and the Police have conducted several patrols and joint visits to the buildings, carrying out stop and search exercises as well as the removal of an antisocial (drug dealing) tenant/resident. It was noted that the buildings are primarily used to house elderly and less abled tenants/residents.

RCH Officers added the last remaining antisocial tenant has terminated their own tenancy. Any other ongoing issues within the building will be resolved via the continued partnership working, with Police and Community Wardens. Noting, that partnership working is key to tackling the very difficult task of dealing with antisocial tenants/residents and the wider impact on neighbours.

- **West Blackhall Street (WBHS)** – Joint partnership visits have also been conducted on WBHS, to mitigate any antisocial impact on traders or tenants/residents; partnership works are ongoing.

It was further noted that there is graffiti and vandalism issues on WBHS.

- **Kilblain Street** – Stop and search powers were carried out, and there has been a notable reduction in drugs activities, due to the high police presence.
- **West Stewart Street (WSS)** – It was noted that crime in relation to street drinking and rough sleeping has risen, due to the new bus stop benches on WSS. It was further noted that shop owners/traders are not keen on the benches being there.
- **Toilets** – It was advised Police received numerous reports of drug misuse within Kilblain Street and Hunters Place toilets and have responded accordingly.
- **Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)** – the Police have requested additional CCTV coverage on WBHS, Nicholson St, West Burn Street (WBS) and WSS underpass, to assist them with their TC patrols.

IC Officers highlighted challenges with positioning CCTV coverage for the underpass, without it being easily vandalised. IC Officers advised that the CCTV Service has been regularly considered under Council cost saving exercises and any requests for additional CCTV would need to be taken to Committee. IC Officers asked PT to submit any information that would support a request for additional CCTV, and they will take this as a consideration to Committee.

- **Retailers Against Crime** – It was noted that larger organisations such as Next, Tesco and TK Maxx are members of the Retailers Against Crime group, who provide crime information, intelligence and statistics relating to the Glasgow area. They also give warnings to traders of any travelling crime gangs who have moved to their specific area, and it is worth highlighting this service to all traders

to assist with Crime Prevention and awareness. ([Link to Retailers Against Crime website](#))

- **Armed Response and Future Initiatives** – It was advised that overtime patrols and support from the Operational Support Division (armed response vehicles) have been put in place focusing on the TC, Regent Street, Lynedoch Street and Sir Michael Street from 6pm to 10pm; then patrols move to Word Up and Gourrock TC area until 3am.

It was added that the Area Commander has planned to roll out several initiatives within Inverclyde, such a Warrant, Curfew and Vehicular checks.

It was requested additional police focus is given to the West Station area, due to unsavoury characters hanging around that area. PT advised he would request TC Officers to increase their presence in this area.

Decided:-

- **PT to submit information/evidence to IC Officers, to support their request for additional TC CCTV coverage.**
- **PT to ask TC Officers to provide additional focus to the West Station Area to deter loitering.**

4.0 Greenock TCRF Budget Update

- 4.1 A November 2024 budget snapshot was disseminated prior to the meeting.
- 4.2 It was noted that at a previous Forum agreement was made to use a portion of the available Forum funds, to repair the WSS Underpass vandalism. However, there is remaining funding for other potential projects and the Chair asked Forum members to submit any proposals to IC's Regeneration Manager.
- 4.3 The Trader representatives were asked to consider utilising some of the funding for a WBHS Christmas event.

CJ advised he would liaise with Traders for suggestions; however, he made another plea for Professional Events Management Support to be provided to Traders wishing to take forward future events. He also requested that they are given permission to close off various sections of WBHS when holding events.

The Chair asked CJ to create an Event Plan well in advance of any proposed events and submit this to IC's Regeneration Manager, to ensure funding and the correct Committee Approvals are in place before taking forward.

Decided:-

- **Forum suggested projects to be sent to IC's Regeneration Manager**
- **Trader planned events to be sent to IC's Regeneration Manager**
- **All Forum spends to go through correct authorisation governance.**
- **AMB to send IC's Regeneration Manager's contact details to CJ.**

5.0 Inverclyde Council (IC) and Partnership Project Updates

5.1 REPORT UPDATES

A Report was distributed prior to the meeting with updates on the following projects:-

- a) Custom House Square Phase 1
- b) Custom House Square Phase 2

c) West Blackhall Street (WBHS)

- In addition to the report update, it was advised the phase 2 works (road section between Argyle and Jamaica Street) are well underway and due to be completed by 13 December 2024. Normally, the next section would be started, but due to the holiday season, snagging works will be carried out. In turn the road will be open over the Christmas and New Year period and road works will recommence in January 2025.
- It was noted the previous request to remove a couple of parking spaces from Dalrymple Street (Tesco's) would be removed in due course.
- IC Officers advised that all works will be completed to the agreed contract finish and will not be signed off until this is met.
- IC's Head of Physical Assets stated that a Members Briefing in relation to the changes with the Cycle Lane is to be finalised and will be circulated to all members in due course.
- It was noted that WBHS is already greatly improved and looks visually impressive. Thanks was given to all Officers involved for their hard work and vision to retain cobbles as well as installing the benches which were reported to be well used, as well as the brighter lit street at night.
- It was advised a few people had complained about the layout being confusing and not being able to park. IC Officers reiterated that the street has been designed in recognition to the Highway Code, that Pedestrians have priority and there are clear signs in place to highlight this.
- It was further noted that several new businesses are moving into WBHS, and this brings new hope, that the local economy is starting to recover.

Decided:-

- **Roads Officers to remove a few parking bays on Dalrymple Street (Tesco).**
- **Members briefing on changes to Cycle Lane, to be circulated in due course.**

d) Town Centre Action/Master Plan

e) Towns Fund

f) Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Transforming the 'Heart of the Town'

- In addition to the report update, IC's Physical Regeneration Manager advised the contractor Balfour Beatty are progressing well with the works and on schedule to confirm project prices by January 2025.
- Regeneration Officers are consulting with Corp Coms to develop a communication plan and rollout.
- Second investigation works at the Bullring, Wallace Place and Clyde Square were carried out in October 2024.
- The removal of the Oakmall Canopy on 14 November 2024, commenced the demolition works. A further planning application (24/0251/IC) was submitted on 19 November 2024, for additional demolition and façade works.
- Further investigation, nighttime works, will commence on 2 December 2024 for 10 days.

- Site investigations will commence in January 2025
- IC is due to submit a Report to the UK Government by the end of November 2024, to firm up the agreed extension.
- Officers also liaising with Oakmull on project plans and logistics.
- IC Officers advised that in relation to the Towns Board, Town Centre Action Plan and Levelling Up Fund projects, IC Officers will work together to bring together a strategic flow between the three projects to ensure they all bring the best impact and outcomes for the Town.

Decided:-

- **IC Regeneration Officers to develop a Strategic Plan to get the best impact and outcomes for the TC under the LUF, TCAP and Towns Board.**

g) Partnership Working - River Clyde Homes & ICDT

- In addition to the report update, ICDT (known as The Trust) advised they provide environment works on behalf of IC, providing trainees with additional work skills.
- The Spring session of soft landscaping works is now complete.
- RCH and ICDT have developed a programme of works commencing the first week of December at East Shaw Street, to run over a three-month period and will also cover Anne Street, Sir Michael Street and Wellpark areas. The works will address back courts and lanes that require weeding, repointing, small slabbing, step works and basic tidy up of all areas.
- It was noted these environmental works not only provide additional work skills to the trainees, but also support social areas with mixed tenancy and/or areas experiencing hardship.
- Praise was given to The Trust for repainting the Buoy on the Esplanade.

h) River Clyde Homes (RCH) Strategic Investment Plan

5.2 VERBAL UPDATES

a) West Stewart Street (WSS) Underpass (Vandalism Repairs)

- It was noted that the WSS Underpass works are still being considered. IC Regeneration and Roads Officers raised concerns with the number of times works have been done to the underpasses at considerable costs, only to be vandalised again. It was added that like for like costs to repair the current extensive vandalism, could range from £50k to £70k and it may be more cost effective to return the underpass to bare/painted concrete.
- A discussion took place with regards to deterrent measures and IC Officers advised due to the location of the Underpass, there would be nowhere to locate CCTV surveillance that would not be subject to vandalism.
- At the request of the Chair, IC Officers will look at possible interim patchwork measures to deter further damage and vandalism.

Decided:-

- **IC Officers to identify best cost-effective solution to repair WSS Underpass.**

• **IC Officers to identify interim patchwork measures to the vandalised area.**

b) RCH Town Centre Properties Update

- In addition to the Police update on Cathcart Street under 3.1, RCH Officers added they have issued a notice of proceedings to the remaining Cathcart Street antisocial (drug dealing) tenant.
- RCH advised they plan to re-let in Cathcart St. and will use their best endeavours to sensitively let but are restricted in this capacity.
- RCH are planning another Tenants/Residents and Traders meeting to measure the effectiveness of the major partnership working, in the area.
- It was highlighted there is still an issue with overflowing bins attracting vermin and making the area look unsightly. A partnership site meeting was held, and interim measures have been put in place to alleviate this issue, at a significant cost to RCH.
- A discussion took place concerning the road blighted by the litter issues and who owned the road. It was noted the road is too narrow for refuse lorries to access and it has been suggested on a few occasions to close the road and redesign it, to address the bin issues. Roads Officers confirmed the road has not been adopted by IC.
- RCH Officers will take back comments to Senior Colleagues to ascertain if there are plans under the Strategic Investment Plan to address this issue.

Decided:-

- **RCH to hold further Cathcart Street tenants, residents and traders meeting.**
- **RCH Strategic Officers to identify ownership of road with litter issues and feedback on plans going forward.**

6.0 Any Other Competent Business (AOCB)

6.1 A8 Traffic Lights – CJ asked if consideration would be given to using the Towns Board funding, to address the outdated traffic lights that hold up traffic along the A8.

IC Roads Officers advised that the Traffic lights on the A8 are owned by Transport Scotland. It was noted that IC Road Officers regularly meet with Transport Scotland, and they frequently raise this point at meetings and will continue to do so.

7.0 Date of 2025 Meetings

The following 2025 meeting dates were agreed at the meeting:

GREENOCK	FROM	TO
DATE	TIME	TIME
Wednesday 19 February 2025	12noon	3.30pm
Wednesday 21 May 2025	12noon	3.30pm
Wednesday 27 August 2025	2.30PM	6pm
Wednesday 05 November 2025	12noon	3.30pm

Chair Signature Date