

ANGUS COUNCIL – 18 JUNE 2015

BRECHIN AND CARNOUSTIE CHARRETTES

REPORT BY THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND PLACE

ABSTRACT

This report outlines the results of charrettes in Brechin and Carnoustie and details plans for future events in Angus.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Note the outcomes of the two charrettes in Brechin and Carnoustie.
- (ii) Approve the framework for the actions identified within the charrette reports
- (iii) Approve the proposed rollout programme of charrettes across Angus

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to all of the outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016.

3. BACKGROUND

Reference is made to Information Report no. 303/14 Schedule 16 Implementation of Charrettes and Report 129/15 Planning for Place Proposals.

A charrette is an interactive design process, in which stakeholders, including community members, public bodies and private sector organisations, work directly with a specialist design team to generate a specific community vision and develop a framework and actions to achieve this shared vision. In addition to informing specific actions it is expected that charrette outcomes will inform future policy including local development plans, housing strategy and other significant local policies and plans in Angus. Charrettes are an important element in working towards the council's plans for the alignment of spatial and community planning and achieving a more holistic approach to planning with communities.

In a typical charrette, a temporary design studio is set up within the town or neighbourhood on which the charrette will focus. The public and other stakeholders then work with the design team over several days to develop ideas into plans and designs. This process allows a very high degree of active public engagement to take place. It also develops and tests a wide range of ideas in order to identify approaches that are well-informed and specific to the particular situation. Although the main purpose of a charrette is normally to consider the design of the physical environment, a charrette project will also consider the wider social and economic issues related to the sustainable development of the community concerned.

The Scottish Government response to the national review of Town Centres is encouraging the continuing use of the charrette model to support the enhancement of community engagement and empowerment in town centre regeneration. It has, therefore, established a funding stream, SSCI Mainstreaming Town Centre Charrettes, from which the council was successful in securing funding for the Carnoustie charrette in the latest round.

This report outlines the results and emerging action plans of the two charrettes which took place in February and March 2015 in Brechin and Carnoustie respectively.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The Charrette Approach – Both charrettes had 3 distinct phases: the pre-charrette phase, the charrette itself, and the post charrette phase resulting in a finalised action plan and final report. The charrette consultants in both areas were tasked with clear aims and objectives. In the pre-charrette phase, significant preparatory work was undertaken in order to establish a baseline site analysis. This involved:

- the compilation and sourcing of a wide range of data
- mapping
- collating background information and supported by previous work carried out by the community themselves and local communities teams
- Meetings with council officers and community organisations

The charrettes themselves were intensive multi day events and involved workshops, walkabouts, presentations and refinements to emerging actions. They brought together all parties – council staff, partners, local schools and community members. They were facilitated by a team of independent design led consultants who questioned and challenged emerging ideas.

There were very positive levels of engagement in both events, and attendance was drawn from a wider cross-section of the local community than those normally engaged in community and planning activity. During the launch events there were particularly high attendance levels, and during the course of both charrettes hundreds of people contributed to the discussions. Social media tools were utilised (Twitter and Facebook) in addition to contacting established networks, the local press and the council website to promote attendance and provide updates on the outcomes. Both events were positive, energetic and generated “an atmospheric buzz.” From the outset participants were given the opportunity to contribute and share their concerns and aspirations. They were encouraged to identify solutions set within an expectation that emerging action plans would be both realistic and achievable. Co-production and partnership based solutions underpinned the approach as well as a commitment to shared ownership and understanding.

4.2 The Brechin Charrette – The Brechin charrette was held at the Damacre Centre, Brechin, between February 3rd and 7th starting with a launch event on 4th February and thereafter involving a series of facilitated workshops, walkabouts and feedback sessions. These resulted in the formation of a shared action plan and development framework for Brechin Town Centre which was considered at a further public event on 19th February.

The charrette confirmed that the town centre’s historic core and considerable physical assets, both built and natural environment, had significant potential to contribute to the achievement of a long term vision for the town. The community’s commitment to the future of their town was identified as a significant strength comparing favourably to elsewhere and providing a solid foundation for future action and development

The Brechin charrette established a physical development framework with three key strands:

- priority buildings and sites
- open space networks
- access, traffic and transport

Within this framework, possible project actions which emerged during the charrette included:

- The potential reuse or redevelopment of vacant or potentially vacant buildings and tackling areas of blight. This includes the enhancement of the area around Flicks and developing the link between St Ninians Square and the High Street.
- The enhancement of the open space by the River South Esk where the flood prevention works are currently taking place. This would build on work that is already

underway with a new and enhanced play park and provide increased leisure pursuits as well as link in with a wider network of green open spaces.

- A number of actions to cut the heavy goods traffic in the town centre, specifically on St David Street, by up to 50% through effective signage and partial re-routing.

The action plan that is recommended by the consultants focuses on local economic and community regeneration projects and includes short, medium and long term actions. These have been further split down into with twenty five projects in five integrated programmes under the development framework and can be found in full in [appendix 1](#).

4.3 The Carnoustie Charrette (Big Carnoustie Conversation) – The Carnoustie charrette was undertaken between 2nd and 9th March 2015 and was held at the Carnoustie Golf Hotel. The charrette began with a launch event on Monday 2nd March followed by facilitated workshops, walkabouts, drop-in sessions and feedback sessions, resulting in the formation of a shared action plan and framework for Carnoustie Town Centre.

An early focus in the charrette was dialogue around what local people regarded as the town centre, which resulted in agreement on an area bounded by Station Road to the east, Links Avenue to the west, High Street/Dundee Street to the north and the seafront to the south. This area provided focus for subsequent charrette activity.

The charrette developed a vision for the town centre area with three core objectives:

- To provide a better retail offer which reduces dependency on travel to other towns
- To provide a focus for a stronger and more coordinated range of community, social and cultural facilities
- To offer a more attractive tourist destination for overnight stays and day visitors

It concluded that the vision and its objectives needed to be underpinned by supporting and enabling a number of interlinked themes and projects.

Six key projects with 23 related components were identified:

- Kinloch Square – the development of a new civic and social space for Carnoustie
- The Bonella Quarter – a major opportunity for commercial expansion in the town centre
- High Street East – general enhancement around the western anchor for the town centre, including the creation of a small community space and improved connection between parking, retail and community facilities
- Memorial Garden and Dibble Court – enhanced civic space that would celebrate the birth of Carnoustie and the memory of its sons and daughters. It would also act as a new attraction for visitors
- The Links Link – providing improved access to the seafront and links, thereby improving connectivity for residents and increasing regeneration and tourist potential
- Carnoustie Seafront – a range of actions to enhance the seafront and provide a strong anchor point for the southeast of the town centre. Possible actions could include extending the promenade, commercial development, the creation of a community garden and improved signage to offer information and interpretation

A copy of the full report outlining the framework and actions can be found in [appendix 2](#).

4.4 Lessons Learned -The charrette model was a new approach to participatory engagement for the council and a number of lessons were learned in delivering these first events.

By participating in these events, stakeholders developed a better shared understanding of the communities on which the charrettes focused. They also developed a greater mutual understanding of the fact that if actions are to be progressed and visions realised, all partners will need to contribute according to their strengths. In particular there will need to be a different relationship between community, public sector and private sector partners which enables all to focus on shared priorities.

The intensive nature of the events generated a positive energy and enabled discussion to progress more quickly than has been the case previously when using more traditional engagement approaches

Charrettes are resource intensive in the short term and involve a significant time commitment for all stakeholders, but have the potential to deliver significant long term gain if robust action plans are developed and implemented.

Participation from council staff and partner agencies was variable. Charrettes work best when all stakeholders engage together in developing plans and solutions; they are co-production and not community engagement events. In the first two charrettes, it was clear that where Council staff and partnership agencies sat together and tackled issues a more rounded discussion took place and there was greater shared ownership of the outcome. A challenge in future charrettes will be securing higher and more even levels of engagement throughout the events.

Overall there was a positive early experience using social media as a part of a wider communications and engagement strategy. Some important lessons were learned that should make this even more effective in future. These included issues relating to forward planning, timing, and management.

The locations for the first charrettes were markedly different and it was clearly apparent that it is important that the approach taken is responsive to place and needs to be tailored to local circumstances and suitability of venues.

The quality and makeup of the consultant design team is a key factor in the delivery of charrettes. The procurement process for the initial charrettes worked well, but lessons were learned which should allow it to be refined and improved in future.

5. PROPOSALS

5.1 Framework for Action Planning – Charrettes result in action plans that can be categorised into short, medium and long term objectives. In order to follow up and progress these actions it is essential that structures are established to drive forward actions. It is proposed that the communities' team is tasked with a co-ordinating role. The majority of actions will involve shared responsibility and a collective effort to ensure that there is positive progress, particularly where physical improvements are involved and external funding is required. It will be necessary to involve relevant members of the community, partner agencies and council officers to consider actions as appropriate to ensure progress is made. Communication with the wider community will also be essential over the short, medium and longer term.

5.2 Programme for rollout – Due to the success of the first two charrettes, it is proposed that further charrettes are programmed as follows:

2015-16

- Forfar (September 2015),
- Montrose (October 2015)
- Arbroath (early 2016).

Based on our experience in the procurement of 2 charrettes to date, it is anticipated that the 3 charrettes can be accommodated from carry forward resources (ref: report 270/14.)

2016-17

- Monifieth (summer 2016)
- Kirriemuir (autumn 2016)
- Rural Angus (early 2017). During 2015-16 consideration will be given to developing an engagement process that could be applied in more rural areas of Angus

Implementation of the 2016-17 programme is subject to securing resources to support delivery and to continuing positive evaluation of the approach.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional financial implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report. Implementation of the action plans arising from the Brechin and Carnoustie Charrettes may require some specific financial support from the Council, but this will be the subject of separate reports seeking approval or dealt with through the Council's priority based budget setting process. All financial and in-kind support from Angus Council is met from existing budget resources. A carry forward resource has been identified to extend the programme of charrettes in 2015. (£110,000 has been earmarked for this purpose in line with Report 504/14). No funding is currently in place for extending the charrettes programme beyond 2015 so this will need to be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2016/17.

7. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Head of Corporate Improvement and Finance, Head of Property and Technical Services and Head of Legal & Democratic Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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[Appendix 1](#) – Brechin Charrette Report
[Appendix 2](#) – Carnoustie Charrette Report