

FORMARTINE AREA COMMITTEE – 21 SEPTEMBER 2021

TOWN CENTRE FIRST PRINCIPLE

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 The Town Centre First Principle (TCFP) Policy has reached its five year term and is due for renewal.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider, Comment, and make recommendation on the renewal the Town Centre First Principle Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to Infrastructure Service Committee on the 22nd November 2021.**

3 Purpose and Decision-Making Route

- 3.1 The TCFP was launched jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA in January 2015 (Appendix 1). All Local Authorities and public organisations were invited to sign up to the Principle.
- 3.2 The TCFP states that Town Centres are a key element of the economic, social, and environmental fabric of Scotland's towns; often at the core of community and economic life, offering spaces in which to live, meet and interact, do business, and access facilities and services. We must take collective responsibility to help town centres thrive sustainably, reinvent their function, and meet the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors for the 21st century.
- 3.3 The principle requests that: Government, local authorities, the wider public sector, businesses, and communities put the health of town centres at the heart of proportionate and best value decision making, seeking to deliver the best local outcomes regarding investment and de-investment decisions, alignment of policies, targeting of available resources to priority town centre sites, and encouraging vibrancy, equality, and diversity.
- 3.4 The TCFP Policy was approved by the Infrastructure Service Committee on the 1st December 2016. Launched in June 2017, the policy was rolled out through all committee procedures, embedded into service strategy and into the Council's Procurement system. All officers are asked to consider the TCFP in their decision-making processes.
- 3.5 The TCFP has been in place for five years and is required to be renewed. Consultation has taken place with the Senior Management team, planning colleagues, Town Centre First Ambassadors, and Town Centre Business Association Chairs. An engage portal has been launched to give

information and to collate ideas on how to strengthen the policy going forward.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 It was clear from the consultation that the TCFP Policy has been successful. It has raised awareness and allowed mitigating actions to be thought through where decisions impact the town centres. It has allowed officers to understand the impacts council decisions can make to our town centres and has enabled impacts to be considered in all decision-making processes. It was evident through the consultation process that there is an appetite to do more.
- 4.2 It is recommended that the TCFP policy be approved for a further five years. Through the consultation it has been highlighted that further work cross service is required to embed the policy into all council strategy, Area Plans and underpinned to the forthcoming Place Strategy. Should the principle be approved as a policy for a further five years, the framework will be updated to allow more integration and joined-up thinking when delivering against the TCFP. There is a possibility this can be taken forward through place planning.
- 4.3 Through the consultation there was some discussion around which towns would be included. It is recommended that the TCFP continues to cover the principal Town Centres documented in the Aberdeenshire (see Appendix 2) and Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plans: Banchory, Banff, Ellon, Fraserburgh, Huntly, Inverurie, Peterhead, Stonehaven, Turriff, and Ballater. These towns have been recommended as they have a diverse mix of uses, have a wider economic and social base and integration with residential areas. It is important that our principal Town Centres are supported to enable economic growth and in turn this will support the outlying villages and settlements. It is expected that in time other policy areas such as 20-minute neighbourhoods and Place Plans can help to develop function and activity in our smaller towns and settlements.
- 4.4 The town centre first framework will be refreshed and will continue to include a Town Centre First Impact Assessment in the form of the Integrated Impact Assessments along with relevant guidance for officers when writing reports and committee papers. Town Centre Ambassadors and Elected Member Ambassadors will remain, and further work will be done to ensure that town centres are considered in all decision-making processes, assisting colleagues with the monitoring of papers, giving advice where necessary. There were numerous responses through the consultation that a continued cross service / One Aberdeenshire approach is helpful.

4.5 It is recommended that through the TCFP Framework a joined-up approach will be taken with planning colleagues to encourage more town centre development rather than out of town development.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 This report helps deliver the Strategic Priorities “Economy and Enterprise” and “Estate Modernisation” within the Pillar “Our Economy”, “Infrastructure” and “Resilient Communities” within the Pillar “Our Environment” and “Health & Wellbeing” under the Pillar “Our People”.

5.2 There are no implications in renewing the TCFP policy.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		X	
Staffing		X	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland		X	
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing		X	
Climate Change and Sustainability		X	
Health and Wellbeing		X	
Town Centre First		X	

5.3 An integrated impact assessment is not required due to this being for the renewal of the policy. Work will be done with all officers to ensure the TCFP is considered in all service decisions.

5.7 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a [Corporate Level](#):

- ACORP002 - Changes in government policy, legislation, and regulation.

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a [Strategic Level](#):

- BSSR003 - We live within our means and use public money to maximise outcomes for our communities

6 Scheme of Governance

6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are

incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the [Scheme of Governance](#) and relevant legislation.

- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider this in terms of Section B.1.1.2 of the [List of Committee Powers in Part 2A](#) of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to the renewal of a policy which will impact its Area.

Alan Wood

Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Audrey Michie, Strategic Town Centre Executive

Date: 30 August 2021

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Town Centre First Principle for Renewal

Appendix 2 Extract from Local Development Plan Appendix 2 Network of Centres

Appendix 1

Aberdeenshire Council Town Centre First Principle

Town centres are a key element of the economic, social, and environmental fabric of Scotland's towns; often at the core of community and economic life, offering spaces in which to live, meet and interact, do business, and access facilities and services. We must take collective responsibility to help town centres thrive sustainably, reinvent their function, and meet the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors for the 21st century.

Aberdeenshire Council will put the health of town centres at the heart of proportionate and best value decision making, seeking to deliver the best local outcomes regarding investment and de-investment decisions, alignment of policies, targeting of available resources to priority town centre sites, and encouraging vibrancy, equality, and diversity.

We commit to:

A collaborative approach which understands and underpins the long-term plan for each town centre.

NETWORK OF CENTRES

A2 APPENDIX



Appendix 2 Network of Centres

Centre type (role)	Policy approach		Centre
	New development	Principle for sequential approach	
Principal Town Centre	Support all retail developments where the market area is not regional	Town Centres with a diverse mix of uses, a high level of accessibility qualities which identify them as “places”, wider economic and social activity, and integration with residential areas. Preferred location for large comparison type shops commercial, leisure, offices, community and cultural uses, other public buildings where appropriate, and for local convenience shops which serve the town centre.	Banchory Banff Ellon Fraserburgh Huntly Inverurie Peterhead Stonehaven Turriff
Other town centres	Local retail provision only	Town Centres. Preferred location for convenience shops, commercial, leisure, offices, community and cultural uses, and other public buildings where appropriate, which serve the town.	Aberchirder Aboyne Alford Kintore Macduff Newmachar Oldmeldrum Portsoy Rosehearty Westhill
Neighbourhood centres	Local retail provision only (less than 500m ² gross floor area)	Out of Centre	Other villages Neighbourhoods within principal towns

Other commercial centres and retail parks		Other commercial centres. Preferred location for bulky comparison outlets if town centre sites are not available	Buchan Gateway, Peterhead Corskie Drive/B9026, Macduff Highclere Business Park, Inverurie Portlethen Retail Park South Harbour Road, Fraserburgh, Steven Road, Huntly Waterton, Ellon Windmill Road, Peterhead.
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The extent of centres are identified in the settlement statements in appendix 8 of the plan.