

UNTAPPED RICHES

Assets are “piggy bank buried in concrete”

Council could unlock gems

Kenny Smith

South Ayrshire Council is being offered expert advice on how to develop its surplus assets.

A representative from the council attended a meeting in Edinburgh earlier this month, organised by to launch the Social Infrastructure Development (SID) Framework for Scotland.

The Framework gives public sector organisations, like the council, the opportunity to look at some of its assets, such as land and buildings, how they can be developed and, in return, use the profits from development and build new assets or improve existing ones.

Tim Byles is the chief executive of Cornerstone, a social investment company that works with public bodies to provide commercial and imaginative property solutions to public policy problems.

Cornerstone has had considerable successes when working with local authorities south of the border.

Tim said: “My background is in local and central government, and having been chief executive of a large local authority in England, and chaired SOLACE, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, I’m very aware of the issues facing local authorities today.

“In the last few years, I’ve set up and run Cornerstone to work with the public sector to find underused public assets, when cash is hard to come by. If you look, there’s quite a lot of surplus or not fully utilised assets that can be put to better use in the interests of the tax payer.

“We can identify what’s the best use of assets, whether bringing people together across organisations, and often it’s physical buildings being put to better use.

“Very often we find local communities have better ideas about what their priorities are but don’t have the personnel infrastructure or capacity to make that happen in the way that they would like. One of the things that has struck me is how much better developed this idea is in Scotland than it is in England.

“There’s lots a communities who would like public facilities to develop and grow together. We want to make the process as simple and accessible as possible, where we create value in surplus assets and the community and local authority decide what it’s to be used for, and what can we spend in a sustainable way.

“This could be housing or education surpluses, facilities for older people, and integration of health and social care.

“We are interested in all of these aspects and have been talking to local authorities. Over two-thirds of local authorities in Scotland were in attendance, and I’ve also personally met the chief executives of 11 of them.

“We also had representatives from health as well, which is the first time we have engaged with them.

“We hope to meet with more representatives from South Ayrshire, who were at the launch and the workshop, and it was very encouraging.

“Looking at South Ayrshire, there’s disused public buildings and others in a state of disrepair.



Hidden gem? South Ayrshire Council’s Robert Burns House

There’s locations like Burns House.

“They are like piggy banks which are full of coins but buried in concrete. We want to use our expertise to help bodies access these.”

Donald Gillies, South Ayrshire Council’s head of property and risk, said: “Our estates team co-ordinator attended the launch of the new Social Infrastructure Development (SID) Framework for Scotland on behalf of the

council.

“The aim of the SID Framework is to allow public sector organisations the opportunity for surplus assets to be developed and, in return, use the profits from development to build new assets or improve existing ones.

“Our co-ordinator found the launch useful and we will consider the use of this Framework as and when opportunities arise regarding our surplus land and buildings.”

Homes wanted



Homes wanted Harry (left) and Shiloh

Two canine companions are looking for new homes from Islay Dog Rescue.

Shiloh is a one-year-old white whippet and boxer cross who is looking for a new home.

He is a quick learner, easily trained and comfortable around other dogs. He is an intelligent, loyal dog and would make a wonderful companion to someone with a garden. He is neutered, vaccinated, microchipped, treated for fleas, worms and is behaviour assessed.

Harry is a fox terrier cross who was abandoned in London, ending up in a pound.

The loving dog is around 5-6 years old and in desperate need of a loving home, ideally with a single person or a couple in a quiet home. Potential adoptees need to appreciate Harry may never curl up next to them and adoption would have to move slowly to allow him time to adapt.

To find out more, contact Lorraine on 07876561545 or Richard on 07949961253.