What does “regeneration” mean in your area?

1. Renfrewshire takes a broad view of regeneration activity. It firmly embedded in our strategic documents, such as the Single Outcome Agreement and the newly developing Community Plan. In addition the Council is currently developing a new Employment and Economic Regeneration Strategy. Regeneration cuts across different policy agendas. Renfrewshire is an urban based local authority which, as with many others around the Glasgow city region, has similar issues relating to areas as follows:

- Youth employment
- Employability
- New/small business development
- Urban renewal
- Areas of multiple deprivation
- Town centre redevelopment
- Vacant and derelict land
- Environmental quality

2. Renfrewshire Council has prioritised tackling youth unemployment through £2.5 million programme “Invest In Renfrewshire”, which aims to stimulate and support the local business community into creating new permanent jobs for unemployed young people (16-24).

3. In addition the Council has significant about the long term impacts of the recession and what implications the reform of the welfare system will have on our more deprived communities.

What would you consider to be a successful outcome?

4. Successful regeneration outcomes relate to the effect of activity on people and communities whether those benefits are economic, social or on well being. Examples of this are:

- Reductions in unemployment and worklessness.
- Sustained business start ups and fewer business failures.
- Redevelopment of brownfield land/vacant property.
- Broadly based town centres.
- Quality public realm and spaces.

5. Renfrewshire Council is currently undertaking two major physical regeneration programmes. Building Better Communities is a programme of renewing the infrastructure of schools, community and leisure facilities and the Housing Improvement
Programme is a major refurbishment programme which will bring all council housing in Renfrewshire up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015.

6. There are some specific examples of successful regeneration such as the work on the Cart Corridor area regeneration and the restoration of Renfrew Town Hall and the surround area.

**The regeneration strategy, resources and funding**

7. Local authorities are well placed to co-ordinate regeneration activity but face issues in terms of certainty over capital and revenue budgets to be able to fulfil that role effectively. Nevertheless in Renfrewshire we are being effective in pairing up with the private sector to deliver regeneration outcomes.

8. The central challenge facing the implementation of the Regeneration strategy is if the resources that are available match the aims and aspirations set out in the document. Of the funding streams identified in the document, SPRUCE, VDLF, People and Communities Fund and so forth, it is debatable if the scale and extent of the funding is adequate to meet the challenge set out in the strategy.

9. For example, The Regeneration Capital grant fund is worth £25 million per annum but it is only available to areas which have Urban Regeneration Companies. The Vacant and Derelict land fund is worth approximately £27 million between 2012/13 and 2014/15, although again it is only available to five local authorities. The People and Communities fund, which has been made available to third sector organisations across Scotland, although the level of funding has changed since the publication of the Strategy, from £7.9million per year as set out in the strategy, to “At least £6 million” per year, as indicated on the Scottish Government website.

10. The Strategy is specific about the requirement to move away from a grant funding model to a finance model, e.g. through loan funding. This reflects the financially challenging environment that national and local authorities are operating in.

11. The ending of specific ring fenced regeneration funding in 2010, Fairer Scotland Funding, meant that for the first time in a generation specific area based regeneration funds were not available to local authorities and their Community Planning partners. The mainstreaming of these funds, while welcome for the additional flexibility and reduction in bureaucracy, does run the risk of a loss of focus on the needs of our most deprived communities.

12. What is most important is that local authorities, working with the communities they serve and with their communities planning partners, can effectively prioritise resources to ensure that the most important and pressing regeneration needs of their areas are effectively met. The Government’s Regeneration Strategy is not as strong as it could be in this area, as it is not clear from the document what the Scottish Government’s key priorities for regeneration are.

**Regeneration, equalities and preventative spending**

13. Renfrewshire Council has identified significant resources through the “Invest in Renfrewshire” programme and through its mainstream economic development and employability budgets to tackling youth unemployment. This is in recognition of the significant rise in youth unemployment in the area over the last four years.
14. There is also an understanding of the seriousness and potential long term damage that youth unemployment causes - the "scarring" effect that it can have over the course of people’s lives. This includes an increased risk of persistent poverty, lower life time income potential, increased risk of poor physical and mental health, increased risk of family breakdown and increased risk of involvement with alcohol and drugs and involvement with the criminal justice system.

15. The Council and our partners are strongly committed to working together to avoid a "lost generation" of people who miss out on economic opportunities and who are condemned to poverty and insecurity throughout the rest of their lives due to unemployment in their youth.

16. Physical regeneration can contribute to preventative spending by improving levels of health and wellbeing through effective housing renewal and by reducing fuel poverty through installation and maintenance of effective heating systems. This will reduce the need for health spending caused by illness and disease associated with cold and damp conditions and mental stress. Improving the levels of social housing conditions can have a positive impact on reducing health inequalities.

17. Regeneration of community and leisure facilities can reduce inequalities by increasing access to activities that reduce isolation and promote good health. Community and leisure facilities can also contribute to preventative spending by promoting pro-social behaviour and diverting people from anti-social behaviour.

**Regeneration and sustainable economic development**

18. Renfrewshire Council has adopted an approach to tackling youth unemployment and supporting local companies called “Invest in Renfrewshire”. The Council has provided £2.5 million of funding in 2012/13 for a package of support to local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Renfrewshire as a means of stimulating growth and supporting companies to take on young (16-24 years old) unemployed people.

19. There are 3 specific strands of Invest in Renfrewshire:

- A campaign aimed at Renfrewshire companies so that they “sign up” to working together with Renfrewshire Council to support employability locally and to “give something back” to “Invest in Renfrewshire”.

- Helping unemployed and under-employed young people become employable, get and keep a job and progress within work (an employability approach);

- Engaging with businesses - helping businesses of any size that want to grow, to find, keep and develop the workers they need, and through them, grow their productivity and success (a business development approach).

20. Invest in Renfrewshire Programmes and Services have been developed to bring together the 3 strands under a single and co-ordinated approach. A range of existing Economic Development services and programmes are also incorporated into Invest in Renfrewshire to ensure a comprehensive range of services for unemployed young people and businesses.

21. Invest in Renfrewshire features a number of programmes including:

- Wage subsidy and Apprenticeship grants
• Pre-recruitment training programmes
• Employability support in schools
• Internships
• Business Growth support including Micro loan fund, Business and innovation grant, ICT grant, Tourism grant, Development grant, Exhibition grant, funding for feasibility studies.
• Retail improvement grant

22. It should be noted however that “Invest in Renfrewshire” is the Council’s response to the acute problem of youth unemployment in Renfrewshire as opposed to a specific response to the Government’s regeneration strategy. Invest in Renfrewshire is also part of the Council’s wider response to the challenge of unemployment and worklessness, augmenting and supporting the working being done by the Renfrewshire Employability Partnership Programme to implement a strategic skills employability pipeline.

23. It should also be noted that the Scottish Government has provided Renfrewshire Council with an additional £799,000 of “Opportunities for All” funding in 2012-13 to support and augment services aimed at youth unemployment. This funding, whilst welcome, is both short term and a disproportionately inadequate contribution from central government. Local government finances are underpinned by approximately 80% of its resources being provided by central government with 20% raised locally through principally council tax. Applying this underlying funding principle, would suggest that in contrast to the £2.5 million funding put forward by the Council, a proportionate level of support from the Scottish Government in this area would be around £10 million. Adequate and sustained funding in this area would be very beneficial, particularly to local authorities such as Renfrewshire that suffer significantly higher levels of acute, deprivation where the long term challenge of youth unemployment, economic recession and the emerging impact from welfare reform are more acutely felt than in other areas of Scotland.

24. Significant issues that impact on the ability to stimulate economic development are the constraints on lending by banks to businesses and the level of rates and support for businesses in traditional town centres. The low rate of bank lending is a key factor that restricts the ability of the economy to grow. Town centres such as Paisley, Renfrew and Johnstone suffer from relatively high business rates, based on past retail function, which has led to a reduction in economic activity in town centres and an increase in the number of vacant retail units.

25. A particular issue in Renfrewshire has been the cancellation of the Glasgow Airport Rail Link (GARL) project. The lack of direct rail connectivity between Glasgow Airport, Paisley town centre and Glasgow City Centre restricts the ability of the city region to maximise the benefit of having a major international airport. Re-instatement of the GARL project would deliver significant benefits to the Renfrewshire and Glasgow City region economy.

Community led regeneration and CPPs

26. The Scottish Government’s Regeneration Strategy states that it “places support for community led regeneration at the heart of its approach”. The strategy is clear that, “The involvement of local people in public sector led activity is not community led regeneration”. 
27. However, this definition does not take into account the role and responsibility of elected members as democratically elected representatives of their community. Renfrewshire Council strongly endorses the need for communities to be engaged and active. It is considering the "Co-operative Council" model as a means of improving the effectiveness of its engagement with communities on how services are delivered.

28. There is an example of community led regeneration in Renfrewshire, the “Our Place" programme, which is situated in “Renfrew West”. Renfrew West is an area of Renfrew which comprises communities across Moorpark, Kirklandneuk, Blythswood and Newmains.

29. The Programme is funded by the Big Lottery and it seeks to improve the quality of life of people living in area. Over £600,000 of revenue funding has been awarded to three projects- “our place our families”, “Our place youth project” and “our place community capacity building project”. In addition the Our Place Programme has submitted bids to the Big Lottery for two capital projects worth over £1.5 million for the development of Knockhill Park and a submission by Williamsburgh Housing Association and the Renfrew Association of Growers and Gardeners. A decision on these two capital programmes is expected imminently. The formal launch of the “Our Place” programme took place in mid September 2012.

30. While these projects are community led they also require significant support and involvement from public agencies. The Council, as the public agency whose members have been democratically elected to lead and represent their community should play a lead role in driving forward and supporting community led regeneration activities - just as it has a lead role in supporting the community planning process. Communities, particularly deprived communities most in need of regeneration, require additional support and resources to take forward their aspirations.

31. In Renfrewshire the Council is committed to supporting the community planning partners in helping to deliver regeneration in the area. Renfrewshire has a strong, and independent third sector interface organisation, Engage Renfrewshire, which is active in promoting and supporting community led projects. The Council funds Engage Renfrewshire to ensure that there is a strong basis for supporting communities in their regeneration activities.

**Regeneration and climate change targets**

32. There is potential for the effective implementation of regeneration programmes to have a positive effect on supporting the Government’s climate change targets. For example, the Housing Improvement Programme, is in the process of installing new energy efficient heating systems in Council houses across Renfrewshire, which will also contribute to tackling fuel poverty.

33. In addition the Council has entered into a partnership between the Council and the local Energy Savings Scotland Advice Centre to provide a free telephone advice line on fuel poverty and climate change issues and provides a referral service for home visits for those requiring face to face advice from the Council’s Energy Advisors. This partnership has also accessed £270,000 of funding from the Scottish Government’s Universal Home Insulation Scheme (UHIS) in 2011/12. This funding has provided insulation for houses of all tenures across Renfrewshire.

Renfrewshire Council
27 September 2012