

## NORTHERN ROADS COLLABORATION JOINT COMMITTEE

ANGUS HOUSE, ANGUS COUNCIL, 21 JUNE 2019

**Councillors:** Councillors Ellen Morton, Argyll and Bute Council, Chair; Ross Grant and Michael Hutchison, Aberdeen City Council (both by Skype); Peter Argyle, and Anouk Kloppert (as substitute for Councillor David Aitchison) (by Skype) Aberdeenshire Council; Brenda Durno (Vice-Chair), and Ron Sturrock, Angus Council; Theresa Coull, Moray Council; and Allan Henderson and Trish Robertson, The Highland Council (both by Skype).

**Officers:** Doug Ritchie, Aberdeen City Council (via Skype); Ruth O'Hare, and Jan McRobbie, Aberdeenshire Council; Douglas Hill, Angus Council; Jim Smith, Argyll and Bute Council (via Skype); Murdo MacRitchie, Cohairle nan Eilean Siar (via Skype); Mark Atherton, Moray Council; Robin Pope and Tracey Urry, Highland Council; and Angus Bodie, The Improvement Service.

**Apologies:** Councillors David Aitchison, (Aberdeenshire Council); Roddy McCuish, (Argyll and Bute Council); Uisdean Robertson and Kenneth MacLeod, (Cohairle nan Eilean Siar); and Gordon Cowie, (Moray Council).

### 1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

Councillor Morton, Chair of the Committee, welcomed Members, via remote access, or in person, to Angus House, Forfar.

Housekeeping details were provided by Douglas Hill.

The Chair advised Members that Ewan Wallace, Lead Officer, was unable to attend and the Joint Committee **agreed** that good wishes for a speedy recovery be sent to Mr Wallace.

### 2. SEDERUNT AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Morton asked Members for declarations of interest.

No interests were declared.

### 3. STATEMENT OF EQUALITIES

In making decisions on the following items of business, the Joint Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act, 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
  - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
  - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and

- (2) where an Equality Impact Assessment was provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching their decision.

#### 4. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of 18 May, 2018, (Item 3) and 1 March, 2019 (Item 9), there had been circulated a report dated 12 June, 2019 by the Lead Officer, requesting Members' consideration of an amendment to the Minute of Agreement to allow any appointed Chair or Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee to hold office for a second, or subsequent, time in any five-year period; the current Standing Orders (4.1) allows for the appointment to both roles for 12 months only.

The Joint Committee heard from Ms O Hare, Principal Solicitor, that all Member Authorities, having been surveyed, were supportive of the proposed amendment, and **agreed:-**

- (1) to note the positive conclusion of discussions with Member Authorities on the potential variation of Clause 4.3.5 of the Minute of Agreement to allow the Chair and Vice-Chair to hold office for a second or subsequent time in any consecutive five-year period;
- (2) that the Minute of Agreement be varied as detailed above;
- (3) that the Standing Orders for the Joint Committee be amended to reflect the said variation; and
- (4) that Councillor Morton be re-appointed to Chair of the Committee for the period to 20 June, 2020.

#### 5. MINUTE OF MEETING OF 1 MARCH, 2019

There had been circulated and was **approved** as a correct record, the Minute of Meeting of 1 March, 2019.

Arising out of discussion of the above, the Joint Committee heard further from Angus Bodie of the Improvement Service of the ongoing investigation by officers on the potential incorporation of plastic in road highway maintenance. A recent briefing had been provided to officers of the Joint Committee but had not been submitted for Members' consideration as there were no decisions to be made.

Mr Bodie reported that whilst SEPA had approved the process as an "end of waste licence" this was based on information provided by the company; this approval rested on the use of virgin plastic, not recyclates, and that any further assurances on the precise consistency of the product were masked by propriety and commercial sensitivities. The manufacturer's promotion was based on a "plastic bag equivalency", not necessarily 6.5 million plastic bags, or bottles, per se, as seemed to be the perception on social media. The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation, Scotland (SCOTS) were to discuss the matter at their meeting today, where consideration of issues such as forward maintenance implications would be considered, giving the differing melting points of different plastics and the need for bonding to the main asphalt ingredients, usage in core roads, strength issues, potential future leachate concern with associated implications for Councils as waste authorities. A bid was to be made to the Scottish Research Board to consider the process and this would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

Following a question about areas where pilot explorations were being undertaken with East Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway Councils, officers clarified that there had been, to date, no official test in Moray, although a local developer had used the process for a road on one of

their schemes, which would never been considered for Adoption by the Council as roads authority.

There was discussion of the onward implications for development control decisions by Councils in schemes where roads may ultimately require to be adopted by Councils, and as to whether composition of material could be stipulated in planning conditions.

The Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) that officers for each authority update as appropriate to each Council the briefing which had been provided to them, for consideration; and
- (2) that a further update be reported to a future meeting when appropriate.

## 6. NATIONAL ROADS COLLABORATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 1 March, 2019, (Item 7), there had been circulated a report dated 12 June, 2019 by Angus Bodie, the Roads Collaboration Programme, providing an update on national progress in terms of Roads Collaboration Programme (RCP). The report detailed developments in governance of joint working; progress made in terms of workforce development, including the continuing expansion of mature apprenticeships with Universities; progress with the Collaborative Network Management, coordinated by the Scottish Roads Network Management Forum to implement opportunities for joint working across trunk and local road boundaries, including consideration of shared depots across road authorities, and with Transport Scotland and any potential trunk roads contractors; and technical projects, including the SCOTS "Value in Local Roads" project, due for completion in July, 2018.

There was discussion of the relative progress made in other areas towards collaborative working, and the Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note the progress on the National Roads Collaboration Programme as detailed in the report;
- (2) to commend officers supporting the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee for their work in progressing the Joint Committee's evolution and achievements to date; and
- (3) that an update, including a presentation of up to 30 minutes, on the Value in Local Roads project findings, be scheduled for the September meeting of the Joint Committee.

## 7. PROPOSED CARRIAGEWAY RECYCLING AND RETEXTURING JOINT COLLABORATION CONTRACTS

There had been circulated a report dated 12 June, 2019 by Derek Murray, Roads and Landscape Manager, Aberdeenshire Council, detailing recent discussions between Aberdeenshire, Angus, and Moray Councils on the potential, given the specialist nature of the work and limited contractor availability, to share contracts for recycling of roads and retexturing (usually either by shot blasting or high-pressure water jetting) of roads. It was reported that, due to timescales, separate contracts would continue for recycling in 2019, with a view to awarding a joint contract early in 2020, but that a joint retexturing contract was hoped to be awarded through Public Contracts Scotland in summer 2019, with works undertaken in summer/ autumn 2019. Although not a Northern Roads Collaboration project per se, this was reported as a good example of additional collaborative working. Having heard from representatives of Highland Council, the Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note the collaborative working progressed to date in respect of retexturing and recycling of roads; and
- (2) that Highland Council's interest be included in this area of joint working.

## 8. STRATEGIC BUSINESS CASE FOR ROADS ASSET MANAGEMENT

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 1 March, 2019, (Item 6), there had been circulated a report dated 12 June, 2019 by Angus Bodie, Programme Manager, Roads Collaboration Programme, requesting Members' consideration of (a) a Strategic Business Case for wider collaboration in asset management and investment planning, recommending a two phase approach to the project implementation, allowing for a review by Members between Phases 1 and 2, and (b) shared funding of work, with the Roads Collaboration Programme providing half of this sum, at a total cost of £10,000, to support the collaborative process.

Having heard further from Mr Bodie that the island authorities of Orkney and Shetland, although not currently members of the Collaboration Joint Committee, may be interested in participating in this area of work, the Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note the ongoing progress in considering opportunities to collaborate in asset management planning at operational and strategic levels;
- (2) that Orkney and Shetland Islands Councils be surveyed to determine their potential interest in participation;
- (3) to approve the Strategic Business Case as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, recommending it to Member Authorities for support;
- (4) that Member Authorities be recommended to cover the funding gap for the work, as a share of the residual £5,000; and
- (5) that the Roads Collaboration Programme Manager report completion of Phase 1 to the project in due course.

## 9. REVIEW OF SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS AND FINANCIAL MONITORING

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 18 May, 2018 (Item 6), there had been circulated a report dated 17 June, 2019 by the Lead Officer (a) requesting consideration of the support arrangements and (b) reporting financial spend at the end of the initial year of the Joint Committee and a projected budget for 2019/20.

Having noted the Officers' Group recommendation that Aberdeenshire Council continue as Lead Authority and provide legal and committee support, with financial support provided by Highland Council, the Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) that Aberdeenshire Council continue as Lead Authority to the Joint Committee;
- (2) that the support arrangements, as approved on 18 May, 2018, and as detailed in the report, continue and to commend the officers on their work to date in supporting the ground-breaking, evolving, collaboration;
- (3) that the Lead Officer review support arrangements on an annual basis and report to the Joint Committee only in the event that changes are required; and
- (4) to note the financial position as reported in paragraphs 2.6 and 2.7 of the report.

## 10. CASUALTY UPDATE

In the absence of Mr Wallace, consideration of this issue was deferred to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

## 11. ANNUAL REPORT ON ACTIVITIES

There had been circulated a report dated 18 June, 2019 by the Lead Officer, (a) providing for consideration a draft annual performance report, as required in terms of Clause 4.1.2 of the Joint Committee's Minute of Agreement and (b) recommending that the report be shared with all Partner Authorities for their consideration.

The Annual report on activities detailed areas which the Joint Committee had overseen since May 2018 and suggested areas that are likely to be considered in the coming period.

The Joint Committee **agreed** to commend the Annual Report to constituent Authorities as a correct record of working to-date and planned.

## 12. FUTURE ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AS AN AGENDA ITEM

The Joint Committee had noted from the Annual Report approved in Item 12 above, and previous discussions, that future areas of work would include:

- Continuing Joint Procurement intra-authority discussions;
- Scottish Roads Asset Management Plan; and
- The Strategic Timber Transport Fund (currently being discussed via CoSLA and the Scottish Minister);
- Cobble surface specialist repair issues (to be considered by Aberdeen City Council and of potential interest to other authorities, and the subject of a previous report to SCOTS);
- The potential security implications for Ports in the context of BREXIT;
- Continued consideration of the use of recycled plastics in road surfacing;
- Joint contractual agreements;
- Consideration of the "Value in Local Roads"; and
- Consideration of national transport infrastructure in support of the emerging National Transport Strategy.

In further discussion, issues relating to the extension of transport strategic funding beyond that for timber, and also the experience of authorities in working with SUSTRANS, the Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) that matters for future consideration include the consideration of the extension of the strategic transport fund for timber to other industries (such as distilleries) which impact on the rural road network; and
- (2) that Councils which had experience of working with SUSTRANS share their experiences with Angus Council who were currently considering joint working with the organisation.

### 13. FUTURE MEETINGS – TO APPROVE AND CONSIDER

The Joint Committee considered the requirement to set meetings for autumn and winter 2019, and **agreed:-**

- (1) that the next meeting take place in Highland Council Headquarters, Inverness, on Friday 6 September, 2019, commencing at 2.00pm, to facilitate travel; and
- (2) that the winter meeting take place in Woodhill House, Aberdeen, Friday 29 November, 2019, commencing at 11.00 a.m.

Councillor Ellen Morton  
Chair