

## **REPORT TO BANFF AND BUCHAN AREA COMMITTEE – TUESDAY 16 JUNE 2015**

### **Response to Notice of Motion: Banff and Buchan Area Committee 26 May 2015**

#### **1 Recommendations**

The committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note the response from both Infrastructure Services and Business Services regarding the Notice of Motion agreed by Banff and Buchan Area Committee on Tuesday 26 May 2015.**

#### **2 Background / Discussion**

- 2.1 During Banff and Buchan Area Committee on Tuesday 26 May 2015, the Chair admitted discussion of the possible closure of the Local Planning Service in Fraserburgh as a matter of urgency, since the closure could take place before the Committee was able to consider the issue at its next scheduled meeting.

The draft minute of the meeting records that – “After discussion, the Committee agreed:

1. To instruct officers to provide information to the Committee on the possible closure of Local Planning Service offices in Fraserburgh, and
2. To instruct officers to provide information to the Committee on the upcoming changes to Benefits Service provision in Banff.”

#### **2.2 Infrastructure Services (Building Standards)**

In response to the proposal to relocate the Building Standards operational base from Fraserburgh to Peterhead the Service has confirmed that the Building Standards office in Fraserburgh is not closed, however in the medium term it would be proposed that the office be utilised more as a hot desk and flexible working location. In the long term the Councils ambition would be to dispose of this building by means of sale as a Customer Service Hub is developed in Saltoun Square (including the renovation of 1 - 3 Kirk Brae and Former Police Station building).

The service is committed to ensuring that there will be no reduction in the level of service provided to the residents of Fraserburgh and District. It may mean however, that a member of the public will have to make an appointment or visit during a time when a Building Standards surgery is in operation to see an officer.

There are currently two officers located in the Fraserburgh office, one Building Standards Surveyor and one Building Standards Technical Assistant (Inspector). At present it is unlikely that if a member of the public “drops in” to the office that they would be able to see an officer immediately as officers are regularly out with the office conducting site visits.

With the proposed method of working, i.e. meeting by appointment or attending a Building Standards surgery, a customer wishing to see an officer is guaranteed a meeting. This method of working is also a move towards hot-desking and flexible working currently being promoted by the Council whereby staff can work out of a number of office locations ensuring better usage is made of desks and buildings.

In respect of admin support to the Building Standards service, this has been provided for a number of years through the Housing Service this will continue meantime as discussions progress.

In June 2016 e-building standards is being introduced by the Scottish Government. This initiative allows for Building Warrant applications to be submitted electronically, similar to the system currently operated by the Planning Service. Approximately 70% of planning applications are currently submitted electronically and it is envisaged that Building Warrant submissions would be at a similar level meaning that there would be less visits to an office by members of the public.

With the electronic building standards system it is envisaged that additional travelling would be limited as in theory an application could be checked from any location provided the correct equipment is in place.

A meeting with Building Standards staff who were to be involved in the relocation was held on Wednesday 20 May and followed up with a letter dated the same day informing staff of a 21 day consultation period beginning 25 May. Although this process remains at an early stage it is the intention of the service to fully engage with staff and make them feel involved during the process.

### **2.3 Business Services (Benefits)**

The Benefits Team based in Banff is currently located at 10 Carmelite Street and the same number of staff will be moving back into the Town House when the refurbishment is complete. Staff working within the Benefits Team have recently been consulted on a proposed new staffing structure, which has the same complement of staff as the existing structure

### **2.4 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.**

### **3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications**

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because there are no recommendations which impact on those with protected characteristics.

**RITCHIE JOHNSON**  
**DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES**

Report prepared by: Margaret-Jane Cardno (Area Manager, Banff and Buchan)  
Date: 3 June 2015

