

**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL****INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE****WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 14 MAY, 2015**

**Present:** Councillor P J Argyle (Chair), A S Buchan (Vice Chair), W A Agnew, J B Cox, S M Lonchay, F McRae (substituting for S W Smith), R J Merson, I J Mollison, C H Nelson, M Roy and B A Topping (substituting for G J Clark).

**Apologies:** Councillors G J Clark and S W Smith.

**Officers:** Director of Infrastructure Services, Head of Service (Planning and Building Standards), Head of Service (Protective Services and Waste Management), Head of Service (Roads and Landscape), Head of Service (Economic Development), Strategy Manager (Transportation) Waste Manager, Chief Internal Auditor, Chief Accountant, Legal Services Manager (Governance) and Committee Officer (F Brown).

**1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct and the following declarations were intimated:-

Councillor Argyle declared an interest in Item 8 as a board member of NESTRANS;

Councillor Buchan declared an interest in Item 8 as a board member of NESTRANS;

Councillor Cox declared an interest in Item 16 as the Chairman of Moray First Coast Inshore Fisheries Group; and

Councillor Mollison declared an interest in Item 8 as a substitute member of NESTRANS and Item 15 as a Director of Enterprise North East Trust;

**2. RESOLUTIONS****A. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY**

In making decisions on the following items of business, the 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
- (2) where an Equality Impact Assessment was provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching their decision.

**B. EXEMPT INFORMATION**

The Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the items

specified below so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the classes described in the undernoted paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Item No	Paragraph No of Schedule 7A
18	1, 2 and 14
19	6 and 9

## PRESENTATION

### 3. ABERDEEN TO INVERNESS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Chair introduced Graeme Stewart (Senior Programme Development Manager) and Stacey Lynch Community Liaison Manager from Network Rail who were in attendance to provide the Committee with an overview of the Aberdeen to Inverness Improvement Project. The presentation included information on the scope and programme of works; current and possible advance works; Forres Station relocation; Elgin Station platform extensions and a new station at Dalcross. It was reported that for such a large project there would be some degree of disruption and Network Rail were fully committed to ensuring that there was full community engagement throughout the life of the project and any impact to wildlife or vegetation had been fully considered.

During the question and answer session the Committee queried whether there were any short term plans for increasing car parking in Inverurie as it was felt that Inverurie was an important hub within the North East. Mr Stewart advised the Committee that a contract would be awarded in September, 2015 and during the next six months, a temporary parking solution would be addressed.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to thank Graeme Stewart and Stacey Lynch for their informative presentation.

## PLANNING, POLICY AND ENVIRONMENT

### 4. ABERDEEN LAND USE STRATEGY REGIONAL PILOT – CLOSURE AND LEGACY WORK

With reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 2 October, 2014 (Item 7, Page 843) where the Committee had been provided with an update on the progress of the Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy Regional Pilot and proposals for a public consultation on a spatial mapping tool, there had been submitted a report dated 20 April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which asked the Committee to consider the outcomes of the Land Use Strategy and then approve proposals to take forward the work of the project within Aberdeenshire.

The Head of Planning and Building Standards introduced the report and advised the Committee that the Aberdeen Land Use Strategy Regional Pilot had formally closed on 31 March, 2015 however the project board which had been setup to discuss environmental challenges related to rural land use which affect those living and working in Aberdeenshire had unanimously agreed to support the continuation of the scheme with suggestions for future actions at a regional level, namely:

- exploring a more integrated and inclusive approach to rural land use planning which better takes account of, and protects long term, the goods and services provided to all sectors of society by the natural environment;
- exploring the scope for and implications of expanding woodland in Aberdeenshire; and

- continuing work to describe and map the natural assets and benefits delivered by Aberdeenshire's environment

It was reported that £70,000 of funding received from the Scottish Government for the project still remained unspent and section 2.8 and 2.9 of the report provided proposals for legacy work which would be undertaken over the coming year.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the outcomes of the Land Use Strategy Regional Pilot; and
- (2) to approve the proposals under paragraph 2.8 and 2.9 of the report for taking forward the work of the project within Aberdeenshire.

## 5. PLANNING ENFORCEMENT IN ABERDEENSHIRE

There had been circulated a report dated 15 April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which provided the Committee with an overview of the Planning Enforcement Service in Aberdeenshire since the establishment of a centralised Planning Enforcement Team in 2014. The purpose of the report was to provide the framework for Planning Enforcement; to highlight the work of the Planning Enforcement during 2014/15 and to outline the Service Improvements which were proposed for the future.

It was reported that the framework for Planning Enforcement had been presented as Appendix 1 to the report; the process map for dealing with enforcement complaints was presented as Appendix 2 to the report; the setup of the Planning Enforcement team and the work/pressures they face was presented as Appendix 3 to the report and Planning Enforcement performance statistics for Aberdeenshire and the six Areas was presented as Appendix 4 to the report.

The Head of Planning and Building Standards introduced the report and advised the Committee that the report provided Management priorities for 2015 as presented in section 4.2 of the report and additional verbal updates were then provided since the publication of the report:-

- an additional member of administrative staff had been appointed to assist the Planning Enforcement team in tracking all incoming cases;
- to assist greater engagement with members at a local level, the briefing protocol would include the use of ward pages; regular reporting to each Area Committee and an annual report would be presented to Infrastructure Services Committee on the ways in which Aberdeenshire was continuing to manage enforcement.

The Committee welcomed the report, however, when referring to Appendix 1, Section 1.5 of the report, they voiced some concerns with regards to the legal frameworks and guidance relating to the use of each power as contained with the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) and Circular 10/2009 Planning Enforcement. The Committee queried whether those powers were sufficiently robust enough to deter applicants from submitting retrospective planning applications after they had already breached planning regulations and it was suggested that increasing the fees for retrospective applications could act as a greater deterrent. The Committee agreed that imposing greater punitive sanctions would send out a clear message within the wider community.

The Committee agreed that a letter should be forwarded to the Scottish Government to highlight the Committee's concerns with regards to the legislation which governs Planning Enforcement which they agreed should be more robust so as to act as a deterrent and reduce the amount of breaches of planning control.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the content of the report which had provided an overview of the Planning Enforcement Service in Aberdeenshire Council;
- (2) to write to the Scottish Government to highlight the Committee's concerns regarding Planning Enforcement legislation which needed to be more robust so as to act as a better deterrent and also the suggestions that the Scottish Government raise the fees for all retrospective planning applications; and
- (3) to request that Enforcement activity report be presented to the Infrastructure Services Committee and each of the six Area Committees on an annual basis.

## **6. ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

There had been submitted a report dated 1 May, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which asked the Committee to consider and then endorse a consultation response to the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan Consultation which ended on 6 April, 2015. The Committee were advised that the consultation period only lasted for a period of three weeks and as the Infrastructure Services Committee had not been able to consider the proposed masterplan, the Head of Planning and Building Standards had submitted a response by the due date, but had advised Aberdeen City that revised comments may follow once the Infrastructure Services Committee had been afforded the opportunity to consider the report.

The Head of Planning and Building Standards introduced the report and advised the Committee that the consultation response as presented as Appendix 1 to the report had allowed Aberdeenshire Council to consider the proposed Aberdeen City Masterplan and then think about how those issues may impact on Aberdeenshire towns. It was reported that the Masterplan was consistent with the vision of the six aims of the Strategic Development Plan and the Aberdeenshire response had considered the physical environment, employment and residential uses and travel.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note and endorse the consultation response as presented as Appendix 1 to the report.

## **GENERAL**

### **7. ABERDEENSHIRE PERFORMS – INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES (IS) SERVICE PLAN YEAR END MONITORING 2014/15 AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICE PLAN 2015-2018 (FINAL)**

With reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee of 15 May, 2014 (Item 5, Page 1878) where the Infrastructure Services Plan for 2014-17 had been approved and the Minute of the Meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee of 2 October, 2014 (Item 8, Page 843) where progress with actions set out in the 2014-17 Service Plan were reported, there had been submitted a report dated 1 May, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which presented the Infrastructure Services six monthly Service Monitoring for the period October to March, 2014/15 and to approve the Infrastructure Service Plan for 2015-2018.

The Director of Infrastructure Services introduced the report and advised the Committee that it had been practice in previous years to report on the draft version of the service plan in March, followed by the final version in May for approval, however, in line with other services

across the Council it was decided that one report would be presented for final approval to allow the service to consult with key stakeholders and managers on the content of the Plan.

During discussion the Committee asked questions on:-

- (1) Broadband provision in remote areas and what was being done to deal with gaps in provision. The Director advised the Committee that there were challenges but it was hoped that fibre roll out would continue to address those pockets;
- (2) Asset disposal – with continued pressure on Council budgets was there any way in which to speed up the disposal of vacant properties to maximise income. The Director advised the Committee that a report on Asset Disposal and Asset Transfer would be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration and any issues would be reported back to Area Committees;
- (3) Review of Waste Management – the Committee welcomed the roll out of co-mingled waste collection within Aberdeenshire and congratulated the Waste Management team for the successful role out of the project.
- (4) Planning Service – the Committee noted the significant improvements made within the planning service for the management and delivery of service.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the progress made against actions as set out in the IS service plan for the period October 2014 – March 2015 as presented in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) to approve the service plan for IS for the period 2014 – 2018 as presented in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (3) to advise the Director to continue to report, by exception, to the Committee quarterly on performance measures against service objectives and six monthly on progress in delivering all aspects of the service plan;
- (4) to note that a report would be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on Asset Management and any issues which arose from that report would be reported back to each Area Committee; and
- (5) to congratulate the Waste Management Team for the successful role out of the co-mingled waste collection and the Planning Team for the significant improvements made within their service.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **8. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT UPDATE**

There had been circulated a report dated 17 March, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which provided the Committee with an Action Update for the Local Transport Strategy (LTS) for the period January – April 2015 and which sought agreement that further updates on the progress of both the implementation and delivery of the Aberdeenshire Local Transport Strategy, as appropriate. The report also presented the proposed response to the National Walking Strategy Action Plan and requested that the Committee provide any additional comments as part of the final submission and agreement that two members and two officers attend the Scottish Transport Awards scheduled to take place on 18 June, 2015.

The Strategy Manger introduced the report and advised the Committee that all updates for the Local Transport Strategy for the period January to April 2015 were presented in Appendix 1 to the report and Appendix 2 to the report presented Aberdeenshire Council's response to the National Walking Strategy Action Plan.

During discussion the Committee referred to Appendix 2 to the report and requested that more emphasis was given within the Council's response on the issue of the repair and maintenance of walking paths throughout Aberdeenshire. It was recognised that there were cost implications associated with ongoing maintenance and that should be recognised within the National Walking Strategy Action Plan.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to endorse the progress and development taken through NESTRANS and acknowledge the activities and development being taken forward by external agencies and stakeholders as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) that they had considered the Aberdeenshire Council's response to the National Walking Strategy Action Plan as presented in Appendix 2 to the report and they would request that more emphasis was given within the response to the issue of repair and maintenance of walking paths as part of the National Walking Strategy Action Plan;
- (3) to welcome the shortlisting of Aberdeenshire Council in the Scottish Transport Awards and agree that up to 2 Members and 2 Officers attend the Awards on 18 June, 2015; and
- (4) To agree to accept further updates on the progress of both the implementation and delivery of the Aberdeenshire Local Transport Strategy (LTS) as appropriate.

## **9. ROUTE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE A947 ABERDEEN TO BANFF ROAD**

With reference to the Minute of the Meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee of 21 August, 2014 (Item 6, page 538) where the Committee had considered the progress with regards to improving road safety on the A947 and the approval of the development of a long term Route Improvement Strategy for the A947 between Aberdeen and Banff, there had been submitted a report dated 16 April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which sought consideration of the progress to date for the development of a Route Improvement Strategy and to approve a wider consultation exercise to be undertaken which would include a public consultation with communities along the A947 Aberdeen to Banff route and full consultation with Area Committees.

The report referred to comments made by the Infrastructure Services Committee at their meeting in August, 2014 which had highlighted the need to listen to local feedback in shaping future work for a Route Improvement Strategy and Section 2.10 of the report provided an update for a wider consultation process. Appendix 1 to the report presented the A947 travel survey which would be used gather information to understand more thoroughly the problems and issues faced by route users and interventions which those users may feel would help the long term improvement strategy.

The proposed timetable for the engagement with communities would be a report would be presented to Area Committees in June; a public consultation would be undertaken in July/August; an analysis of the data would be undertaken in September/October and then a further report would be presented to Area Committees on the findings during October/November, 2015.

The Committee welcomed the progress being made and requested that a final update report should be presented to the final meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee on 26 November, 2015.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) That they had considered the progress to date on the development of a Route Improvement Strategy for the A947 between Aberdeen to Banff;
- (2) To approve a wider consultation exercise including a public consultation exercise with communities along the route and full Area Committee consultation;
- (3) To request the Officer's submit a final update report to the Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 26 November, 2015.

#### **10. CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSED BILL RELATING TO BURIAL AND CREMATION AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS IN SCOTLAND – PROPOSED RESPONSE**

There had been submitted a report dated 16 April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which sought consideration of a Scottish Government consultation on a proposed bill relating to burial and cremation and other related matters in Scotland which sought to consolidate and modernise the legislative framework which govern burials and cremations in Scotland.

The Head of Service (Roads and Landscape) introduced the report and advised the Committee that the consultation was being undertaken as the Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act 1855 was no longer sufficient for modern purposes and did not give burial authorities the powers that they require. The Scottish Government would seek to bring forward new legislation and the consultation paper had set out a range of proposals and option for consideration and officers from Landscape Services, Legal and Governance, Built Heritage Planning had contributed to the response as presented in Appendix 1 to the report. It was reported that the consultation period had ended on 24 April, 2015 however, Aberdeenshire Council had been afforded an extension to allow the Infrastructure Services Committee to consider the proposed response then make any additional comments prior to the final submission.

During discussion some concerns were raised by members that there had not been a wider consultation undertaken to allow elected members to consider the proposals and options and then discuss those options with their constituents. While it was recognised that the Officer's response was concise and had addressed key points, it was highlighted that there were matters which related to alleviating pressures on burial grounds within the proposals which may cause concern for various faiths, religions and traditions and as such a wider consultation should have been undertaken.

The Committee recognised that the timeframe for submission would not allow a report to be presented to Area Committees and as such they requested that the matter be referred to the next Council meeting on 18 June, 2015 to allow all 68 elected members to consider the consultation response.

After due consideration the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) ***to recommend to the Council that they consider the proposed consultation response as presented in Appendix 1 to the report to ensure the viewpoints of all elected members had been considered prior to the final submission to the Scottish Government.***

### **11. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION – DELIVERING SCOTLAND'S RIVER BASIN, MANAGEMENT PLANS: IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL CONDITION OF SCOTLAND'S WATER ENVIRONMENT**

There had been submitted a report dated 30 April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which sought consideration of a Scottish Government consultation response on Delivering Scotland's River Basin Management Plans to protect and improve the water environment in a way that balances costs and benefits the environment, society and the economy.

The Head of Services (Roads and Landscape) introduced the report and advised the Committee that the consultation had proposed several key steps to increase progress in delivering improvement to the physical condition of the water environment and the proposed response was presented as Appendix 1 to the report. The consultation response should be submitted by 22 May, 2015 and the Committee were asked to consider any additional comments prior to submission.

After due consideration the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to endorse the proposed Council response to the consultation on the Delivering Scotland's River Basin Management Plans as presented in Appendix 1 to the report.

### **12. FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2009 – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION**

There had been submitted a report dated 23 April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which sought consideration of a Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) consultation response which sought to consider the future direction and delivery of flood risk management across Scotland and which included a specific section in relation to Aberdeenshire.

The Head of Service (Roads and Landscape) introduced the report and advised the Committee that the consultation included the draft Flood Risk Management Strategies and draft Local Flood Risk Management Plans for the North East District for which Aberdeenshire Council was the Lead Local Authority and draft strategies and plans for the Tay Estuary and Montrose Basin District which covered a limited are of south Aberdeenshire.

It was reported that Council officers had been heavily involved in the development of the proposals and those had been reported to Area Committees at various stages and the proposed Aberdeenshire response to the consultation questions was entirely supportive of the approach taken across Aberdeenshire as presented in Appendix 1 to the report.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to endorse the proposed Council response to the consultation on how flood risk is managed in Aberdeenshire as presented in Appendix 1 to the report.

### **13. HUNTLY FLOOD PROTECTION SCHEME – REPORTER'S RECOMMENDATION**

With reference to the Minute of the Meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee of 15 May, 2014 (Item 3, page 1876) where the Committee had agreed to consider the objections to the Flood Scheme and to recommend a preliminary decision to confirm the proposed scheme without modification, there had been submitted a report dated April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which provided the Committee with the Reporters recommendation following a hearing which took place on 18 February, 2015.

The Head of Service (Roads and Landscape) introduced the report and advised the Committee that in line with statutory procedures, the Scheme had been referred to Scottish Ministers to consider and a hearing was held in Huntly. The Reporter's recommendations were appended to the report. The Reporter's had recommended that the Huntly Flood Scheme should be confirmed without modification.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to confirm the proposed Huntly Flood Scheme without modification under the terms of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 and the Flood Risk Management (Flood Protection Schemes, Potentially Vulnerable Areas and Local Plan Districts) (Scotland) Regulations 2010

#### **14. STONEHAVEN FLOOD PROTECTION SCHEME – FORMAL ORDER**

With reference to Minute of the Meeting of the Infrastructure Services of 5 December, 2013 where the Committee had approved, in principle, that the scheme should be taken forward to the statutory legal order stage and then to the Minute of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of 11 September, 2014 (Item 22, Page 724) where approval was given for the funding of the Stonehaven Flood Protection Scheme, there had been submitted a report dated 29 April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which advised the Committee that the Policy and Resources Committee at their meeting of 5 March, 2015 (Item 16, Page 1689) had approved the next stage in the design process and should the Committee approve the promotion of the scheme, there would be a statutory legal process to promote the Flood Scheme to ensure anyone with an interest in the scheme would have the opportunity to formally object as part of a consultation process.

The Head of Service (Roads and Landscape) advised the Committee that should they approve the promotion of the scheme it would be advertised in the press for a minimum of 28 days. Prior to this a week long public event which would take place from 21-27 May, 2015 to ensure active engagement with all interested parties. On completion of the statutory consultation exercise if there were any outstanding objections then a report would be presented to the Infrastructure Services Committee to allow them to make a preliminary decision on how they wished to proceed.

After due consideration the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to agree that Aberdeenshire Council promotes a Flood Protection Scheme (formal order) for Stonehaven, River Carron, under the terms of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 and the Flood Risk Management (Flood Protection Schemes, Potentially Vulnerable Areas and Local Plan Districts) (Scotland) Regulations 2010; and
- (2) to note that there will be an event to inform the public of the current Stonehaven Flood Protection Scheme and that would take place from 21-27 May, 2015 at the Stonehaven Recreation Grounds.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

#### **15. FUNDS DISTRIBUTED BY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES AND BUSINESS GATEWAY 2014-15**

There had been circulated a report dated 8 April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which informed the Committee of the funds distributed through the Support for Aberdeenshire Business (SAB) Scheme and work carried out under the Business Gateway contract for the year 2014 -2015.

The report advised the Committee that the Support for Aberdeenshire Business Scheme had assisted 35 businesses, helped to create 55 jobs and had safeguarded 24 jobs throughout the year. A breakdown of SAB grants and loans awarded in the year 2014-2015 and details of how funds had been distributed by industry sector were included as appendices to the report.

The report also provided a full summary of the targets and results achieved through the Business Gateway Service including grants approved through the first Employee Grant (FEG) Scheme as presented in Appendix 3 to the report.

After due consideration the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to endorse the information on the distribution of funds from the Support for Aberdeenshire Business Scheme as outlined in Appendix 1 and 2 to the report; and
- (2) to endorse the update on delivery of the Business Gateway contract, including the First Employee Grant Scheme, as outline in Appendix 3 to the report.

#### **16. ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2011-16 ACTION PLAN PROGRESS IN 2014-15**

With reference to the Minute of the Infrastructure Services Committee of 15 March, 2012 (Item 11, Page 1604) where the Committee approved the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan for 2014-15 and the Minute of the Meeting of 3 July, 2014 (Item 17, Page 365) where the Committee had approved a mid-term review of the Strategy, there had been submitted a report dated 10 April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which presented the Aberdeenshire Council Economic Development Strategy 2011-16 Action Plan Progress for year 2014/15 as presented in Appendix 1 to the report.

It was reported that during 2014-15 officers had been involved in preparing the Aberdeen City and Shire City Deal and that initial deal bid had been approved by the Treasury and was now the subject of negotiation. The Committee were asked to note that that the City Deal had not been included in the Review of the Economic Strategy, however, officers would have a clearer picture of what additional actions may be required from that deal and that would be included in the annual update next year.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to endorse the Economic Development Strategy 2011-16 Action Plan progress for 2014-15 as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report.

### **BUSINESS SERVICES**

#### **17. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS**

There had been circulated a report dated 1 May, 2015 by the Chief Internal Auditor which advised the Committee of results of completed audits as contained within Paragraph 2.4 of the report and the progress made by Infrastructure Services with implementing agreed recommendations as presented in Paragraph 2.5 and Appendix A to the report.

After due consideration, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) To note the issues raised within the report and the appendix to the report.

## 18. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

There had been circulated a report dated 1 May, 2015 by the Chief Internal Auditor which advised the Committee of progress made by Infrastructure Services with implementing agreed recommendations as contained within Paragraph 2.4 and Appendix A to the report.

After due consideration the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) To note the issues raised within the report and the appendix to the report.

## PROTECTIVE SERVICES AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

### 19. OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR FUTURE WASTE MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL WASTE AND COLLABORATION TOWARDS A JOINT WORKING SOLUTION FOR RESIDUAL WASTE

With reference to the Minute of the Infrastructure Services Committee meeting of 19 March, 2015 (Item 17, Page 1745) where the Committee had considered the outcomes of the options appraisal and the recommended solution for joint working with Aberdeen City and Moray Councils for future management of residual waste, there had been submitted a report dated 15 April, 2015 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which provided the Committee with confirmation of the best solution for Aberdeenshire Council going forward.

The Head of Service (Protective Services and Waste Management) introduced the report and advised the Committee that the detailed analysis of comparisons and risks had identified that the best solution would be Option 1 as presented in Section 2.4 and the summary matrix as presented in Appendix A to the report which would provide:-

- Long term certainty with regards to waste disposal and removing of risk of being subject to fluctuating market conditions;
- Overall costs for each authority;
- Authorities would benefit from sale of electricity generated through plant; and
- Aberdeen City had already committed significant resource and time to develop the project to its current status

After due consideration the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) That they had considered the findings and recommendations and subsequent business case from the Options Appraisal on the future management of residual waste;
- (2) To agree that Aberdeenshire Council would continue to work with Aberdeen City and Moray Council to reflect the favoured option to develop a long term waste treatment solution for the three councils; and
- (3) To agree that an update report would be considered by the Infrastructure Services Committee in August, 2015 prior to the detailed proposals being submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee.

## ITEMS FOR NOTING

- (a) Minute of the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) Meeting of 6 February, 2015 (**Appendix A**)
- (b) Draft Minute of the Fisheries Working Group (FWG) Meeting of 13 February, 2015 (**Appendix B**)

- (c) Draft Minute of the Regeneration Member/Officer Working Group (RMOWG) Meeting of 25 February, 2015 (**Appendix C**)
- (d) Draft Minute of the Rural Affairs Working Group (RAWG) Meeting of 18 March, 2015 (**Appendix D**)
- (e) Minute of the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) Meeting of 25 March, 2015 (**Appendix E**)

## APPENDIX A

### STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY

ABERDEEN, 06 February 2015 - minute of urgent meeting of the STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY. Present: Councillor Argyle Chairperson; and Councillor Milne, Vice Chairperson; and Councillors Corall, Finlayson Thomson and Yuill (Aberdeen City Council); and Councillors Bellarby, Cox, Merson, Norman Smith and Topping (Aberdeenshire Council).

Officers: Robert Gray (Head of Planning and Building Standards, Aberdeenshire Council) and Tom Buchan (Finance, Aberdeenshire Council); Maggie Bochel (Head of Planning and Sustainable Development, Aberdeen City Council), Fiona Selbie (Senior Solicitor, Aberdeen City Council), David Jennings (Strategic Development Plan Manager, SDPA) and Roderick MacBeath and Iain Robertson (Democratic Services, ACC).

#### APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

1. The Chair advised that a Vice Chair representing Aberdeen City Council would need to be elected and requested that any nominations for the positions of Vice Chair be intimated.

Councillor Ramsay Milne was nominated as Vice Chair.

**The Authority resolved:**

to appoint Councillor Ramsay Milne as Vice Chair.

#### CONSULTATION BY ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL ON PLANNING MATTER (RESPONSE REQUIRED BY 6 FEBRUARY 2015)

2. The Authority had before it a report by the Strategic Development Plan Manager.

The purpose of the report was for Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) to agree a response to the consultation by Aberdeenshire Council on an application to modify the s75 agreement in relation to the Strategic Transport Fund contribution at Chapelton of Elsick.

The Strategic Development Plan Manager talked the Authority through the report. Thereafter, there followed some discussion about the report with a particular focus on scrutinising the application for the variation of the Minute of Agreement between the two parties and the SDPA's proposed response.

**The report recommended –**

that the Authority agree to the report, including Appendix 2 as its response to the consultation by Aberdeenshire Council on the application to vary the terms of the s75 agreement at Chapelton of Elsick (APP/2014/4424).

**The Authority resolved:**

to approve the recommendation, subject to two minor amendments to Appendix 2 relating to the terminology used to refer to the applicant's proposed mitigation.- **COUNCILLOR ARGYLE; Chairperson.**

**APPENDIX B****FISHERIES WORKING GROUP****COMMITTEE ROOM 3, WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN****FRIDAY, 13 FEBRUARY, 2015**

**Present:** Councillors C Buchan (Chair), A M Allan (as substitute for Cllr S Smith), A Gardiner, I Gray, P Johnston and M Roy.

**Apology:** Councillor S Smith.

**Officers:** Industry Support Executive (Rural & Maritime), Industry Support Executive (Food & Drink), Service Manager (Business and Communities), European Programmes Co-ordinator, Fisheries Project Officer, Work Placement Officer and Committee Officer (Mrs F Tweedie).

**In attendance:** Melanie McKenzie, Category Manager, Commercial & Procurement Services, Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council

**1. MINUTE OF MEETING OF 31 OCTOBER 2014**

The Minute of Meeting of 31 October 2014 had been circulated and was **noted** as a correct record.

**2. MATTERS ARISING**

Members brought up the subject of procurement but as this was already an agenda item, the matter was deferred until later in the meeting.

The Fisheries Project Officer had been working on how to proceed on the question of the wreck of the Sovereign, just off Cairnbulg. The owners had been identified and it had been confirmed that the insurance company was located in Germany. Aberdeenshire Council does not have any influence on what should be done with the wreck. This lies with the owners and work is ongoing to try to find out what their plans are in relation to the Sovereign.

Members asked if there had been any feedback on the letters sent to the Peterhead Port Authority in respect of the Fish4Market website; officers were able to advise that, subject to assurances on the robustness and future management of the website, the Port Authority was proposing to introduce incentives, including credit on maintenance and repair facilities. This was welcomed by members.

**3. PRESENTATION BY STEPHEN MURPHY,  
NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER, BRAKES**

Mr Murphy informed members that Brakes, through Scotland Excel, was a major supplier to Aberdeenshire of frozen and chilled foods, as well as groceries.

In terms of fish supplies, two main suppliers were used by Brakes. These were Joseph Robertson and, until recently, Trawlpac. Trawlpac had now ceased trading and this had affected the supply chain. Towards the end of 2014, due to market shortages and the loss of Trawlpac as a supplier, product supplies were seriously reduced. Brakes 'ring fenced' what little Scottish landed haddock was available for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City schools. Other local authorities supplied by Brakes were provided with imported fish products. There

were however a small number of occasions when local supplies were inadequate and imported haddock was supplied to Aberdeenshire. In recent months Brakes contacted with Downies of Whitehills for haddock supplies to replace Trawlpac.

In terms of sustainability, Brakes had to be clear where supplies had come from so they could guarantee that the product was safe and came from a good source. Keeping within the guidelines of what Aberdeenshire Council has specified that they want, a lot of work has been done to secure what is required and to keep this within the allotted budgets.

Scotland Excel are the gatekeepers of local authority spending. There are very strict guidelines on specification and the operation of the tendering process. It is a very competitive business. Price is a key component but provenance and origin were also important.

Members asked questions on the price premium arising from the council's focus on locally caught haddock for Aberdeenshire schools and Mr Murphy advised that a cheaper product could be supplied but this would necessitate supplying a different species and from further afield. In answer to a question on how the rest of Scotland's schools reacted to the shortfall in supply of haddock, Mr Murphy advised that Brakes were honest about the problem and how they planned to solve it. The shortfall only lasted for a few weeks and it was found that the 'moulded' imported whitefish product went down well with school children. Members asked if, due to the demise of Trawlpac, there was a lack of capacity to supply the required product but Mr Murphy advised that Brakes had confidence in their ability to supply the size of fillet required, within the agreed price limit. Brakes sometimes had to respond to market forces outwith their control and in cases like these, they would go back to Scotland Excel and submit their action plan on how to deal with the problem. Looking at other whitefish species was an alternative when supplies of haddock were very scarce.

Mr Murphy summed up by saying that there were many complex areas in the supply chain, the closure of Trawlpac being one. He wanted members to know that Brakes was a responsible supplier and had the capabilities to tackle any event in a professional way. They employed a large team of buyers with the purpose of securing the best deals available. They had the expertise and technical background to service the contract for Aberdeenshire schools and had no reason to believe that any other company could do better than them.

#### **4. WHITEFISH PROCESSING STRATEGY**

Prior to the meeting, the Property Analysis Report carried out by BDPlus had been circulated to members. Officers informed those present that this had also been submitted to the North East Scotland Fisheries Development Partnership meeting on 23 January 2015.

Officers noted that the significance of the study had been reflected in that it was a specified outcome in the Scottish Seafood Partnership Action Plan and looked at the needs of the industry in growing and developing. The study was timed to tie in with the launch of the European and Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) - expected in early 2015.

Members noted that the work done by BDPlus on this consultation was of a very high standard. The strategy concentrated on processors but it was important to monitor how things were going for ancillary businesses as well. Related facilities were needed but at the right price to enable a co-ordinated operation. Moving out of Aberdeen was not an option for some processors as the labour force would not wish to be travelling great distances to work. The location of a processing plant was also key in accessing easier access to major markets for the product. This could be markets in England or further afield on the continent.

## 5. INTRODUCTION TO COMMERCIAL FISHING PROJECT

There was circulated a report dated 4 February 2015 by the Head of Economic Development which informed members on the launch of the Introduction to Commercial Fishing training scheme. A Rural Internship project giving young people an introduction to working in the land-based sector was now in its third year of operation. This had proved very successful and the aim was to give young people wishing to work in the fishing industry a similar opportunity.

The project comprised a three week training course at the Scottish Maritime Academy (SMA), followed by paid work experience on a commercial fishing boat. The cost of training at the SMA would be borne by Aberdeenshire Council and Seafish. Work placement costs would be covered by vessel owners and the wider fishing industry. Peterhead Port Authority and Sunderland Marine had committed to providing health and safety equipment for the trainees whilst on placement. It was expected that around twelve trainees would be accepted on to the course and so far, fifteen skippers had noted an interest in acting as mentors.

The launch of the project was widely reported, both in print and broadcasting. An information leaflet was produced for distribution to secondary schools and the Skills Development Scotland team of local careers advisers is promoting the scheme to local young people due to leave school this summer.

Currently, the drive is to make sure the first intake is a success. Discussion will follow on how the scheme will develop and what sort of funding will be necessary to continue the programme. The role of Aberdeenshire Council was to facilitate the process of bringing the various interested parties together to work out the details of the training scheme and to enable the industry to do this for itself.

The Working Group **agreed** to endorse the report.

## 6. WORK PLACEMENTS IN THE FISH PROCESSING SECTOR

There was circulated a report dated 5 February 2015 by the Head of Economic Development which updated members on the low take up of work placements in the fish processing sector.

Officers informed members that it was hoped to provide a different approach by informing young people that there were many more job opportunities in the sector in addition to gutting. Opportunities in accountancy, administration and engineering were also options. The creation and promotion of new placement opportunities, especially those in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) were to be strengthened through visits to schools by industry representatives. Attending school fairs to spread the word on opportunities available was another useful link which should be developed. It was important to raise the profile of the industry amongst young people. There was a need to highlight that there were good career opportunities in the fishing industry requiring graduates. A brochure was to be produced for those with STEM degrees considering a career in the industry.

The Wood Commission Report stated that industry should be encouraged to work with young people and the education authorities to establish pro-active and constructive relationships for their mutual benefit. Council officers are committed to seek out ways of promoting this by changing perceptions and working to increase the take-up of work placements in the industry.

The Working Group **agreed** to endorse the report.

## 7. VERBAL UPDATE ON ABERDEENSHIRE FLAG

The European Programmes Co-ordinator gave a verbal update, advising members that the last funding round was in June 2014. 27 projects had applied. 24 projects had completed or

were ongoing and 3 were decommissioned. £690,000 had been allocated to those 24 projects. The deadline for applications for funding was October 2015 and 45% of the money available had already been committed.

In Fraserburgh, the project to place pontoons in the harbour should finish by the end of March 2015. Improvements to the slipway at Macduff was another project which was nearing completion.

The funding mechanism was to be renamed the European and Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and officers were currently involved in securing funds for 2015. Aberdeenshire may join up with Moray and Angus Councils to become a 'super-FLAG'. This would save money on costs and the administration function would remain with Aberdeenshire. There was still much work to do and it was hoped that the allocation of funds would be revealed by the end of April 2015. It was anticipated that the allocation would be around £2 million but this may increase to £3 million if Moray and Angus Councils were also on board.

## **8. VERBAL UPDATE ON COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE NORTHBAY PELAGIC FIRE**

The Fisheries Project Officer informed members that no work could proceed on site until forensic examination - by the police and fire service - was complete. Once this had been determined, the insurance company would then permit site clearance and rebuilding work to proceed. It was hoped that the business would be up and running in nine months.

All employees had been retained. Female employees had been found temporary employment with other companies and were still on the payroll. Male workers were to help with the reconstruction of the site. Office workers remained and had been relocated to the canteen as this was still operational. There were good stocks in cold store, ensuring continuity of supply for a few months. Public sector partners had worked closely together to minimise delay over the planning process for the rebuild. There was to be a further meeting on 17 February, where things would be progressed further.

It was noted that Panos Pliatsikas, the Fisheries Project Officer, had been very involved in this project and had earned the trust of those involved. Ms Donna Fordyce of Scottish Enterprise had also invested much time and effort and members of the group noted their thanks to both.

## **9. DISCUSSION ON COUNCIL PROCUREMENT ISSUES**

The Industry Support Executive (Rural & Maritime) introduced Melanie McKenzie from the Central Procurement Unit, who was attending the meeting to answer questions on fish supplies to Aberdeenshire schools and care homes. A representative from Corporate Communications had been unable to attend but advised that they would be happy to take any items forward from the meeting.

Morna Harper, Service Manager (Business & Communities) joined the meeting to inform members that Economic Development in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire co-operated to offer short courses to businesses considering becoming council suppliers. Workshops on a range of subjects were held. Basic courses for first time users, advice on pre-qualifying questionnaires and meet the buyer events were all part of the service to try to explain the processes involved and enable smaller suppliers to bid for contracts. Once the process had been completed, much of the information contained could be used again in a future bid. Smaller companies felt they were at a disadvantage and that it was the larger companies who got the contracts. The Council often struggled to encourage enough companies to quote for work and the perception that the process was long-winded and complicated was a major factor. It was unlikely that smaller companies had the time or expertise to invest in the process.

Members asked if there were any options for a small processing firm to supply only local schools but were advised that EU regulations prohibited this. In a public sector contract, it could not be specified that you wanted a 'local' supplier.

#### **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Members discussed the strategy report and asked if a representative from Scottish Enterprise might attend a future meeting to give some follow up on this. Officers advised that uncertainty arising from discussions on landing obligations from the EU were 'clouding the waters' at the moment but that the Council would do everything necessary to do their best for the industry.

It was hoped that a tour of AEFf projects could be arranged for members prior to the next meeting in Banff in June and officers would forward details as soon as this had been confirmed.

#### **11. MEETING DATES FOR 2015**

10 am on Friday, 26 June at County Hall, Banff

10 am on Friday, 25 September in the Peterhead Council offices

## APPENDIX C

### Minute of Regeneration Member Officer Working Group Thursday 19 February 2015 Banff County Hall

#### Present

Councillor Jim Gifford	Chair and Council Leader
Councillor Peter Argyle	Chair of Infrastructure Services Committee
Councillor Hamish Vernal	Leader of SNP Group
Councillor Alison Evison	Leader of Labour Group
Councillor Martin Kitts-Hayes	Deputy Council Leader
Councillor John Cox	Ward 1 Councillor
Councillor Hamish Partridge	Ward 2 Councillor
Councillor Ian Gray	Ward 1 Councillor
Councillor Mark Findlater	Ward 2 Councillor
Stephen Archer	Director Infrastructure Services
Philip McKay	Head of Road and Landscape
Belinda Miller	Head of Economic Development
Allan Whyte	Head of Property and Facilities Management
Chris White	Area Manager (Buchan)
Margaret-Jane Cardno	Area Manager (Banff & Buchan)
Christine Webster	Regeneration and Town Centres Manager Team
Debbie Burroughs	Leader Environment (North)
Abbie Smith	Economic Development (Minute taker)

#### 1. Declaration of Members' Interests.

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. None were declared.

#### 2. Public Sector Equality Duty.

The MOWG agreed to have due regard to Section 149 of the Equality Act, 2010.

#### 3. Minute of Previous Meeting of 6 November 2014 and Matters Arising

The minute of 6 November 2014 was circulated and approved.

#### 4. Fraserburgh Regeneration Updates

- a) Conservation Area & Funding Application. Debbie Burroughs updated the group that they had received funding approval for Phase 1 for the Conservation project at Saltoun Square from the Heritage Lottery Fund. A grant of £58k is to be provided for a year's development phase to submit a second-round development bid for Townscape Funding. This will now be progressed during 2015-16 which, if successful, could access £1.8 million worth of funding for the completion of the scheme. There is a new Development Officer post to be appointed to support the project bid.

**b) Kessock Industrial Estate Update.**

Allan Whyte outlined his report on the plans to improve the industrial site. The MOWG asked about options for the listed building on the site and Allan indicated that options were being looked at.

Cllr Cox indicated that he would like to consider the detail of the options at the Banff and Buchan Area Committee in due course.

**c) Fraserburgh Project Updates.** Christine Webster gave a verbal update on some of the projects underway in Fraserburgh. Christine outlined that the Retail Plus project in the town was now nearing an end and was showing that it had had a very positive impact for those retailers who took part.

Mi-Fraserburgh Digital app has now been launched.

Margaret Jane Cardno updated that work is ongoing to look at options for an outdoor sports facility site. MOWG were keen that discussions on the favoured site were resolved. MOWG indicated they were very supportive of the project and could see its potential impact on the town and the perception of the town.

Gillian Bain the Regeneration Project Officer has now returned to work after maternity leave.

**5. Four Town Centres Update****a) Banff & Macduff.** Allan Whyte and Margaret Jane Cardno outlined the outcome that Tesco had announced it would not now be building a store in Banff. Margaret-Jane is to draft a paper for Banff and Buchan Area Committee on 10 March and a report to Council will follow 12 March 2015 with options regarding the sports facility.**b) Retail Plus.**

Banff & Macduff – Christine Webster outlined that the process was going well 20 businesses have signed up for the consultancy but only 14 businesses have applied for the grant so far but the date has been extended for applicants.

In Peterhead the project will begin shortly with 19 so far signed up with are 35 places.

In discussion, Christine emphasised that this was not a grant scheme to do up shop fronts, it was about business advice to help a shop to become more sustainable and the grant funding (if up to £2,000) had to be matched by the retailer. It could cover shop enhancements, on-line presence and marketing.

Cllr Cox outlined that a lot of the businesses in Banff relied on the Council's own staff who work in the town – shopping at lunch time for example. There was a discussion on the need to promote the town wider and to attract new shoppers to the town, Cllr Gray said that was why the decision by Tesco to not build a new store was very disappointing.

- c) Banff & Macduff Derelict Buildings. Following the mornings tour by the MOWG, Margaret-Jane outlined that Macduff had the greatest need along with Bridge Street in Banff.

Margaret-Jane outlined that work was underway to compile a dossier of buildings of concern and what they key issues where – be it ownership or location. Options for intervention has been looked at and this is not easy as any ‘enforcement’ by the Council requires back up in terms of resources.

In discussion the MOWG acknowledged the challenge – which affected other towns as well. Stephen Archer indicated that the role of the Council was to facilitate solutions not to solve or directly intervene in derelict buildings. It was agreed that the Council’s role was to set a vision and find options to act/encourage action in an area.

- d) Aberdeenshire Harbours Business Plan. Philip McKay outlined the plan to support Aberdeenshire harbours with business plans. There was a lack of funding to consider all 7 Council owned and run Harbours. There were now revised tenders out to consider a Masterplan for Macduff harbour and a business plan for Banff harbour.

In discussion it was emphasised the important role that Aberdeenshire’s harbour make to tourism – from wildlife cruises to the seafood trail. The MOWG asked that at their next meeting that Derek McDonald (Industry Support Executive for Maritime and Rural matters) presented on the work on the seafood trail.

- e) Community Innovation Fund. Christine Webster provided the background that as part of the work on 4 Towns, Policy and Resources Committee (12 June 2014) approved the creation of community innovation funds to support community innovation and empowerment in the towns.

Banff and Macduff approach had been slow and had had a mixed response from various quarters. MOWG agreed that it was about community development and so more time would be needed to allow ideas and approach to develop. MOWG agreed we need to take the approach of supporting not telling the community.

The approach in Peterhead had been supportive with the Peterhead Futures Group now actively spending/ allocating funding.

## 6. Update on 6 Key Areas Finance

Belinda Miller outlined the position with regard to future funding for the 4 towns work. As of 31 March the funding in the reserve for 6 Key Areas ceases. The Head of Finance is proposing that the underspent funding for the 4 Towns project (and potentially other areas) would be placed in a new reserve specifically for Regeneration and Town Centre work. To draw the funds down will require a report to Policy and Resources Committee. Officers plan to report to the June Committee to secure ongoing funding commitments.

In discussion the MOWG indicated the understood that there would be no time limit on the funding as it was to be an ongoing fund to support work over a number of years.

**7 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be 24 June 2015 in Peterhead.

Councillor Jim Gifford thanked everyone for their contribution and attendance at both MOWG meeting and at the site visits earlier in the day.

**APPENDIX D****RURAL AFFAIRS WORKING GROUP****GAIRNIESTON FARM, TURRIFF****WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH, 2015**

**Present:** Councillors A Duncan, K Farquhar, L Pirie and A Robertson.

**Apologies:** Councillors G Blackett, R Christie, W Howatson, P Oddie and A Norrie.

**Officers:** Industry Support Executive (Rural & Maritime) and Committee Officer (F Tweedie).

**NOMINATION OF CHAIR**

As the Chair had intimated his apologies, members proposed that Councillor Farquhar take the chair for the meeting. Councillor Farquhar accepted and firstly thanked Mr Philip Benzies for his kind hospitality and very informative tour of the facilities on the farm. She also expressed her disappointment at the number of members sending their apologies.

**1. MINUTE OF MEETING OF 10 DECEMBER 2014**

There had been circulated, and was **approved** the minute of meeting of 10 December 2014.

**2. SCOTTISH RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2015-2020**

There had been circulated a report dated 10 March 2015 by the Head of Economic Development which gave members an update on the new Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP), Pillar 2 of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP).

There was concern that Aberdeenshire was likely to lose out under the new CAP package, but it was thought that the move away from historic to area-based Pillar 1 payments in Scotland was overdue. Some 9.5% of the Pillar 1 budget was being used to supplement SRDP funds. A major issue for farmers had been the short window in which to lodge SRDP applications for the current year; however officers had advised that the deadline had helpfully been postponed by Scottish Government to 29 May 2015. The new LEADER programme would continue its share of the SRDP budget as before (5%).

Members discussed accessing information on-line on the SRDP website and noted the need to register by mid-May. Questions were raised on what Aberdeenshire Council could do to support those who may be disadvantaged by the new scheme. Officers advised that the new SRDP package incorporates provision of advice and information and that there are specific measures to assist and encourage new entrants and young farmers. This was important as the average age of farmers in Scotland was 58. It was estimated that SRDP would provide around £200 million per annum but that applicants to the new scheme would be expected to have a much clearer understanding of what was expected of them this time around to ensure funds were used appropriately and to reduce the incidence of penalties and disallowances. Further to the query raised about what the council and its partners could do to assist the sector, officers advised that the new NESAG study of the land-based sector in NE Scotland – expected to report in October 2015 - would present such recommendations (item 3 on the agenda).

Members **noted** and **approved** the report and asked for a more detailed insight into SRDP and how the Council might engage with Aberdeenshire farmers to offer its support at the next meeting of the Working Group in September 2015.

### 3. LAND-BASED STUDY – PROGRESS REPORT

There had been circulated a report dated 10 March 2015 by the Head of Economic Development which gave an update on the study due to be commissioned on the land-based sector in NE Scotland.

The previous study (2008) had been produced by a consortium of independent agricultural consultants led by Peter Cook and had provided a very useful and well respected reference document. The previous study was co-funded by Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Enterprise and covered the territory of Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. Subject to budget, the proposed new study will also include Moray and Angus with contributions from the two respective councils to add to existing commitment from Aberdeenshire Councils, Scottish Enterprise and Forestry Commission Scotland. Tenders were currently with Procurement. The project would be priced separately for Aberdeenshire, Moray and Angus. A project steering group would comprise representatives from funders and from the wider NESAAG membership as required. Officers would keep members updated.

Members asked if there were any issues appropriate for Area Committee involvement, since agriculture was a major contributor to the Aberdeenshire economy. It was suggested that officers from Economic Development could forward periodic reports to Area Committees and could also attend to present updates.

Members **noted** and **approved** the report and requested the Industry Support Executive (Rural & Maritime) to look into the practicalities of reporting on the proposed study to Area Committees.

### 4. RURAL INTERNSHIP PROJECT UPDATE

There was circulated a report dated 10 March 2015 by the Head of Economic Development which informed members that the project had been very successful and would continue in 2015. The project had been funded in 2013 and 2014 from the Six Key Areas budget. Ringlink, project managers, had generated sufficient private sector support to ensure that the programme would continue in 2015 without further financial contributions from the council. Training included health and safety, risk assessment and tractor driving with visits to land-based businesses. Interns were then paired with mentors for paid work placements.

Ringlink had indicated that twelve places would again be available for the next (third) intake of interns in June 2015. The council and Ringlink had again engaged with secondary school careers advisers from Skills Development Scotland who had offered their enthusiastic support to promote the internship.

Following on from the rural internship model, a similar project had been initiated for the fishing industry. Ten to twelve applicants would be selected to take part in a three week course at the Scottish Maritime Academy in Peterhead and would then be paired with a mentor skipper for paid work experience on board a commercial fishing vessel for a period of around 2 months.

Members **noted** and **approved** the report.

### 5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business intimated.

## **6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting of the Rural Affairs Working Group was to be set for Wednesday, 9 September, 2015.

## APPENDIX E

### STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY

ABERDEEN, 25 March 2015 - minute of meeting of the STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY. Present: Councillor Argyle Chairperson; and Councillor Milne, Vice Chairperson; and Councillors Finlayson, Grant, Thomson and Yuill (Aberdeen City Council); and Councillors Bellarby and Topping (Aberdeenshire Council). Councillor Jean Morrison (Aberdeen City Council) attended as an observer.

Officers: Robert Gray (Head of Planning and Building Standards, Aberdeenshire Council) and Ruth Taylor (Finance, Aberdeenshire Council); Dr Margaret Bochel (Head of Planning and Sustainable Development, ACC), David Jennings (Strategic Development Plan Manager, SDPA) and Iain Robertson (Democratic Services, ACC).

#### Opening Remarks

1. The Chair welcomed members and invited David Jennings (Strategic Development Plan Manager) to explain the purpose and necessity of the meeting.

Mr Jennings explained that the agenda for the meeting had been stripped back to the statutory minimum in light of a forthcoming meeting of the Standards Commission for Scotland which was to consider an application for a Dispensation from the rules on Interests, which would allow members of Nestrans to consider Nestrans-related matters (such as operation of a Strategic Transport Fund) at the SDPA, or at Council meetings. While not directly an issue for the SDPA, the matter before the Standards Commission could have an impact on consideration of the Strategic Transport Fund (which was due to be the substantive item on the agenda). Aberdeenshire Councillors who had been or were members or substitute members of the Nestrans Board had declared an interest and withdrew from the meeting when the Council considered the Chapelton of Elswick application to modify the S75 agreement.

Mr Jennings added that the automatic dispensation which allowed elected members to consider the same substantive issues at a number of councillor-only committees did not apply because of the presence of non-elected members on the Nestrans Board. Mr Jennings further explained that, as there was a significant crossover of members between Nestrans and the SDPA and based on legal advice, he thought it prudent to postpone consideration of the Strategic Transport Fund until the Standards Commission had met on 30 March and more was known on the implications that their recommendations might have on the development of the supplementary guidance.

Mr Jennings informed members that as a result of this, the meeting had been scaled back to one item which was the approval of the 2015-16 budget that had to be approved by the end of the financial year on 31 March.

#### SDPA Budget 2015-2016 to 2019-2020

2. The Authority had before it the SDPA budget report for 2015-16 for the Authority to agree and the draft budgets for 2016-17 to 2019-20 for the Authority to note. The report proposed that the complement of dedicated staff would remain at one Manager and one Senior Planner for the period and explained that there would be an increase in costs compared with the 2014-15 forecast as the Senior Planner's post had remained vacant throughout 2014-15. The report noted that work done by outside contractors would be in the region of £30,000 for 2015-16 largely due to work on the Housing Market Area Review and the Housing Need and Demand Assessment; the report also added that outside contractor costs were anticipated to drop in subsequent years until 2018-19 when the next Strategic Development Plan examination would commence.

The report also explained that Other Income reflected the release of £104,000 held in reserves since the inception of the Authority and that the outlined budgets for 2016-17 to 2019-20 provided only provisional figures.

Ruth Taylor summarised the report and explained that due to budgetary uncertainties both Councils would contribute £69,000, the same amount as in 2014-15. Ms Taylor also explained that the projected deficit of £17,000 in the financial year 2019-20 would not transpire as the costs would be covered in preceding years by an increase in both Councils contributions and/or through budgetary cuts.

Ms Taylor then answered questions from the Authority which focussed on the fluctuation between the Advertising and Promotions revised 2014-15 budget of £4,000 and the revised 2014-15 forecast of £10,000. Ms Taylor explained that these costs were higher than usual and the increased expenditure was largely due to advertisements in the Press and Journal which were comparatively expensive. Ms Taylor also added that these costs would be contained and offset against other costs in the wider Administration Costs budget.

**The report recommended-**

that the Authority:

- (a) agree the Budget for 2015-16; and
- (b) note the provisional budgets for 2016/17 to 2019/20.

**The Authority resolved:**

- (i) to agree the Budget for 2015-16; and
- (ii) to note the provisional budgets for 2016-17 to 2019-20.

3. The Clerk then informed members that a date had to be set for the postponed meeting of the Authority. The Authority agreed to rearrange the meeting for 2pm on 24 April and instructed the Clerk to send out appointments to all members later that day.

- **COUNCILLOR PETER ARGYLE; Chairperson.**