

REPORT TO GARIOCH AREA COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2019

SCRUTINY AT ABERDEENSHIRE STAGE 1 REPORT IN RELATION TO THE MATTER OF ROADS SERVICE DELIVERY AT NEWMACHAR.

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to;

1. consider and make comment on the matters set out in this Stage 1 Scrutiny report that was requested by the Garioch Area Committee on 14 May 2019; and
2. determine whether the required assurance has been received and whether it is required to move to Stage 2 (Workshop) of the Committee Review Process.

2 Background / Discussion

2.1 In November 2018, Councillor Ford submitted a Member Promoted Issue (MPI) in relation to road traffic and safety issues at Hillbrae and Corseduck Road in Newmachar. This was following engaging with the Roads Service since June 2016 on the matter. On 14 May 2019 the Committee Review Process, as provided for in Part 4A - Scrutiny in Aberdeenshire of the Scheme of Governance was initiated by Garioch Area Committee. A Stage 1 Report was instructed, the lead officer being the Head of Roads, Waste and Landscape Services, following consultation with the Head of Transportation.

2.2 The Committee agreed that the Report cover the following:-

- Consider the relevant Council Policy;
- Explain the delay in service delivery prior to the receipt of the related Member Promoted Issue received in November 2017;
- Explain the delay in service delivery following the report to Garioch Area Committee on 30 January 2018; and
- Provide all other relevant information.

2.3 Consider the relevant Council Policy

2.3.1 The policies relating to the issues originally raised under the MPI in November 2017 are Assessment of Speed Limits and Pedestrian Crossing Assessment. These were included in a list of future policies for review as approved by Infrastructure Services Committee at its meeting of 24 August 2017 (Item 12 refers). At that time, it was noted that the timescale for that review process would be influenced by consideration of the Restricted Roads (20mph Speed Limit) (Scotland) Bill at the Scottish Parliament. This Bill has recently been

rejected by the Scottish Parliament and the Roads Asset Management and Policy Team will be considering the impact of this decision on the review schedule.

2.4 Delays pre November 2017

- 2.4.1 Councillor Ford made representations to the Roads Service on behalf of the Newmachar Community Council and local residents on speeding on both Roads in June 2016. In addition, Newmachar Community Council have made direct representations concerning traffic speeds on these roads.
- 2.4.2 Speed checks undertaken during the Autumn of 2016 at both locations were found to be above the threshold for interventions in terms of assessing for traffic calming to bring about speed reductions.
- 2.4.3 Following these speed checks officers from the Roads Service made contact with Police Scotland to make them aware of the prevailing traffic speeds on both roads.
- 2.4.4 On the 5th February 2017 the Roads Service gave a commitment to Councillor Ford, to seek an update on what action Police Scotland took and what results they found. Officers also committed, at this time, to follow due process and carry out an assessment for Traffic Calming works.
- 2.4.5 This assessment work would have been prioritised alongside other projects. As it is normally the case that the Safety Initiative Budget is over-subscribed, it is never possible to guarantee when a particular project will progress until the annual works programmes are approved by Committee. Until such times as a project budget is confirmed in the approved works programme, no detailed design work can commence.
- 2.4.6 Following the Roads Manager for Garioch Area attending a meeting of Newmachar Community Council in October 2017, where the ongoing concerns were raised again, a response was provided to the Community Council which referred to a possible traffic calming scheme.
- 2.4.7 The MPI report as presented to Garioch Area Committee on 30 January 2018 (Item 5 Refers) refers to the background pre November 2017. The minute of that meeting states;

“Officers confirmed the actions proposed as a result of the Member Promoted Issue and the intention to report back to the Committee before the summer on options. Councillors expressed frustration that this had not been progressed at an earlier stage but welcomed the proposed actions and asked that these be reported back to the 29th May 2018 meeting of the Committee.

*The Committee **agreed** to:*

- 1. welcome the report and the proposed actions to be taken to address the issue; and*
- 2. request that the Director of Infrastructure Services to bring an options report to Garioch Area Committee before 29 May 2018.”*

2.5 Delays post January 2018

2.5.1 As outlined above a further report detailing proposals was considered at the Garioch Area Committee on 29 May 2018 (Item 8). The minute of that meeting is as follows:

“Local Members welcomed progress being made with this piece of work and indicated that it had been discussed at the last Community Council meeting. Members agreed with the proposals, but were keen to see these implemented as soon as possible and pointed out that as the works to Corseduick Road did not require the same assessment work they could be actioned quickly.

*The Committee **agreed**:-*

1. *that Officers are to undertake the following works on Corseduick Road as soon as possible:-*
 - *provision of a speed indication device; and*
 - *chicanes*
2. *to request that Officers work towards the provision of:-*
 - a) *a crossing close to the Scout/Guide Hut;*
 - b) *the provision of a speed indication device (permanently sited);*
 - c) *provision of a traffic island at path to Kingseat;*
 - d) *the provision of a footpath between the Scout/Guide Hut and the path to Kingseat;*
 - e) *road markings to delineate a cycle lane.*
3. *to request that further update report be provided as part of the agenda for the meeting on 28 August 2018.”*

2.5.2 This follow up report was taken to Committee within the agreed timescale and, at that time, the proposal included a pedestrian crossing on Hillbrae Way near the Scout Hut.

2.5.3 Due to competing demands on internal resources, a package of pedestrian crossing assessments, across Aberdeenshire area, was let to one of the Council's Framework Consultants.

2.5.4 Updates were subsequently provided to the Area Committee under Outstanding Business, specifically on 9 October 2018 (Item 16), in order to make them aware of the current position.

2.5.5 The Outstanding Business Report from 9 October (Item 16) states;

In terms of providing a crossing at Hillbrae Way, Officers confirm that the external Consultant has only recently submitted the assessment for crossing provision and this information has confirmed that Hillbrae Way does not meet the required criteria for the provision of any form of crossing.

The data from the consultant is currently being further assessed and analysed by our Transportation colleagues, taking account of other relevant data relating to RTCs, etc., and a further update will thereafter be available but it looks likely that it will still be a negative outcome.

The poles for the speed indicator device (SID) have been erected in both Corseduick Road and Hillbrae Way and indeed the SID has been, at times, positioned at both sites. The SID is not currently located in Newmachar but will be erected here again as per our proposed intention to rotate its use at other suitably identified areas. The ongoing use of the SID in both roads will act as a reminder to drivers of the speed limit as well as provide good data relating to overall traffic behaviour.

The surface dressing works were completed along a section of Corseduick Road as per our Road Maintenance Programme. Once the final decision relating to the crossing provision at Hillbrae Way is available, a full update will be provided to Area Committee on 13/11/18.

2.5.6 The results of the pedestrian crossing assessments were provided by the Framework consultants on 11 September 2018. However, due to lack of internal design resources, the Service took the decision to use our external framework consultant to develop the revised proposals relating to traffic islands on Hillbrae Way, but no formal crossing, and chicanes on Corseduick Road.

2.5.7 A further report was requested and this came before the Garioch Area Committee on 4 December 2018 (Item 9). The minute states

“Members welcomed the progress made but noted the length of time it had taken to get to this stage. It was noted that traffic islands on Hillbrae Way would be welcomed in the absence of a crossing. Members sought clarification as to how often speed cameras would be in place and the Roads and Landscape Services Manager confirmed that it should be around 4 or 5 times a year.

*The Committee **agreed** to welcome the progress made and note the proposals for traffic calming at Hillbrae Way and Corseduick Road, Newmachar.”*

2.5.8 There was a delay whereby officers were awaiting designs from the framework consultant. Initial designs promoted pedestrian islands along Hillbrae Way which necessitated road widening and were therefore cost prohibitive. Officers therefore went back to the consultant requesting that traffic islands were used, which would enable the project cost to remain within the identified budget. These updated designs were provided by the consultant on 1 May 2019.

2.5.9 On 14 May 2019 the Garioch Area Committee considered a further report outlining the detailed designs for both roads, Item 6 refers. The minute of that meeting states;

“The Roads and Landscape Services Manager apologised for the delays in progressing the work. He explained that the cycle lane markings still needed to be defined, but all of the designs had now been agreed with the consultants.

Members welcomed the timescales for the works to be undertaken and the identified funding in place. They highlighted the positive benefit of the cycle

lanes which would link to other cycle ways and the importance of the traffic islands in making the route to the Scout Hut safer. However, Members were concerned at the amount of time it had taken from the road safety issue being identified, to the Member Promoted Issue being required to be submitted due to lack of progress and then for any clear proposals and timescales to be provided. They indicated the need for the Council to be more responsive to issues that arise and its duty of care to residents. They stressed the need for lessons to be learned and sought an investigation under the Committee's scrutiny powers to report to Committee on the reasons for delays in delivering required improvements to speeding in Newmachar.

The Committee **agreed** to :-

1. *note and welcome the progress made with the proposals for traffic calming at Hillbrae Way and Corseduick Road, Newmachar;*
2. *request that the item be retained in the Statement of Outstanding Business until the works have been completed;”*

2.6 Other Relevant Information

- 2.6.1 The current number of in house staff who are available to coordinate pedestrian crossing assessments is 0.25 full time equivalent. If undertaken in house, traffic surveys are undertaken by the local Roads Team in each area. These works are prioritised and accommodated with the overall roads maintenance and management activities of these teams. The number of requests for pedestrian crossing assessments across Aberdeenshire is currently 44.
- 2.6.2 There are currently six local Roads Teams, with one team allocated to each area. The Principal Engineer for each area leads a team of 5. This is comprised of one Senior Engineer, two Engineers and two Technicians. This part of the Team is responsible for the technical aspects of maintenance and management of the road network in the area. This includes all works contained within the Annual Roads Maintenance Programme, as well as works commissioned from the Transportation Service in relation to Capital Plan Rolling Programmes in relation to Safety Initiatives, and Cycling and Walking. As such there are no dedicated staff working solely on traffic calming and speed reduction measures, rather these are part of the much wider programmes of road maintenance and management.
- 2.6.3 There have be no reported accidents at Hillbrae Way since 2017. The traffic survey carried out in July 2018 showed that there were approximately 500 vehicle movements in both the AM and PM peak periods.
- 2.6.4 The estimated cost of the physical works agreed in May 2018 is £30,000. The cost of consultancy time purchased in relation to the design work was £16,560.

2.7 Summary and Issues

- The funding for this project was not available from the time of the initial operational decision in February 2017 to progress further work. As funding was not available, works did not commence immediately, but started after

funding was confirmed, as part of the annual rolling programme. This could have been communicated more clearly.

- Competing priorities meant that this assessment work could not be carried out by internal design teams. The work required at this site was packaged with other projects and passed to external consultants. Packaging of works in this fashion is more efficient than putting out a single assessment. However, it can extend the timescale as results will normally only be available once the package of work has been completed.
- Competing priorities meant that there was not capacity within the local Roads technical team to carry out the traffic calming design. Therefore, the works were issued to an external consultant. Unfortunately, the first version of the design received did not meet the brief, as costs had escalated. A revised design was therefore required.
- Outsourcing has to comply with internal governance and procurement rules and this additional stage does mean that it will take longer compared to use of internal resources.

2.8 Lessons Learned

- Clarity is required during the initial stages to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the timescale for the development and implementation of a project. This should include the stages required to prioritise the project against other competing projects and the securing of the necessary budget.
- As the project passes through the stages of commitment it is essential that resources are identified to deliver the project in line with the programme. This should allow for the anticipated lead in times required if elements of the project are to be externalised.
- The focus of the local Roads Teams is currently, quite rightly, on the time critical elements of the annual maintenance programme. However, this should not be at the expense of delivery of projects that enhance the network, either related to safety or active travel. Both the Transportation Service and Roads, Landscape and Waste Service are aware of the need to achieve the appropriate balance. To that end both Services are already considering revisions to current structures to enhance our ability to carry out more of these works in house. The option currently under consideration would include the expansion of the existing Projects team to ensure that an appropriately trained team is available to provide continuity and resilience for the future in terms of design work.

2.9 The Head of Transportation has been consulted in the preparation of the report and that his comments are incorporated within the report and he is agreeable with the content.

2.10 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3 Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section B.11.2 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2B of the Scheme of Governance as the Committee Review Process has been initiated and this report is Stage 1 of the process.

4 Implications and Risk

- 4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because as it and does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.
- 4.2 There are no staffing and financial implications.
- 4.3 No Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Brian Strachan, Roads & Landscape Services Manager

17th June 2019