

## ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

### INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

#### SKYPE MEETING, 14 MAY, 2020

**Present:** Councillors P Argyle (Chair), J Cox (Vice Chair), W Agnew, D Aitchison, G Carr, A Fakley, J Ingram, P Johnston, J Latham, I Mollison, G Reid, S Smith, I Taylor and R Withey.

**Officers:** Director of Infrastructure Services, Head of Service (Transportation), Head of Service (Planning & Environment), Head of Service (Roads, Landscape and Waste Services), Head of Service (Economic Development and Protective Services), Strategy Manager (Transportation), Service Manager (Economic Development and Protective Services), Corporate Finance Manager (S Donald), Principal Solicitor, Legal and Governance (R O'Hare) and Senior Committee Officer (N David).

#### 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 interests were intimated: – Councillors Argyle, Aitchison and Cox (as substantive members) and Councillors Carr and Mollison (as a substitute member) of NESTRANS, declared an interest in agenda Item 6. That interest had a specific exclusion, therefore, those members concluded that they would remain and participate when that item was being considered.

No other interests were declared.

#### 2. 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 is provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching a decision.

#### 3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF 12 MARCH, 2020

The Committee had before them, and **approved** as a correct record, the Minute of Meeting of 12 March, 2020 which would be signed by the Chair at a later date.

#### **4. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS**

There was circulated a report dated 21 April, 2020 by the Director of Business Services which provided a list of items of business previously or originally scheduled to be reported to Committee at this time and proposed action to be taken as a result of restrictions on travel and other activities implemented in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee **agreed** to acknowledge the position with regard to dealing with outstanding business as detailed in the Appendix to the report.

#### **5. ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020 – REVISED DEVELOPMENT PLAN SCHEME 2020**

There was circulated a report dated 9 April, 2020 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which requested that the Committee consider the revised Development Plan Scheme prepared to support the preparation of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2021. A copy of the Plan was included as an appendix to the report.

The report reminded members that the preparation of a Local Development Plan was a statutory process and Aberdeenshire Council was required to submit a “Proposed Local Development Plan” to Scottish Ministers for examination. This represented the settled view of the Council as to the form and content of the Local Development Plan 2021 and was agreed by Aberdeenshire Council on 5 March, 2020. The revised Development Plan Scheme 2020 continued to present the principles established in the 2019 Scheme, and the initial Development Plan Scheme, 2020 agreed by the Council’s Infrastructure Services Committee on 12 March 2020 following consideration by Area Committees.

Given the impact of social distancing measures and changes introduced through emergency legislation, the Planning Services had considered it appropriate to publish a revised Development Plan Scheme for 2020 with a new participation statement outlining the engagement to be undertaken associated with the Proposed Local Development Plan 2020. Changes to the Development Plan Scheme previously considered by Infrastructure Services Committee on 12 March, 2020 were highlighted within an appendix.

Following discussion, the Committee **agreed** to approve the Revised Development Plan Scheme 2020.

#### **6. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT UPDATE**

The Head of Service (Transportation) took the opportunity to advise the Committee about Spaces for People, a new funding opportunity announced by the Scottish Government at the end of April 2020. This was open to Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and other statutory bodies to bid for funding for projects that would support safe walking and cycling. Aberdeenshire Council, in consultation with Sustrans, would submit appropriate bids and in due course the Committee would be advised of these.

Thereafter, there was circulated a report dated 29 April, 2020 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which provided the Committee with updates on transportation projects across Aberdeenshire for the period between January 2020 and April 2020.

The report included an appendix detailing the Local Transport Strategy (LTS) Action Update covering the period from January 2020 to April 2020. This shows progress made against identified categories, i.e. Travel Actively and Travel Effectively.

The Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) acknowledge the progress made with projects, activities and developments taken forward by Nestrans, external agencies and stakeholders as outlined in the report; and
- (2) accept further updates on the progress of both the implementation and delivery of the Aberdeenshire Local Transport Strategy (LTS) as appropriate.

## **7. USE OF DELEGATED POWERS**

There was circulated a report dated 29 April, 2020 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which informed the Committee of the use of delegated powers by the Director by reason of special urgency in respect of Burial Service Fees and Charges.

The report explained that modelling of the COVID-19 mortality rates suggested that the Burial Service would have to deal with significantly increased level of demand. This would be at a time when the availability of experienced, trained personnel from within the Burial Service may be reduced due to the impact of the pandemic. During these extraordinary times, to protect this vital service, it may be necessary to amend the level of service currently provided. These operational changes would be brought in as circumstances dictated. Their application would be carried out in an empathetic manner, reflecting the sensitive nature of the work performed by the Burial Service and the impacts of any potential changes on family and friends who are already dealing with the loss of a loved one.

The Committee **agreed** to acknowledge the use by the Director of Infrastructure Services of delegated powers, as fully provided for in Appendix 1 of the report, in order to vary Burial Fees and Charges in light of potential COVID-19 impacts on service provision.

## **8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ECONOMIC RENEWAL PROPOSALS**

There was circulated a report dated 30 April, 2020 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which provided and update on the actions taken by the Council's Economic Development Service in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and sought approval for a package of renewal measures to support Aberdeenshire businesses to deal with some of the short to medium-term impacts of the outbreak.

The report explained that the COVID-19 crisis has had a significant and potentially lasting impact on Aberdeenshire's economy, our communities and residents. The Council's Economic Development Service had worked closely with other internal services and external partners to deliver as effective a response as possible given

the restrictions placed on all organisations and people. The report set out the work that had been done to date and changes to the Economic Development Service's priorities that were proposed as a result of the crisis and to support a strong renewal for the Aberdeenshire economy.

The Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) acknowledge the proactive approach and interventions undertaken by the Economic Development Service in immediate response to the COVID-19 outbreak and its particular impacts on businesses and residents;
- (2) approve the COVID-19 renewal package and measures as set out in paragraphs 4.20-4.22, noting that some of these interventions may have already started in response to specific business needs under existing officer delegations;
- (3) approve the use of up to £175,000 of the unallocated regeneration reserve to deliver renewal activities in town centres across Aberdeenshire;
- (4) delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure Services, following consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson for Infrastructure Services Committee to approve appropriate and timeous changes to the renewal package in order to ensure that the proposals remain relevant to the needs of the Aberdeenshire economy and continue to add value alongside other activity and investments; and
- (5) approve the drawing down of additional EU funding resources to support the Council's COVID-19 renewal package and deliver enhanced services to businesses and individuals.

ABERDEEN, 25 September 2019. Minute of Meeting of the STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY.

**Present:** Councillor Marie Boulton, Chairperson; Councillor John Cox, Vice-Chairperson; and Councillors David Aitchison, Bell, Copland (as a substitute for Councillor Cooke), Graham, Mair, Mollison (as a substitute for Councillor Latham), Topping and Yuill.

**Apologies:** Councillors Cooke and Latham; Mr R Gray, Head of Service, Planning and Building Standards, Aberdeenshire Council; and Mairi Stewart, Planning Manager, Aberdeenshire Council.

**Officers:** **Strategic Planning Authority:** Ms S Lamont and Mr T Walsh, Senior Planners;

**Aberdeen City Council:** Ms G Beattie, Chief Officer, Strategic Place Planning; Ms L Christie, Solicitor, Governance, Mr D Dunne, Policy and Strategy Manager, Strategic Place Planning; Ms K Gatherum, Trainee Solicitor, Governance; Mr A Thomson, Solicitor, Governance; Mr M Orchard, Committee Lead, Governance, and Ms E Robertson, Committee Assistant, Governance;

**Aberdeenshire Council:** Chris Smith, Accountant

**In Attendance:** Ms A MacDonald, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland; and Rab Dickson, Transport Strategy Manager, NESTRANS.

## **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

1. There were no declarations of interest.

## **MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF 14 JUNE 2019 - FOR APPROVAL**

2. The Authority had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 14 June 2019.

**The Authority resolved:**  
to approve the minute.

## STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY

25 September 2019

### 2018/19 ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT

3. The Authority had before it the external auditor's 2018/19 Annual Audit Report of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority's (SDPA) annual accounts.

The Authority received an overview of the report from Ms Anne MacDonald, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland. She explained that Audit Scotland had provided an unqualified opinions on the annual accounts; and the audited part of the remuneration report, management commentary and the annual governance statement were all consistent with the financial statements and prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Authority consider and note the auditor's report.

**The Authority resolved:**

to note the auditor's report.

### AUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2018/19

4. The Authority had before it the independent auditor's, Audited Annual Accounts in respect of 2018/19 for approval.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Authority -

- (i) acknowledge the Audit Scotland's unmodified opinion on the Annual Accounts for 2018/19; and
- (ii) approve for signature the audited Annual Accounts for 2018/19.

**The Authority resolved:**

to approve the recommendations.

### FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

5. The Authority had before it a report by Alan Wood, Treasurer, proposing the adoption of revised Financial Regulations.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Authority note the revision to the Strategic Development Planning Authority's Financial Regulations.

**STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY**  
25 September 2019

**The Authority resolved:-**

to approve the recommendation.

**QUARTER END BUDGET**

6. The Authority had before it a report by the Treasurer on the budget monitoring position for 2019/20 as at 31 August 2019.

**The report recommended:**

that the Authority

note the budget monitoring position as at 31 August 2019.

**The Authority resolved:**

to approve the recommendation.

**BULLETIN REPORT**

7. The Authority had before it a bulletin report which provided a brief overview of strategic planning matters involving or relating to the work undertaken by the Authority.

Sheena Lamont, Senior Planner, spoke to the report and provided updates on:

- Examination of the Proposed Strategic Development Plan;
- Planning Act;
- Other Relevant Decision from Scottish Ministers;
- Local Development Plan; and
- Strategic Infrastructure.

**The Authority resolved:**

to note the bulletin report.

**DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

8. The Authority had before it proposed dates of future meetings as follows:

- 13 December 2019, 2pm at Woodhill House
- 18 March 2020, 2pm at Aberdeen Town House
- 26 June 2020, 2pm at Woodhill House
- 23 September 2020, 2pm at Aberdeen Town House
- 11 December 2020, 2pm at Woodhill House

**STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY**  
25 September 2019

**The Authority resolved:-**

to approve the future meeting dates.

- **Councillor Marie Boulton, Chairperson.**



## APPENDIX B

# ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL:

Powering Tomorrow's World

### ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL JOINT COMMITTEE

8 NOVEMBER, 2019

- Present:** Councillors Gifford (Chair), Cox (as substitute for Councillor Argyle); and Thomson, Aberdeenshire Council; Councillors Laing (Vice-Chair), Boulton, and Lumsden, Aberdeen City Council; and Ms J Craw (as substitute for Sir Ian Wood), and Mr P Machray, ONE.
- Apologies:** Councillor Argyle, (Aberdeenshire Council); Prof S Logan and Sir Ian Wood, ONE.
- Officers:** Mr J Savage, Chief Executive, Aberdeenshire Council; Mrs A Scott, Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council; Ms B Millar, Head of Economic Development and Protective Services, Aberdeenshire Council; Mr A Wood, Head of Finance, Aberdeenshire Council; MS R O'Hare, Principal Solicitor, Aberdeenshire Council; Ms J Richards-Wood, Programme Manager, Aberdeen City Council; W Robertson, Digital Programme Manager, Aberdeen City Council; Ms S Rochester, Service Manager, Customer Communications and Improvement, Aberdeenshire Council; Mr P Finch, Strategic Transport Manager, Aberdeenshire Council; Mr R McGregor, Strategic Transport Officer, Aberdeenshire Council; Mr R Dickson, Director, NESTRANS; and Ms J McRobbie, Committee Officer, Aberdeenshire Council.
- In attendance:** Mr D Rennie, Head of Partnerships/Oil and Gas, Scottish Enterprise; Ms A Philip, Head of Development and Regional Transport Planning, Transport Scotland; and Mr D Briody, Commercial and Regulatory Manager, Rail.

#### 1. SEDERUNT AND DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Apologies were intimated from Councillor Argyle, Aberdeenshire Council and Professor S Logan and Sir Ian Wood, ONE.

No interests were intimated.

#### 2. RESOLUTIONS

##### (A) Public Sector Equality Duty

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 content and take this into account when reaching a decision.

**(B) Exempt Information**

The Joint Committee **agreed**, in terms of Sections 50A (4) and (5) of The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of Item 9, so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the classes described in paragraph 6.

**3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF CITY REGION DEAL JOINT COMMITTEE OF 28 AUGUST, 2019**

There had been circulated, and was **approved** as a correct record, the Minute of Meeting of 28 August, 2019.

In respect of the proposed equalities training for members, it was **agreed** that a training session be scheduled for the conclusion of the next meeting, of 7 February, 2020.

**4. ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE**

There had been circulated a report dated 8 November, 2019 by Programme Manager providing an update on the City Region Deal \*(CRD) and its constituent workstreams, and the Joint Committee heard from the Programme Manager as to specific projects.

It was noted that the annual conversation with the Scottish Government had gone well , with the City Region Deal's progress noted and an encouragement to capture, report, and monitor projects.

There was discussion of the additional work to be carried out by the Oil and Gas Technology Centre, outwith the City Region Deal funding; the timetable for the development of the national sub-sea centre;

The Joint Committee heard further from Mr Machray, ONE detailed progress on the Food hub for Innovation, to be launched at Deans of Huntly in January 2020, with the appointment of a design team and architect expected by the end of January, and a target completion date of August 2022 anticipated.

Ms Crow provided an update on the work for the bio-hub and the challenges of designing its location on a tight corner site, the announcement of a preferred contractor imminent; continuing positive relationships with life sciences and NHS Grampian on the data set. There was discussion of the timescale for planning permission and SEPA's comments on the site, and also the interrelationship between the site and the adjacent planning applications for a new mortuary and new green space to the south of the proposed bio-hub.

The Joint Committee heard from Ms Robertson, Digital Programme Manager that by the end of December it was expected that 21 out of the 58 identified suites would be completed, with others scheduled for 2020; that the Private Investment for Digital anticipated £15m investment had been realised /spent in the City to date. A further £25m has been committed by CityFibre as per their £40m announcement. and that the tender for full fibre in the Shire and NHS closed on 18 November, with an appointment hoped for mid-December. In respect of the duct network contracts, one was due to complete by the end of the year and a workshop to be held on 25 November to explore opportunities and inform business cases.

Mr Finch spoke of a very successful checkpoint review which had just taken place with Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government and other partners, on the Strategic Transport. The two main issues had been the updating of the Strategic Transport model, informed by user interviews as well as an analysis of on the ground infrastructure, to be coordinated with data already collected by Transport Scotland on the A96 consultation. In terms of the external road linkages to Aberdeen south harbour, useful workshops had been held with the Harbour Board and consultants, which would lead to an economic appraisal early in 2020.

There was discussion of the A90 challenges through and to Ellon , which was beginning to impact negatively on local land use development projects, and the Joint Committee were advised of ongoing micro-surveys focussed on Ellon which would be shared with Aberdeenshire Council's Formartine Area Committee when completed.

In respect of the well-publicised delays in the harbour expansion, the Programme Manager advised that a phased outcome was now in place and that there would be no negative impact on either the cash draw down or expected benefits. There was discussion on the impact of this delay in the support available for cruise ships which would have nowhere to berth.

The Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) that an update presentation by Michelle Handforth, Chief Executive, on the mitigations which were proposed to facilitate the advent of cruise ships, be made to the Spring meeting;
- (2) to note that the transport surveys on the A90 would be reported to Aberdeenshire's Council's Formartine Area Committee in due course;
- (3) that an update on net zero solution be provided within 6 months; and
- (4) in all other respects to note the terms of the updates provided.

## **5. BENEFITS REALISATION WORKING GROUP**

There had been circulated a report by the Programme Manager, advising of the creation of a Benefits Realisation Working Group to support the assessment of outcomes of the City Region Deal. This would support the monitoring and evaluation framework which had been agreed with input from both the Scottish and UK Governments and partner organisations to support all projects in fully maximising the benefits arising from the Aberdeen City Region Deal Investment as well as making recommendations and providing assurance to Aberdeen City Region Deal Programme Board through a monitoring and evaluation framework which will be agreed with input from.

There was discussion of the potential challenges in trying to retro-fit benefits measurements to projects that were already in place and, and also assessing the economic benefit of works which would not necessarily impact within the 10 years of the City Region Deal; the need to be aware where impacts are established, proportional to the timescale set out the original approved business cases; and the inability to measure what was not intended to be delivered in terms of the innovation projects; of the valid opportunities to link benefits realisation to new procurements, especially for physical developments and employment; the governance route for the reporting back to the working group; and the potential measures against which progress might be assessed.

The Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note the establishment of a Benefits Realisation Working Group, and its Terms of Reference;
- (2) that officers consider and report, prior to any gathering of data, the proposed scope of the application of the benefits realisation.

## 6. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – TRANSPORTATION PROGRESS REPORT

There had been circulated a report dated 29 October, 2019 by Transport Scotland providing an update on the progress of additional projects being taken forward through the additional Scottish Government investment, including progress on the A90 Laurencekirk junction improvement scheme and the investment in the rail network to improve services between Aberdeen and the Central Belt.

The Chair, on behalf of the Joint Committee, welcomed Amy Phillips and Damien Briody of Transport Scotland to the meeting which heard from the officers further details of the progression of the schemes additional to those set out in the accompanying agenda report.

During his presentation Mr Briody confirmed the following:-

- a) The Aberdeen to Central Belt Reference Group met on 12 September, 2019 in Dundee, and heard proposals for investment in a route signalling upgrade between Aberdeen and Dundee, complementing other planned investment on the rail network. These investments would work together to deliver journey time goals, within the CRD timescale of 2026;
- b) The journey time improvement vision presented to the Reference Group was for a 2hr10min journey time Aberdeen to Edinburgh, 2hr30min Aberdeen to Glasgow, and 1hr10min Aberdeen to Dundee. These would be improvements to average journey times;
- c) The project was now recognised as a rail enhancement project, moving from the rail policy team to the rail delivery team within Transport Scotland. Network Rail had been remitted to develop the scheme to GRIP4 (single preferred option and outline business case).
- d) The reference group was now being wound up, to be replaced by a rail industry project delivery group. Representatives of the City Region Deals and Regional Transport Partnerships would be kept closely informed of progress and actions.
- e) It was expected that the total cost of investment between Aberdeen and Dundee would exceed £200m. The precise set of benefits, and mixture of interventions would only be confirmed when Network Rail had produced their single design option and outline business case. The interventions would likely involve signalling, targeted line-speed improvement, freight loops, timetabling, and rolling stock improvements.
- f) The programme and associated milestones for the project would be available in January 2020.
- g) Future plans to electrify the rail network by 2035 would be considered within the development of the proposed signalling improvements.
- h) The scheme would be required to take full account of the current and proposed mix of rail services on the route (inter-city, local, freight), as well as future regional aspirations for development of the local rail service.
- i) The signalling improvements may provide greater flexibility to facilitate any required improvements to connections between trains to the Central Belt, and trains north of Aberdeen, with the aim of developing fully connected communities.

In response to the presentation, Members spoke of their concerns that the journey time improvements set out in the previously presented Arup report (around 2 minutes) had seemed a very small return for the £200M, and that there were other infrastructure projects being considered within the region which potential had a greater economic impact on the region as a whole to which the funds might have been more competently directed. Members considered that there seemed little of substance and detail in the update provided to give full assurance on delivery and benefits. Mr Briody indicated that more detail would be available in January, 2020, following Network Rail's response to the development remit. It was also noted that meetings had still to be held with the Cabinet Secretary and that this might provide additional assurance.

In respect of the road improvements to the A90 at Laurencekirk, the Joint Committee heard from Ms Phillips that draft Orders arising from the preferred option announcement of July.

2018 were expected to be published by the end of the year. This work was being supported by an ongoing programme of survey, design, and assessment work. However it was not yet possible to set a timetable for construction or completion, as it was currently unknown whether there would be any objections to the scheme following publication of draft Orders, and whether or not these would then lead to a requirement for Public Local Inquiry.

The Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) that Mr Briody be requested to attend future meetings to provide updates on the options chosen and provide feedback requested in letter to committee when received;
- (2) to note the updates provided and request a further report to the next committee on breakdown of costs against each intervention and milestone; and
- (3) to thank Ms Phillips and Mr Briody for their informative presentation.

## **7. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING - HOUSING PROJECTS**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 2 May, 2018, (Item 7), there had been circulated a report dated 8 November, 2020 by the Senior Housing Strategy Officer, Aberdeen City Council, providing an update on progress in relation to the housing workstream, where the additional investment of £20M Infrastructure funds was to unlock sites of strategic importance and provide 5 year certainty on £130M of affordable housing supply grant.

The report indicated that five sites had been identified, with expressions of interest submitted to the Scottish Government on which decisions were expected at the scheduled meeting on 20 December.

The Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) that a further update report on the 5 bid sites be reported to the Joint Committee in February, 2020; and
- (2) to note in all other respects the terms of the report.

## **8. PROPOSED MEETING DATES.**

The Joint Committee noted the proposed dates for meetings in 2020 and, having heard that confirmation was awaited from ONE as to the suitability of the dates, **agreed:-**

- (1) to approve in principle the undernoted dates of meeting for 2020:
  - 7 February, 2020 (already in diary);
  - 5 June, 2020;
  - 4 September, 2020; and
  - 13 November, 2020;
- (2) to delegate to the Programme Manager, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, final confirmation of these dates; and
- (3) to note that from April 2020, meetings would be supported by, and hosted by Aberdeen City Council.

## **9. FINANCIAL UPDATES - QUARTER 2 2019/2020**

There had been circulated a report dated 8 November, 2019 by the Head of Finance, Aberdeenshire Council and the Programme Manager, Aberdeen City Council, providing an update on the finances of the City Region Deal for actual expenditure to quarter 2 in 2019/20, and updating the forecast for 2019/20.

The meeting heard from the Head of Finance of the figures represented in the report, that each project streams were progressing well, with expenditure in line with what was expected at this stage of the financial year; of positive discussions with the Scottish Government which

looked to provide assurance against the implications for cash flow of the payments being made quarterly in arrears; and of a report which would be considered by Aberdeenshire Council on 21 November which would allow him greater authority as a Section 95 officer, in regard to cash flow for projects, should the timing of release of funding from the government become an issue.

Mr Wood also spoke of his intent to maximise the transparency of reporting of financial updates in the public domain and sought guidance as to the level of detail required by the Joint Committee to provide them with assurances in terms of scrutiny of the financial management and progress of the City Region Deal.

The Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to welcome the positive discussions with the Scottish Government to facilitate the express release of funds when required;
- (2) to note that Aberdeenshire Council would consider a system to mitigate in cases of any delayed drawdown of funding from the Scottish Government;
- (3) that officers consider and report the proposed future split of the financial update reports between public and exempt documents; and
- (4) to note, in all other respects, the terms of the report.

Councillor Jim Gifford, Chair

## APPENDIX C

### NORTHERN ROADS COLLABORATION JOINT COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 29 NOVEMBER, 2019

**Councillors:** Councillor Brenda Durno, (Vice Chair), Angus Council; Councillor Robin Currie, Argyll and Bute Council (by Skype); Councillors Peter Argyle and David Aitchison, Aberdeenshire Council; Councillors Gordon Cowie and Theresa Coull, Moray Council (by Skype); and Councillor Allan Henderson, The Highland Council (by Skype).

**Officers:** Paul Finch, Ruth O'Hare, Robert McGregor, Philip McKay, Jan McRobbie, and Ewan Wallace, Aberdeenshire Council; Douglas Hill, Angus Council; Jim Smith, Argyll and Bute Council (via Skype); Calum Mackenzie, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (via Skype); Mark Atherton, Moray Council; Robin Pope and Tracey Urry, The Highland Council (via Skype); and Shaun Millar and Angus Bodie, The Improvement Service.

**Apologies:** Councillor Ellen Morton, Argyll and Bute Council; Councillors Michael Hutchison and Ross Grant, Aberdeen City Council; Councillor Ron Sturrock, Angus Council; Councillor Trish Robertson, The Highland Council; and Councillors Uisdean Robertson and Kenneth MacLeod, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

### 1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

In the absence of Councillor Morton, for whom apologies had been submitted on the grounds of ill health, Councillor Durno took the Chair and welcomed Members to Woodhill House, Aberdeen.

The Joint Committee **agreed** that best wishes be sent to Councillor Morton wishing her a speedy recovery.

The meeting heard from Mr Wallace, Chief Officer, of the housekeeping arrangements.

### 2. SEDERUNT AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Apologies were intimate from Councillors Morton, MacLeod, Uisdean Robertson, and Sturrock.

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. MINUTE OF MEETING OF 6 SEPTEMBER, 2019**

There had been circulated the draft Minute of Meeting of 6 September, 2019. Having noted that apologies had been recorded from Councillor Currie, instead of from Councillor McCuish, of Argyll and Bute, the Joint Committee **agreed** to approve the Minute as a correct record, subject to that amendment.

#### **5. THE VALUE OF THE LOCAL ROADS NETWORK IN SCOTLAND – PRESENTATION**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 21 June, 2019 (Item 6), when it had been agreed that a presentation be made on the SCOTS “Value in Local Roads” project, the Joint Committee heard from Angus Bodie, of the Roads Collaboration Programme, an update on the work.

Whilst originally envisaged as a short, distinct piece of work, the focus of the research had expanded, including more detailed consideration of what was meant by “value”, in terms of the intrinsic impact of roads on rural economy, beyond a direct correlation made in 2010 of the £1 spend on roads translating to £1.50 impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It was necessary to consider more than an economic value, by looking at journey time and reliability, and speculate as to what would happen to our country and our communities if the roads network did not exist.

Mr Bodie spoke of the research’s methodology, with the work shared across three individual experts rather than a single firm, and to begin with a desktop assessment of existing policy and literature, followed by interviews with 60 stakeholders and a survey of over two hundred community councils. From this, initial work had been undertaken on the information sets and values, linking activities in terms of outputs and outcomes in a greater detail than had previously been considered, including Councils’ work in community planning partnerships in developing Locality Outcome Improvement Plans.

It was reported that the research was already improving understanding of the linkages between investment in infrastructure and non-infrastructure outcomes, including social issues beyond the previous assumptions of roads safety and community safety. This would allow officers to consider how to better assess future investment priorities across their authority area. Mr Bodie stressed that there would be a need to consider these local impacts in the context of a wider national roads



system, and ultimately align this with national performance indicators and the policy framework for Scotland's roads.

The desired way forward was to develop a model that would ensure the capture of values, seen initially in the context of the local economy. This model would require to take cognisance of the differences in geography, both locally, regionally, and nationally. It would also need to be flexible to be able to absorb new data when known.

This might be expressed in a pyramid of values; from utility (evidence based); social value (reflective and evidence based); and future value (predictive and responsive to policy changes and future trends).

From the work done to date, it was possible to confirm that, a basic utility value, including personal, business, and social use, including public transport, had an estimate of £6.4 Billion per annum nationally. From a total level of spend across Scotland of about £1.8 Billion, this was a crude approximation of 1:3, but this would be clarified further when wider social values had been assessed and incorporated.

The next steps, Phase 2, would be the build up from utility values to identify and test social and future value components; the refinement and testing of the theoretical models, potentially in three different areas, (urban, rural, and island) and the inclusion of the trunk roads to inform a "whole network" approach. From this, a standardised approach, with guidance, would be developed and demonstrations made, including to the Joint Committee, of how the model works to embed local roads.

Mr Bodie reported that Transport Scotland were also interested in the holistic network approach, as this could alter the traditional reliance on journey time alone as the sole value focus.

There was discussion of the inclusion of an assessment of the impact of industrial transport on local roads, including that of distilleries on islands, impacting on both commercial ferries and roads built for horse and cart; the process through which a new model might interface with the established Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) assessments, currently subject to consultation, potentially allowing for additional funds to be allocated to rural areas which were not currently able to access Government funding; where tourism would sit in terms of the utility valuations; the role of Transport Scotland officers in advising Ministers of the work and its potential assistance in considering the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) processes, and the requirement for Partners to reference the ongoing work in any engagement events in which they participate.

The Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note and welcome the update provided; and
- (2) to have a further detailed report on the project progress in due course.

## 6. NATIONAL ROADS COLLABORATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 6 September, 2019 (Item 6), there had been circulated a report dated 19 November, 2019, by Angus Bodie, Programme Manager, National Roads Collaboration Programme, providing an update on progress being made with collaboration, nationally and locally, through the Roads Collaboration Programme (RCP).

The report highlighted the various stages of governance partnership working across Scotland, with other joint working under early development; cited the updating of the 2017 National Workforce Improvement Plan, reflecting the staff survey which had identified, amongst other matters, a 20% reduction in roads staff across Scotland as well as increasing apprenticeship opportunities; the ongoing work with the Scottish Road Network Management Forum, including representatives from SCOTS (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland) and Transport Scotland in delivering the shared action plan of opportunities to work across trunk and local road boundaries, with meetings held with BEAR Scotland in May and November; the progress of various technical projects, including the joint Asset Management Project, the initial stage of SCOTS' "Value of the Local Roads" project and its further development, and bids for Scottish Roads Research Board funding for (a) the use of recycled materials in road construction, (b) sustainability in the use of aggregates in roads construction and maintenance, (c) the impact of industrial transport on local roads, and (d) the Value of Local Roads (Phase 2); and spoke of other training events for staff and ongoing projects to develop sharing of information and best practice around gully maintenance, street lighting (LED) maintenance, and standard construction details.

The Joint Committee heard from Mr Bodie further of additional work with the Roads Work Commissioner to be done on roads management with the advent of a revised Transport Act; how the Northern Roads Collaboration was still the exemplar of good practice to other embryonic governance groups; that the Scottish Roads Training Programme was expected to be complete by January 2020 and would potentially be of benefit to over 2000 roadworkers; and that the research bid projects would all have a significance in the Collaboration area, including work on quarries where it was anticipated that slight amendments to specifications might impact positively on waste arisings and cost savings for each authority.

There was discussion of the impact of reduced or restricted gully cleaning on the roads and its potential impact on flooding and Members heard from officers that often water on roads was not a result of this or of failure of other drainage.

The scope of the assessment of industry on roads was raised, and its potential expansion to consider not only roads infrastructure but harbours and bridges was promoted, potentially as an area where additional funding might be achieved from government, from the taxation of operations such as the whisky industry.

In respect of the Joint Committee's previous consideration of the use of plastics in road works, Mr Bodie advised Members that a report by the Australian Environmental Agency, which paralleled the licensing and monitoring work of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, had concluded that there was still no

evidence base that the materials used made any difference, good or bad, when added to the aggregate: however it had made it clear that there was no domestic plastic or bags in the process, as the manufacturer had suggested, but rather that virgin plastic offcuts were being used. In the United Kingdom, testing on site had not yet been undertaken, and the results of a pilot in Ayrshire had not yet concluded to clarify what the short and long term outcome would be and its implications for future maintenance sustainability, cost, and regimes. Concerns had been raised on the issue of Health and Safety for roadworkers working with an unknown combination of materials and the end use question had still to be resolved, as, at some point in the future, the material would require to be disposed of to landfill. A sound evidence base was needed to be able to answer these questions.

Mr McKay spoke of additional research being undertaken by KIMO (Municipalities for Sustainable Seas) on the potential for off-run by micro-plastics into water courses and the marine environment; this information was to be shared with Mr Bodie to tie all the research together.

The Joint Committee heard that The Highland Council Members had been keen to explore the options and, against officer recommendation, and in the awareness of potential concerns of Health and Safety issues, had approved a trial of the plastic material, not on a housing estate, but on an area of commercial road. This would be reported in due course to the Joint Committee.

In respect of the continued evolution of the Joint Committee itself, Mr Wallace spoke of additional engagement with the Western Isles to explore the reality of collaboration for them: this would be reported to a future meeting. In addition, Aberdeen City were currently exploring the implications for increased use of hydrogen as a fuel; this would also be reported to a future meeting.

There was discussion of the increasing availability of electric vehicle charging points and whether this might expand from current prominent sites in towns and cities to be more generally available close to roads. Officers advised that some charging sites were located outwith centres, some in transport interchanges, with others being promoted by private sector at petrol stations. Additional locations would continue to be considered, but at present sites were chosen to maximise access by the most people.

The Joint Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note the ongoing progress being made with collaboration nationally and locally through the Roads Collaboration Programme (RCP); and
- (2) await further updates on the various projects cited in the report.

## **7. JOINT ASSET MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 21 June, 2019, (Item 8), there had been circulated a report dated 19 November, 2019, by the Programme Manager, Roads Collaboration Programme, providing an update on the joint project to consider opportunities for collaboration in the collection, management, and reporting of asset data.

The Joint Committee heard from Mr Bodie of progress on the initiative, with the project plan signed off and a SWOT (Strength/Weakness/Opportunity/Threat) analysis of the current situation, compared with SCOTS guidance and world-based best practices across each authority undertaken. Results varied across the partnership and an individual assessment had been shared with each authority, but the overall findings supported a clear case for collaboration in due course, with a shorter term option recommended to create a soft hub to share practice and opportunities to align both systems and the form in which data was gathered. Transport Scotland had been engaged in the process as they were currently developing a new asset management system, to be launched in autumn 2020 when new operating companies would be added. BEAR Scotland were aware of these proposals and were tracking developments.

There was discussion of the increasing ability to be able to prioritise works such as bridge management in the light of the joint working on asset management and sharing of good practice, and the requirement for some authorities to further consider the detail of what would be expected in the proposals, before submitting a formal response for ongoing support for the Phase 2 of the Business Case with the Asset Management Hub.

The Joint Committee **agreed** to:

- (1) note the outputs from the completed first phase of this project, noting that each partner authority should now consider their individual responses to the recommendations;
- (2) seek from each authority, by 31 January, 2020, confirmation (or otherwise) of ongoing support for the project along with authority to take forward Phase 2 of the Strategic Business Case, i.e. to introduce an Asset Management Hub across the Northern area during early 2020, and to explore new funding opportunities and approaches; and
- (3) note that officers would continue to engage with Transport Scotland and BEAR Scotland around the potential to collaborate on asset management across the local and trunk network.

## **8. A9/A96 DUALLING PROGRAMMES**

There had been circulated a report dated 19 November, 2019 by Robert McGregor, Strategic Transport Officer, Aberdeenshire Council, providing an update on the Scottish Government's progress in its commitment to completing the dualling of (a) the A9 between Perth and Inverness, to be undertaken at 11 sections of the route, and (b) the A96, in four sections, between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030. The report detailed Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils' experiences of recent working with the Government on the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) and The Highland and Moray Councils' experience of the A9 dualling and the A96 programmes to date, where issues including impact on Council staff resources; communication with communities and Elected Members; and the knock-on impact on other travel routes and implications for additional future maintenance of de-trunked roads were highlighted.

Although previously identified as a common issue for partnership authorities, it was noted that, given the proximity to the General Election, Transport Scotland had been unable to attend the meeting, but would continue to be invited to future meetings.

There was discussion on how the sharing of experiences as detailed in the report was a very helpful tool for officers in preparing to support new road works. The Joint Committee heard that Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee had, the day before, heard a public petition that, on the basis of climate change, the A96 be not dualled in its entirety, and had referred the issue simpliciter to the Scottish Government for consideration.

The meeting heard from Mr McGregor that meaningful intervention for change in roads projects could only be achieved before a contract had been awarded, and also that there should be a clearer focus on the implications for de-trunking in terms of future maintenance, actual effectiveness, and drainage.

The Joint Committee **agreed** to:

- (1) note the ongoing progress of the Transport Scotland Dualling programmes for the A9 and A96, within the overall commitment to completing the dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness by 2025, and the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030; and
- (2) welcome the opportunities afforded for collaboration and information sharing to ensure the best outcomes for neighbouring communities, future maintenance, and traffic management of the existing road network.

## **9. NATIONAL GULLY MAINTENANCE PROJECT UPDATE**

There had been circulated a report dated 19 November, 2019, by Shaun Millar, Project Officer, Roads Collaboration Programme, providing an update on the national gully maintenance project, from which relevant information for the northern roads' authorities had been extracted, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Joint Committee heard further from Mr Millar that some of the survey results were surprising; for example, there was only one "backup" vehicle across the seven authorities; of the move to single person machines, and the implications of this; and of the great potential for collaboration as gully work was generally undertaken across planned routes, with the exception of responsive works. There were challenges in so far as there were differences in the four mapping systems currently used across the authorities, but this could be an opportunity for change.

The Joint Committee heard from officers that the gully maintenance work was done in terms of road safety and dealing with flooding of properties, but there was a need to counter any perception that roads should be free from water during heavy rainfall: the systems were not designed that way and roads were designed to be used to channel that flow. This was an area where expectation and aspiration required to be managed, as sometimes when a gully was backing up, this did not indicate a system failure, but rather that the water could not get away. Gullies were expected to

surcharge once a year, with the system every five years, but could not cope in terms of flooding incidents recorded as 1:200 years.

The Joint Committee **agreed** to:

- (1) note the results of the survey as detailed in Appendix 1;
- (2) welcome the establishment of a short life Officer Working Group to explore further collaborative opportunities;
- (3) that officers report to a future meeting on flood alleviation measures in terms of road surface safety; and
- (4) to receive an update on gully collaboration options at a future meeting of the Joint Committee.

## **10. DRAFT ACTIVITY PLAN AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NORTHERN ROADS COLLABORATION JOINT COMMITTEE**

There had been circulated a report dated 26 November, 2019, by Ewan Wallace, Head of Transportation, Aberdeenshire Council, reporting on the successful collaboration achieved as part of the Scottish Government/ Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) Joint Agreement 2018, resulting in the further development of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) and seeking consideration of the potential for the Joint Committee to seek funding support across several areas of its Draft Collaboration Action Plan.

The Joint Committee heard from Mr Wallace as to the learning from the successful funding achieved for the collaboration in Education in North East Scotland, albeit that these had been in response to specific Scottish Government invitations for grant. The potential applications would be set in the context of the work undertaken across the northern collaboration to date, and had been extracted from the approved activity plan.

Having noted that the cumulative total of funding requested across all the potential collaborations across the seven authorities was £300,000, the Joint Committee **agreed** to:

- (1) note the example of the positive collaboration achieved as part of the Scottish Government/COSLA Joint Agreement (2018) which resulted in the further development of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs);
- (2) approve in principle the potential for Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee to seek funding support from Transport Scotland/Scottish Government as set out in the Draft Collaborative Activity Plan (Appendix 1); and
- (3) delegate to appropriate officers to fine tune the submissions prior to their being put to the Scottish Government.

## **11. FUTURE MEETINGS AND ARRANGEMENTS**

The Joint Committee heard from officers that there had been no consensus returned on dates circulated on potential availability for the quarterly meetings for 2020.

It was **agreed** that the dates to be considered for each of the meetings be recirculated and locations identified as appropriate by officers.

In considering the agenda for future meetings, and noting the request that officers report further on technical considerations regarding road surface water issues, it was **agreed** that future meetings consider the undernoted topics as appropriate:

- Electric vehicles; and
- Signage on the network and interrelationship with linkages to trunk roads.

Councillor Brenda Durno

Vice Chair