

## ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL – 30 JUNE 2022

### AREA WORKING

#### 1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 This report will provide Full Council with the position on Area Working at Aberdeenshire Council. As the new term of five years begins the ongoing work to mainstream and support Area Working will include regular meetings with chairs of policy and area committees with the Chief Executive, Directors, and Area Managers; Area Working being on Directorate Management Team agendas and the role of area committees relating to the remit of Landscape Services being considered. The report asks Full Council to acknowledge that a final report is scheduled for its meeting on 19 January 2023.

#### 1.2 Full Council is recommended to:

**1.2.1 Acknowledge the ongoing work to mainstream Area Working and that a final report is scheduled for the meeting on 19 January 2023.**

#### 2 Decision Making Route

2.1 Full Council received reports on Area Working at its meetings on [24 June 2021](#) (item 4) which agreed a list of actions and the report on [13 January 2022](#) (item 10) provided an update and noted that a further report would be required for the meeting of Full Council in June 2022.

2.2 This report provides an overview and an update on the ongoing progress to implement the ethos of Area Working at Aberdeenshire Council.

#### 3 Discussion

3.1 Due to the commencement of the new council term, it is a useful juncture to provide an overview of the Council's agreed position on the practices being undertaken or to be undertaken that supports the mainstreaming and embedding of the ethos of Area Working.

#### **How does the committee structure and governance framework support Area Working?**

3.2 The six area committees have the delegation to determine matters which directly affect their areas and to make recommendations to Policy Committees on strategic matters and Council Policy. The area committee delegations are contained within Part 2A, Section B of the List of Committee Powers in the Scheme of Governance.

3.3 The area committees make decisions on area and regeneration plans, local common good funds and trusts, area committee budget grant funds, community councils, procurements, licensing, planning, property, roads, and trading standards matters. They also make recommendations to the policy committees

on policy development and review, capital and revenue expenditure prioritisation, school zones, roll and closure. Indeed, it is hard to capture all the remit of area committees as the agendas of meetings are varied and wide, but they have a common theme – area decision making and area matters.

- 3.4 The scrutiny role of area committees is also vital and plays a key role in ensuring that the Council delivers best value and continuously improves. This includes performance management at Aberdeenshire Council. All the Services report performance information to area committees in terms of the Corporate Performance Management Framework. The Directors and Heads of Service regularly attend area committee meetings and provide regular opportunities for informal sessions with elected members.
- 3.5 The delegations to area committees also include specific scrutiny powers and how the area committee can undertake scrutiny is set out in [Scrutiny and Improvement at Aberdeenshire](#). This framework sits alongside the previously noted Corporate Performance Management Framework, which provides a comprehensive and robust approach to managing performance across the organisation, and the Policy Development and Review Framework, which contains guidance on how the Council develops and reviews its policies. The elected members' role is to lead and own the scrutiny process, provide challenge to decision making, to reflect the voice and concerns of residents and communities and to have a positive impact on the delivery and improvement of Council Services.
- 3.6 Area committees meet every third Tuesday, so local decision making can be responsive to need and demand. This meeting pattern particularly supports the Council's role of Planning Authority and meeting statutory timescales. Tuesdays are generally protected time in elected members' diaries, so that Area Managers, following consultation with Area Chairs, can utilise the non-meeting Tuesdays to allow local members to take part in workshops and seminars with Council officers, (often on the request of committees when there is interest on a specific matter) and also to hold sessions with local partners including Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. This also supports elected members with keeping on top of their continuing professional development (CPD) requirements.
- 3.7 Council services are delivered in accordance with Council policy, as set through the four Policy Committees. As such, the impact of decisions made at Policy Committees will have a bearing on each area. This is why the area committees play an integral role in the development and review of all council policies. This process and structure is captured in the [Policy Development and Review Framework](#) which is in Part 4B of the Scheme of Governance. It provides that *'a report should be submitted to all appropriate area committees detailing the core issues and how the proposed policy change might affect each Area or Service. Such reports should be submitted timeously to Area Managers to enable discussion at Area Management Teams should this be considered appropriate. The committee report should set out the timetable for the area committee to submit its views and for the eventual consideration of the matter by the appropriate policy committee.'*

### How do operational arrangements support Area Working?

3.8 To ensure robust, respectful, and meaningful working arrangements and relationships between area committees, policy committees, Area Managers and the Strategic Leadership Team, there is a series of regular officer/member meetings as per the table below -

	<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
1	Area Managers and Area Chairs	Quarterly	Area Manager	Committee procedure and process, area specific matters and support for Area Chairs.
2	Area Chairs, Chief Executive, Directors, and Area Managers (Leader of the Council is to be invited)	Twice a year	Chief Executive	Mainstreaming of area working across the organisation; keeping focus on the importance of area working; enhancing area status; consideration of delegated activities and budgets; being the forum to highlight any areas of concern or good practice
3	Area Chairs, Policy Chairs, Chief Executive, Directors, and Area Managers (Leader of the Council is to be invited)	Twice a year (alternate quarters to meeting line 2 above)	Chief Executive	Mainstreaming of area working across the organisation; keeping focus on the importance of area working; enhancing area status; consideration of delegated activities and budgets; being the forum to highlight any areas of concern or good practice

3.9 There are also other meetings throughout the year which support Area Working. The agreed Area Management Framework (implementation date of August 2022) provides the structure, with the emphasis on supporting Area Working and which allows for cross service strategic and operational delivery across each administration area. The Framework supports the delivery of Area Plans, performance reporting and delivery and monitoring of the six Local Community Plans, amongst other outputs. The table below provides details –

	<b>Name/Attendees</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
1	<b>Area Management – Strategic Group</b> Area Manager, Strategic Service Representatives	Twice a year	Area Manager	To develop and monitor each Area Plan
2	<b>Area Management-Operational Group</b> Area Manager, Area Team, and Operational Service Representatives	Every four to six weeks	Area Manager	All operational matters including Developer Obligation spend and addressing issues where joint working is required
3	<b>Local Community Planning Group.</b> Area Manager, Statutory Partners, Area Committee nominated representative(s), Local Community Safety Group, Community Council Forum representative, Third Sector, Rural Partnerships.	Every eight weeks	Area Manager and Community Planning Officer	Working together to deliver the outcomes agreed in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-2027 and locally, collaborating with communities to deliver Locality Plans, Local Community Plans and Community Action Plans. The Area Community Planning Partnership brings together representatives from the Community Planning Partners to identify and address the needs and concerns of those living in the area. Each area committee appoints a representative and it is suggested that best practice is that the member provides updates to the rest of the committee, the usual format is

				email or note. Area Committees do receive reports about the local community plan and activity and can request information.
4	<p><b>Community Planning Joint Meeting – Area Forum</b> Area Committee, Area Manager, Area Team, Area Management Team (Strategic and Operational) Area Community Planning Group</p>	Twice a year	Area Manager and Community Planning Officer	The Area Forum is the place where each level of the Area Management Framework will come together; Area Committee, Aberdeenshire Council Services, Community Planning Partners, and any other relevant local representative as required The Forum will consider and discuss common themes within the Area and will meet twice yearly. It is also an opportunity to consider progress with the Area Plan and Area Community Plan in a workshop session.
5	<p><b>Directors/Area Managers</b></p>	Every two months	Director of Education and Children’s Services	Monitoring of operational activities to mainstream area working, performance, area plans and area matters.

**Ongoing operational activity**

3.10 Area Working is a standing item on Directorate Management Team (DMT) agendas. There is a formal meeting arranged by each of the Directors approximately every six weeks but there are also more frequent shorter meetings so matters can be raised quickly. This gives the opportunity for all members of the DMT to raise matters about service areas and area working

noting that it is not limited to the remit of the services within that directorate. All area matters can be raised and discussed and then decisions made on the action to be taken. Whilst the Area Managers can provide a general update under this item, it is hoped that the opportunity to support the mainstreaming of Area Working ensures a good pace of embedding the ethos. The effectiveness of this arrangement can be monitored by the Directors at every meeting and then further discussed at the Directors/Area Managers meeting that is held every two months.

- 3.11 Elected Members will see an improvement in the reporting of area Committees' comments to Policy Committees, which are gathered as part of the formal consultation process in relation to policy development and review but also other decisions. This process starts with the submission of comments in an agreed template (managed by Area Committee Officers) and the report to Policy Committee being monitored by Legal Officers for compliance in terms of approach and consistency. There is a clear expectation and instruction to officers that the scheduling of consultation reports to area committee must ensure that all comments are able to be fully incorporated into the policy committee report and that verbal updates are for exceptional reasons only. Section 3.12 below explains an opportunity of how comments from area committees are considered by policy committees.
- 3.12 Area committee Chairs and policy committee Chairs are able to monitor the impact of the ongoing activities to mainstream Area Working at the regular meetings as detailed in the tables. There was some interest in how a committee itself could monitor and evaluate how effective it is in terms of provision of comments into policy development, policy review and other strategy (perhaps a performance indicator in an area plan amongst other options) as well as how a committee could self-evaluate generally in terms of its effectiveness. Garioch Area Committee (2017-2022) asked officers to consider how to progress this discussion. A workshop was proposed but due to the proximity of the election, it was decided that Garioch Area Committee (2022-2027) will take the time to consider if this is a matter that it wishes to progress. The recently appointed Chair and Vice Chair will be consulted first to ascertain views on this experimental suggestion. It would be the role of the meetings of the Area Chairs with Chief Officers to monitor the progression.
- 3.13 Elected members are currently undertaking a series of induction modules to ensure that they are appropriately provided with the tools and information for them to carry out their role. The induction programme was developed via a member/officer working group and an officer group with representatives from across the services and the area teams. The focus has very much been on working as an area committee, good decision making, and getting to know the area and the officers that deliver services in the area. The embedding of the Area Working ethos was recognised as a strong aim during the extensive process of developing the programme and sets a clear steer for the next five years.

## Ongoing Strategic Activity

- 3.14 At the Business Services Committee meeting on 23 June 2022, it is considering the review of the Public Convenience Strategy, area requirements as part of the Strategy, the role of and delegation to the area committees, the operational remit sitting with the Head of Property and Facilities Management following consultation with the relevant Area Manager and how local delivery can be incorporated into the Area Plans so that area committees can monitor and oversee local service delivery. As with all policy review, the area committees will be consulted. At the time of writing this report, Business Services Committee had not yet considered the report at its meeting. Therefore, a verbal update can be provided.
- 3.15 There have been discussions on the role and reporting arrangements for Area Managers in terms of the devolvement of regeneration as agreed in the Chief Officer Review. Regeneration will now sit within the Place Strategy which will be co designed with Area Managers and Planning Service and will be reported to the relevant committee in due course.
- 3.16 Procedures Committee is due to receive a report from the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services in terms of the role of area committees in relation to the delivery of Landscape Services. This report is currently scheduled for the meeting of Procedures Committee on 31 August 2022 (date still to be confirmed). The restructure of Environment and Infrastructure Services in ongoing and Landscape Services now sits in the remit of Head of Environment and Sustainability. A Service Manager has recently been appointed whom will cover all six areas in respect of Landscape Services. There is further discussion required on how participatory budgeting can play a positive part of how Landscape Services delivers the services to the communities of Aberdeenshire. Members will be able to input into the consideration of remit and role via the planned report to Procedures Committee.

## 4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 4.1 All of the Council's strategic priorities are relevant to this report. Effective area working supports the delivery of the pillars, priorities, and key principles.

<b>Pillar</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Our People	Education Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Infrastructure Resilient Communities
Our Economy	Economy & Enterprise Estate Modernisation

Underpinning the Priorities are a number of key principles. They are right people, right places, right time; responsible finances; climate and sustainability; Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plans; human rights and public protection; tackling poverty and inequalities; digital

infrastructure and economy.

- 4.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is (are) agreed.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Financial			x
Staffing			x
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland			x
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			x
Climate Change and Sustainability			x
Health and Wellbeing			x
Town Centre First			x

- 4.3 The staffing / financial implications will be managed within existing staffing arrangements and agreed budgets.
- 4.4 An integrated impact assessment is not required, as confirmed during the screening process, because this report is an update on the implementation of Full Council's recommendations. (IIA – 000313)
- 4.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:
- ACORP004 Business and organisational transformation (including ensuring governance structures support change; and, managing the pace of change), the mitigation of which is the reporting to Full Council [Corporate Risk Register](#).

## **5 Scheme of Governance**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 Full Council is able to consider this item in terms of its general remit in the [List of Committee Powers in Part 2A](#) of the Scheme of Governance. Full Council has not delegated the matter to another committee and has instructed the submission of reports.

**LAURENCE FINDLAY**  
**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**  
 Report prepared by Ann Overton, Garioch Area Manager  
 Date 16 June 2022