

FORMARTINE AREA COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2022

ONLINE MEETING

Present: Councillors I Taylor (Chair and present for Items 4 to 10), J Crawley, I Davidson, A Forsyth, A Hassan (Chair for Items 1 to 3), G Lang, L McAllister, J Nicol, G Owen and D Ritchie

Apologies: Councillors P Johnston and A Stirling

Officers: E Brown (Formartine Area Manager), C Young (Area Committee Officer), A de Candia (Solicitor, Legal and People), A Davidson (Senior Planner, Planning & Economy), C Roff (Waste Support Leader, Environment and Sustainability), C Henderson (Business Change Manager, Customer and Digital Services), J Rigby (Digital Stakeholder Lead Officer, Planning and Economy), R O'Hare (Legal Services Manager, Legal and People) and S Boyes (Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service)

The Chair made the following statement at the start of the meeting:

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, our longest serving British Monarch, passed away at Balmoral on Thursday 8 September.

The admiration and respect for Her Majesty was highlighted by the monumental outpouring of love, and affection, from the people of Aberdeenshire as the Royal cortege travelled through the region.

With the passing of The Queen, we witness the end of an era, but welcome a new one, with the accession of King Charles III as our new Monarch. We can now look forward to his coronation, reign and a new chapter in our history.

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Members had no interests to declare in accordance with the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In making decisions on the items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act, 2010:-

1. to have regard to the need to:-
 - (i) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;

- (ii) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (iii) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
2. where an Integrated Impact Assessment was provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching its decision.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING OF 23 AUGUST 2022

The Committee had before them, and **approved** as a correct record, the minute of the meeting of 23 August 2022.

4. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – FORMARTINE AREA COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR Q1 – 1 APRIL TO 30 JUNE 2022

There had been circulated a joint report by a Local Senior Officer of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Director of Business Services of Aberdeenshire Council, which informed members of how the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service was performing locally in Formartine, against key performance measures and associated targets as set out in the Aberdeenshire Local Fire and Rescue Plan and the Formartine Multi-Member Ward Plan, for the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 June 2022.

The Station Commander was in attendance to introduce the report and provide a local update to the members.

During discussion, the members were pleased to hear that staffing numbers were up and asked about staff retention measures. In noting that there had been a significant increase in Road Traffic Accidents, members also asked about the Safe Drive Stay Alive campaign and whether this incorporated things such as fuel economic driving.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- (1) **noted** the performance report relating to the period 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2022, and
- (2) **noted** the local operational matters arising together with key resource issues, as detailed within the appendix to the report.

5. LOCAL REVIEW BODY DECISION NOTICES

A. LRB 546 – APP/2021/2733 – Site at Milltown of Drumwhindle, Ellon

There had been circulated, and was noted a Review Decision Notice dated 24 August 2022, advising of a decision by the Local Review Body to agree with the determination

reviewed by it and refusing Planning Permission in Principle in accordance with the Appointed Officer's decision, as set out within the notice.

The salient points to be acknowledged by the Committee and the Service had been outlined with the information provided to the Members.

B. LRB 551 – APP/2021/1978 – Site at Unit 1A, Middlemuir Croft, Whitecairns

There had been circulated, and was noted a Review Decision Notice dated 24 August 2022, advising that the Local Review Body agreed to uphold the Notice of Review and reversed the decision reviewed by it, granting Full Planning Permission subject to the conditions specified within the notice.

The salient points to be acknowledged by the Committee and the Service had been outlined with the information provided to the Members.

C. LRB 552 – APP/2021/2061 – Land to the South West of Nether Auquhadlie, Auchnagatt, Ellon

There had been circulated, and was noted a Review Decision Notice dated 24 August 2022, advising that the Local Review Body agreed to uphold the Notice of Review and reversed the decision reviewed by it, granting Planning Permission in Principle subject to the conditions specified within the notice.

The salient points to be acknowledged by the Committee and the Service had been outlined with the information provided to the Members.

6. HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRE HYBRID BOOKING SYSTEM PROPOSAL

There had been circulated a report dated 18 August 2022 by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services, outlining a proposal for a hybrid booking system for Household Recycling Centres. Following a report to Infrastructure Services Committee on 20 January 2022, the Committee agreed that the Member Officer Working Group be requested to consider a customisation of the service, on a site-by-site basis, providing further opportunities for users of the service, and to report back to Infrastructure Services Committee.

During discussion, the members asked about the barrier at the Ellon Recycling Centre and who was responsible for rectifying this; noted that tyres were not accepted at recycling centres but they could be left at the transfer stations in Macduff, Ellon and Banchory on certain days at certain times; noted that fixed penalties were issued to those caught fly tipping; and highlighted that although some residents in Formartine did not find it easy to use a booking system as they did not feel comfortable using technology, there was also opportunity for bookings to be made by telephone.

Thereafter, the Committee: **noted** the recommendations to the Waste Service and Infrastructure Services Committee on the proposed trial of a hybrid booking system for a 12-month period from 1 December 2022 at Macduff and Stonehaven Household Recycling Centres, to allow data to be gathered with a view to implementing where practicable in other sites; and provided the following **comments**:

- a) It might be helpful to close the quieter centres during some weekdays to allow openings where there is demand in the evenings,
- b) As some people prefer booking slots and others like attending freely, could there be scope for a mix, for example bookable slots at the weekends but open attendance on some weekdays,
- c) If there's concern about trade persons attending open slots, could this be monitored using security cameras,
- d) Do we have any detail about where trade waste is going?
- e) Can anything else be done to try and reduce fly tipping and do we have a further break down of what is being fly tipped,
- f) Could alternative systems be considered to the booking system, for example permits,
- g) One issue with the current booking system is that residents with vans or trailers are being treated as commercial users,
- h) Another issue is that the system in place does not pick up frequent users,
- i) Can we widen the scope of the trial to include more than the two suggested sites, and
- j) If the trial goes well, can we consider shortening the trial period and implementing new strategies sooner.

7. ABERDEENSHIRE'S DIGITAL STRATEGY: PROGRESS UPDATE

There had been circulated a report dated 20 July 2022 by the Director of Business Services which provided an update on the progress of Aberdeenshire's Digital Strategy which was previously reported to Business Services Committee on 8 January 2022, and the Bulletin previously circulated to Area and Policy Committees during August / September 2021. It provided a background to the holistic approach to digital inclusion across Aberdeenshire and set out the key areas of progress across the suite of projects which received funding under the Digital Strategy package of support approved by committee in January 2021.

Officers introduced the report and presented further detail on digital connectivity and digital inclusion, highlighting the support available to residents in Formartine, encouraging everyone to share this widely and signpost any interested parties to the service.

Following discussion, the Committee: **noted** the report which was been considered by all Area Committees in September; and provided the following **comments** for the Business Services Committee:

- a) How do we identify those who are digitally excluded, for example we have residents who do not wish to be connected, how to we keep them informed of services available?
- b) How can we ensure that suppliers are providing an adequate level of service to customers?
- c) Do we need to be aware of any additional costs to residents?
- d) We need to be assured that Aberdeenshire Council remains on the front foot for digitalisation, with our ICT having sufficient budget to upgrade our meeting rooms,
- e) We are behind the curve in digital terms in Aberdeenshire as we have a unique wiring system to the exchange. This will have an impact on the infrastructure required and should be detailed in future reports,
- f) Breaking down works required into bite-sized contracts is welcomed,
- g) If there are no masts in place then customers cannot be connected,
- h) Our rural businesses need more than a hub available to them,
- i) In considering master data management, a move towards all systems updating at once is welcomed,
- j) Are customers being informed of all the options that are available to them, including sim cards and hub options?
- k) We appear to have only spent 0.5% of the budget for frontline employees but note that this should increase, and
- l) Noting that the Service intends to attend Community Council meetings to highlight the assistance available, it would be helpful if these sessions could be advertised as widely as possible.

8. HYBRID MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

There had been circulated a report dated 30 August 2022 by the Director of Business Services which sought feedback from the Committee on future arrangements for hybrid meetings with a view to informing the report to Full Council on 29 September on the wider review of hybrid meeting options. In accordance with the decision of Full Council on 23 September 2021, where the Council agreed a Choice Based Blended Model for Fully Virtual and Hybrid Meetings, meeting venues must have a functioning hybrid option for any online attendees. Fully in-person meetings would only take place where all participants have chosen to attend in person, creating an in-person meeting by default.

During discussion, members shared their differing views on whether the Formartine Area Committee meetings should continue to be fully online or be hybrid to allow in-person attendance, considering the pros and cons of each option. Some felt that it was beneficial to have people together in one setting, or to at least have that option with the current cost of living crisis, where others found the flexibility of online meetings incredibly helpful for a variety of reasons. It was also noted that Formartine did not currently have a venue within their area that would allow hybrid meetings to take place.

In considering whether there was a need for livestreaming to continue, it was recognised that it was very resource intense in terms of the staffing required, with

officers highlighting that the meeting was also recorded and could be available to view afterwards. Members had concern that the recording could be redacted but were assured that this would only happen in exceptional circumstances, and advice would be sought from the Head of Legal and People in the first instance. It was also noted that in-person meetings were not recorded prior to covid.

Thereafter, the Committee provided the following **comments** to Full Council on the future arrangements for hybrid meetings of Formartine Area Committee:

- a) Some members preferred the option to meet in person whilst others welcomed the option to partake online,
- b) Further discussion was required around live-streaming and whether this was required in addition to the recording of meetings,
- c) It would be helpful to have further detail on how many people accessed the Committee meetings using the live-stream, and
- d) The proposed new build office in Ellon should be developed to allow hybrid meetings.

In summary, the Committee **agreed** that they wished to remain online but to have some in-person hybrid meetings, depending on the agenda. Gordon House was the preferred venue for any hybrid meetings, should the venue be available.

9. AREA COMMITTEE BUDGET 2022-23 – APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING

With reference to the Minute of the Meeting of this Committee of 26 April 2022 (Item 8), at which the broad allocation of the Area Committee Budget for 2022-23 was agreed, there was circulated a report dated 24 August 2022 by the Director of Business Services which outlined applications for funding that had been received for consideration by members.

After considering all the information provided, the Committee:

- (1) **agreed to award £5,000** to the Daviot Amenities Improvement Group, towards improvements to the Daviot Play Park, and
- (2) **agreed to award £2,000** to the Rotary Club of Ellon, towards Christmas Lights and an associated switch-on event for Ellon.

10. STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

The Committee had before them and **noted** a report by the Formartine Area Manager, updating on matters that had previously been discussed by the Committee but remained to be resolved.