

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

PLANNING & BUILDING STANDARDS MEMBER/OFFICER WORKING GROUP

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 12 SEPTEMBER 2018

Present: Cllr Peter Argyle (Chair), Cllr David Aitchison, Cllr Martin Ford, Cllr Alastair Forsyth, Cllr Ian Mollison Cllr Norman Smith

Apologies: Cllr John Cox and Cllr Fergus Hood

Officers: Bruce Stewart, Planning Service Manager (BPS)
Kenny Simpson, Building Standards Manager (KS)
Maureen Corley, Planning Service Manager (MC)
Piers Blaxter, Policy Team Leader (PB)
Fraser Napier, Admin Support Assistant (Minutes)

1. Minute of Meeting of Planning and Building Standards Member/Officer Working Group of 25 April, 2018

The Minute of 25 April 2018 was approved.

2. Fraserburgh Shop Publication

MC advised that the Fraserburgh 2021 Project was a grant scheme and could be used for shopfront improvements. It was hoped that a specific project would begin work soon.

Peterhead had a similar scheme in the past that caused some conflict with shop owners as it had little variation. A sensitive approach in Fraserburgh would be used.

3. Building Standards Update

KS advised that Building Standards were currently unable to meet their target of responding to 95% of applications within 20 days, but that they managed to respond to 91% within that timeframe.

In 2017 Aberdeenshire was assessed to be a strong performing Authority, and therefore, had been appointed the right to be verifiers of Building Regulations for the next 6 years. Aberdeenshire Council, Building Standards was recognised as one of the top 3 performing authorities in Scotland.

On 1 July 2017 a fee increase came into force for the first time in 10 years. The fee for undertaking unauthorised works increased by 300%.

In December 2017 the Building Standards Division carried out a National Customer Service Survey, Aberdeenshire Council scored 8.4 out of 10, which is better than the national average of 6.7 out of 10.

KS advised that there were arguments for and against going paperless in Building Standards and that tablets will be used in place of paper-based plans on a case-by-case basis.

A staffing age profile has found that over 50% of the Aberdeenshire Building Standards staff are over 50 years old and Service is looking at succession planning.

4. Local Development Plan Update

PB advised that there has been significant progress on the LDP since the last MOWG. All bid sites have been discussed with CCs, Area Committees and relevant services within the council. So far there has been very positive feedback from Members.

Settlement appendices have been developed for inclusion in the LDP. A MIR would be considered by Area Committees during October.

Key issues: SDP have increased the number of new houses that need to be found in Aberdeenshire, and this is proving not to be easy. PB advised that they are looking to accept reserve sites, sites that are not ideal but are good enough to be accepted. This increase in housing numbers may not be popular with communities.

PB advised that 19 main issues have been identified that are considered worthy of debate in the MIR. It was intended to publish a draft proposed LDP document along with the MIR.

The draft proposed LDP will not be published to Area Committees, but it would be available electronically on the public Aberdeenshire Council website.

In terms of the Strategic Environmental Assessment, an Environment Report would be required to be prepared to show how we are taking our environmental responsibilities on board. Joseph Somevi, who specialised on that topic, was no longer available, so the Policy team have had to take on that role.

A Planning Education Scheme has been set up and will be led by the Planning Information & Delivery Team, who will go to secondary schools in the near future to talk about planning and what students think about the MIR.

The draft MIR is going to Area Committees, where Councillors were being asked to “sense check” the document. The main risk with the MIR is the housing numbers, and the increase in number is likely to cause concerns for a number of affected communities.

5. Date of Next Meeting

21 November 2018 (14:00 in Committee Room 2)

6. Proposed Meeting Dates for 2019

Wednesday 13 March 2019
Wednesday 12 June 2019
Wednesday 11 September 2019
Wednesday 11 December 2019

(All meetings will start at 14:00 in Committee Room 2)

