

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee

Tuesday, 14 November 2023

Council Chambers, Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX

PRESENT

Councillor Peter Bloomfield, Councillor John Cowe, Councillor John Divers, Councillor David Gordon, Councillor Juli Harris, Councillor Sandy Keith, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Paul McBain, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor John Stuart, Councillor Draeyk Van Der Horn, Councillor Sonya Warren

APOLOGIES

Councillor Amber Dunbar

IN ATTENDANCE

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Economic Growth and Development, Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Head of Housing and Property Services, Transportation Manager, Strategic Planning and Development Manager, Asset Manager (Commercial Buildings), Mrs Anderson, Senior Engineer (Transportation), Ms Penny, Engineer (Traffic), Sustainable Travel Officer, Ms Ward, Climate Change Strategy Officer, Mr Gunn, Climate Change Officer, Energy Officer, Legal Services Manager and Lissa Rowan, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the Meeting.

1 Chair

Councillor Macrae, being Chair of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee, chaired the meeting.

2 Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests

In terms of Standing Orders 21 and 23 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from Group Leaders or Spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

3 Minute of meeting dated 5 September 2023

Under reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee dated 5 September 2023, Councillor Divers stated that, although the report was on the Egin Parking Review, he had made significant comment in relation to car parking charges and asked that a summary of this be included in the Minute due to the particular interest in this topic.

In response, the Chair advised that the Clerk would review the webcast and amend the minute accordingly in consultation with Councillor Divers and the Chair.

Thereafter, the minute of the meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee dated 5 September 2023 was submitted and approved subject to an amendment to paragraph 8 regarding car parking charges.

4 Written Questions

The Committee noted the following Written Questions submitted by Councillor Van Der Horn and subsequent response from the Council.

Question to Committee on use of Glyphosate

Relating to 7 February 2023 committee: "(iv) that a further report be brought to a future meeting of this Committee detailing how Glyphosate will be phased out by 2025."

Could this committee have an update on the levels (quantities) of Glyphosate used by this council and how much we have reduced its used since the ED&I committee in February.

Can we be given an update as to what extent officers have monitored and identified alternatives? Finally, when may we expect this report?

RESPONSE

Since the Committee meeting in February 2023 a total of 956.5 litres of glyphosate-based products has been applied. This is a reduction in the region of 49% compared to the previous year (1950 litres used in 2022). It should be noted that this reduction is not solely down to changes in working practices as agreed at Committee. Other factors also influenced the application of glyphosate including the weather, staffing levels and reduced requests for spraying from other Council departments and external third parties.

Just also to note that the reductions now achieved this year are in addition to the measures already taken but not recorded as referenced in the previous Economic Development and Infrastructure committee (ED&I) report and before baselining data ie.: 3.10 The Council's Open Space Operations team recognise that herbicides containing glyphosate continue to provide the most cost effective and efficient method of weed control across the Council's estate. Measures have however been taken to reduce the use of glyphosate where possible. This includes reducing treatments around amenity grass plots where grass cutting machinery can easily access to control vegetation, and mulching of some shrub beds and other amenity plantings to suppress weeds. In addition, the team has introduced areas of less frequent grass cutting to allow wildflowers to thrive to support biodiversity and to reduce the need for herbicides in these areas

High level information regarding alternative options to the use of glyphosate were provided in the report to the ED&I committee on 7 February 2023. A follow on report will be presented to the ED&I committee in February 2024. The report will outline the works and resources needed to plan for phasing out the use of glyphosate. If the report is approved by the ED&I committee, a further report

would need to be presented to the Corporate Committee for any funding implications to be approved.

Councillor Van Der Horn thanked Officers for their response however raised concern in relation to reported links of glyphosate exposure and other pesticide sprays to cancer and asked if there had been any such reports to the Council.

In response, the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services advised that she did not have that information to hand and would provide this to the Committee after the meeting.

5 Active Travel Strategy and Action Plan Annual Update

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asking the Committee to note the progress made over the past year on the delivery of the Active Travel Strategy (ATS), which sets out the Council's vision and action plan over the next 5 years for Active Travel in Moray. The report also sought approval for the use of a new Prioritisation Tool which has been developed to inform the decision making process for new Active Travel infrastructure schemes.

The Committee joined the Chair in welcoming Kelly Wiltshire, Transportation Manager, to her first meeting of the Committee since her new appointment.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

1. note the update in Appendix 1 of the report and progress made in delivering the ATS Action Plan within the first year of the strategy; and
2. approve the use of the Prioritisation Tool, to inform the prioritisation of new Active Travel infrastructure schemes.

6 Road Safety Plan to 2030

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asking the Committee to approve the draft Moray Road Safety Plan to 2030 subject to further stakeholder consultation. The report also informed the Committee of the outcome of investigation of reported injury accidents on the A98 Fochabers to Aberdeenshire boundary road.

With the permission of the Chair, Councillor Warren read a statement from the Buckie and District Community Council in relation to concerns regarding the current speed limit at Arradoul and agreed to forward this on to council officers.

In response, Mrs Anderson, Senior Engineer (Transportation) advised that road safety at Arradoul was under review pending further information from Police Scotland and offered a session with members of the Community Council in the New Year to provide an update in relation to road safety in this area.

Thereafter, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

1. approve the draft Road Safety Plan to 2030 attached as Appendix 1 to the report for consultation with stakeholders;
2. note the outcome of the investigation of reported injury accidents on the A98 over the ten year period 2013 to 2022; and
3. note that a session would be offered to Members of the Community Council in relation to road safety in Arradoul.

7 Port Marine Safety Code Quarterly Report

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Committee on matters of Marine Safety and compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) for the period Q1 and Q2 year 2023/24.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to note the safety performance, fulfilling its function as Duty Holder under the Port Marine Safety Code.

8 Biodiversity Duty Report 2021-2023

Councillor Cowe left the meeting at this juncture.

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asking the Committee to agree the content of the Council's Biodiversity Duty Report 2021-2023.

During discussion, it was noted that one of the purposes of biodiversity reporting is to encourage staff, partners and customers to engage with, understand and consider biodiversity and it was noted that training is to be provided to officers and it was queried whether this training could be provided to Elected Members also.

In response, the Strategic Planning and Development Manager advised that new biodiversity guidance was emerging and that a training programme for officers would be provided in the New Year which could be extended to Elected Members.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed:

1. the content of the Biodiversity Duty Report 2021-23 set out in Appendix 1 of the report that will be issued to the Scottish Government; and
2. that a training programme for officers on biodiversity would be extended to Elected Members.

9 Consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asking the Committee to agree the response to the Scottish Government's Consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity.

During discussion, Councillor Van Der Horn queried whether the 6 large landscapes mentioned at section 2 of the response should be 9 landscape and seaside coves.

In response, the Climate Change Strategy Officer advised that this has been an oversight and agreed to amend this section accordingly.

Councillor Van Der Horn further noted the gaps in consultation response due to limited staff time and priorities however stated that these areas have significant impact on the Council particularly regarding loss of some species and national parks and asked that further work be completed prior to the response being submitted.

In response, the Strategic Planning and Development Manager suggested that officers liaise with Councillor Van Der Horn in relation to the gaps in the consultation and that he be given delegated authority to submit the response thereafter. This was agreed subject to the response being circulated to the Committee prior to submission.

Thereafter, the Committee unanimously agreed the response to the Consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity that will be submitted to the Scottish Government subject to:

- changing "6 large landscapes" mentioned at section 2 of the response to "9 landscape and seaside coves"; and
- officers liaising with Councillor Van Der Horn in relation to completing the gaps in the consultation and that the Strategic Planning and Development Manager be given delegated authority to submit the response thereafter with the response being circulated to the Committee prior to submission.

10 Public Sector Climate Change Reporting

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Committee of the Council's Public Sector Report on Compliance with Climate Change Duties 2022/23 and updates to the reporting methodology and statutory duties.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to note:

1. the Council's Public Sector Report on Compliance with Climate Change Duties 2022/23; and
2. updates made to the reporting methodology for 2022/23 and statutory duties.

11 Industrial Portfolio Annual Report 2022-23

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) which set out the annual performance of the Council's Industrial Portfolio in 2022/23 and asked the Committee to approve in principle, a related sale of a property.

Following consideration, the Committee welcomed the good performance of the Council's Industrial Portfolio and thereafter unanimously agreed:

1. to note the Annual Report for 2022/23; and
2. in principle, to the sale of the property in Lossiemouth as detailed in paragraph 6.3 of the report.

12 Suspension of Standing Orders

The Chair sought the agreement of the Committee to suspend Standing Order 77 to allow the meeting to progress beyond 12.45 pm. This was unanimously agreed.

13 Annual Report on Energy Strategy and Actions

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) setting out the annual energy and water performance of the Council's non-domestic building portfolio in 2022/23.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed to:

1. note the Annual Energy Report for 2022/23 set out in the report;
2. note that in 2022/23 the Council's energy consumption in non-domestic operational properties decreased by 7%, and the energy bill increased by 41.4% (£1,368,365);
3. approve the update of Energy Policy at Appendix I of the report, to align with the mandatory targets set by the Scottish Government and agrees that officers review the Energy Policy and Strategy annually in order to align its goals with the Route Map to Net Zero; and
4. note the making of a SALIX grant application as set out in Paragraph 7.6 of the report.

Councillor Cowe re-joined the meeting at this juncture.

14 Performance Report (Environmental and Commercial Services) - Period to September 2023

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Committee of the performance of the service for the period to 30 September 2023.

The Committee joined the Chair in commending the m.connect service for being shortlisted for the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) Highlands & Islands annual awards and being runner up in the category 'Excellence in Innovation' and thereafter unanimously agreed to note:

1. performance in the areas of Service Planning, Service Performance and other related data to the end of September 2023;
2. the actions being taken to improve performance where required.

15 Performance Report (Economic Growth and Development Services) - Period to September 2023

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informing the Committee of the performance of the service for the period to 30 September 2023.

The Committee joined the Chair in commending the work of the Lossie 2-3 Group and the services they provide which are of good use to the community and thereafter unanimously agreed to note:

1. performance in the areas of Service Planning, Service Performance and other related data to the end of September 2023;
2. the actions being taken to improve performance where required.

16 Question Time

CCTV and 20 MPH Limit Zones Update

Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services (ED&IS) Committee dated 5 September 2023, Councillor Warren stated that she would speak to Officers directly with regard to her questions on car parking and the weighbridge however sought an update on queries raised previously in relation to CCTV and 20 mph speed zones.

In response, the Chair advised that the response from Police Scotland on CCTV had been uploaded to CMIS and that he was still awaiting a response from the Scottish Government on 20 mph speed zones however Councillor Dunbar, Depute Chair of the ED&IS Committee is meeting with the Minister for Transportation in the near future where this could be discussed.