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**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC GROWTH, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE ON 13 APRIL 2021**

**SUBJECT: ARCHAEOLOGY: ABERDEENSHIRE SHARED SERVICE AGREEMENT**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & FINANCE)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Committee with proposals for a Shared Service Agreement for provision of an Archaeology Service for the Council, with a specific focus on assisting the planning service and other sections where required.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee following a decision of Moray Council on 17 June 2020 to agree a simplified committee structure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of this committee the combining of the delegated responsibilities of Economic Development and Infrastructure Services, Community Services (Housing and Property) and Finance (budget, capital and revenue monitoring) (para 9 of the minute refers).

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree:-**

- i) to enter into a Shared Service Agreement with Aberdeenshire Council for the provision of an Archaeological Service in accordance with the terms set out in the draft agreement; and**
- ii) to the cost of the Shared Service Agreement being fixed at £15,000 for 3 years, with the amount then being reviewed for the 2024/25 financial year.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Since re-organisation in the 1990's Aberdeenshire Council has been providing an Archaeological Service to Moray Council. From 2009 Moray Council has entered into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for fixed 3 year periods with Aberdeenshire Council to deliver this service.

3.2 The services that Aberdeenshire Council has provided as part of the Service Level Agreement are set out below:

- update monthly the Council Historic Environment Record on Geographical Information Systems (GIS), note details of sites on computer database records, and provide the Council with electronic copies of those records;
- acquire and manage archaeological information on behalf of the Council by means of aerial and ground surveys as required;
- advise the Council's Planning Service by providing preliminary advice on planning applications and associated consents, also during the determination of planning applications and any other associated consents with a view to ensuring the assessment, evaluation and recording and if required preservation of archaeological sites and findspots within the Council's geographical area in terms of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) and Planning Advice Note (PAN) 2/2011;
- provide input to any relevant planning enforcement matters, and planning appeals, including attendance at a hearing or Public Local Inquiry; to prepare briefs for developers requiring them to carry out appropriate action in terms of SPP and HEPS and to monitor any development likely to affect archaeological remains and to provide updated notes for the Council on a monthly basis;
- assist the Council's Planning Service with the preparation of a Regional Spatial Strategy and policies for inclusion in the Local Development Plan.
- liaise with national and local bodies including without prejudice to the foregoing generality Historic Environment Scotland, National Museums of Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Transport Scotland, Scottish Water, Electricity Authority, the Council's Roads and other service departments, individual landowners, developers; to arrange for surveys as required and to provide copies of all relevant information to the Council's Planning Service.
- be available to the Council one day per week.
- provide an advisory and information service to any service or department of the Council as required.

3.3 An annual report is produced by Aberdeenshire Archaeological Service. The report produced in 2019-20 is attached at **Appendix 1**.

#### **4. PROPOSALS**

4.1 Aberdeenshire Council as part of the latest SLA review has suggested that a Shared Service Agreement (SSA) be considered as a way of consolidating the current fixed term arrangements. There is considered to be merit for moving to a SSA as this would remove any uncertainty regarding service delivery, particularly in the run up to the period of renewal. When dealing with major planning applications/projects continuity of this specialist advice is critical and

for this reason the SSA approach would be the preferred option. This means that SSA will run continuously with 3 year price reviews with provision for either party to terminate the agreement removing the risk of having to renew the agreement every 3 years.

- 4.2 The service that is delivered to Moray Council by Aberdeenshire Council has been of a high professional standard. Where input has been required at both preliminary enquiry stages of development proposals and upon submission of formal applications the attendance at meetings and receipt of advice has always been provided timeously. This is important because it addresses the risk of developments being stalled by archaeological issues being raised late in the day and fulfils our statutory duties.
- 4.3 Looking ahead work will be focused on the preparation of the next Local Development Plan, A96 Dualling, major project work and inputting into other S.36/S.37 consents that come forward.
- 4.4 In addition, the knowledge and training provided as part of the Service Level Agreement helps to improve understanding and increase awareness of archaeological issues which are an important material planning consideration.

## **5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

### **(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

The Shared Service Agreement will provide an important framework to ensure that the Council's statutory responsibility in relation to Archaeology is maintained.

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

The Archaeological Service enables Moray Council to satisfy the relevant requirements of Our Place in Time – The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland (2014), Scotland's Archaeology Strategy (2016), National Planning Framework 3, Scottish Planning Policy, Planning Advice Note 2/2011, Adopted Moray Local Development Plan 2020 and Cairngorms National Park Adopted Plan 2021.

### **(c) Financial implications**

There is existing budget allocated within Development Management for £14,853. An additional £143 each financial year will be required to cover to cover the cost of the Shared Service Agreement over the next three years. The amount will then be the subject of review for the 2024/25 financial year.

### **(d) Risk Implications**

There is a risk to the Council if the integrity of the planning system is not upheld through the inability to adequately assess and mitigate the impacts of new developments on archaeological sites.

### **(e) Staffing Implications**

None.

**(f) Property**

None.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

There are no equalities or socio economic implications arising directly from this report.

**(h) Consultations**

Consultation has taken place with the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth & Development, the Chief Financial Officer, the Payments Manger, the Strategic Planning & Development Manager, the Economic Growth & Regeneration Manager, the Legal Services Manager, Lissa Rowan, Committee Services Officer, and the Equal Opportunities Officer.

**6. CONCLUSION**

**6.1 Entering into a Shared Service Agreement with Aberdeenshire Council for the provision of an Archaeological Service in accordance with the terms set out in the draft agreement will consolidate and provide more certainty for the close working arrangements that have become established and effective over a significant period of time.**

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Background Papers:

Annual Report – Aberdeenshire Archaeological Service  
2019/20

Ref:

<http://spman.moray.gov.uk/MANComRepDraftSite/layouts/DocIdRedir.aspx?ID=SPMAN-813460984-96>