

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee

Tuesday, 21 June 2022

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

PRESENT

Councillor Peter Bloomfield, Councillor John Cowe, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Amber Dunbar, Councillor David Gordon, Councillor Juli Harris, Councillor Sandy Keith, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Paul McBain, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor Kathleen Robertson, Councillor Sonya Warren

Councillor Van Der Horn planned on joining the meeting remotely however due to technical difficulties this was not possible. He therefore took part by watching the live webcast and emailed questions and comments which were put to the Chair by the Legal Adviser via Committee Services.

IN ATTENDANCE

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Acting Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Head of Economic Growth and Development, Head of Housing and Property, Environmental Protection Manager, Consultancy Manager, Waste Manager, Legal Services Manager and Mrs Lissa Rowan, Committee Services Officer as Clerk to the Committee.

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 Order 20 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 Resolution

The meeting resolved that in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the public and media representatives be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items of business appearing at the relevant paragraphs of this minute as specified below, so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the appropriate paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Paragraph No. of Minute

Paragraph No. of Schedule 7A

13

8 and 9

4 Minute of Meeting dated 22 March 2022

The Minute of the meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee dated 22 March 2022 was submitted and approved.

5 Withdrawal of Cloddach Bridge Structural Assessment Report

The Chair stated that Item 6 “Cloddach Bridge Structural Assessment” had been withdrawn as an electronic petition had been received outwith the statutory 3 day notice period. He stated that Officers will review the petition and update the report, if necessary, for submission to a future meeting of this Committee. This was noted.

6 Written Questions

The Committee noted the following written question from Councillor Warren:

Many constituents have been in contact regarding the process the Council use for weed control, many seeing it as a blanket, indiscriminate use of weed killer along many of our paths, parks and playing fields. I've been informed by officers that the weed killer that we use contains glyphosate, which can be harmful to wildlife, humans and our environment. It is also my understanding that some authorities have already stopped using Glyphosate for weed control.

Can details be provided in regard to the process that is used to decide which areas are treated in this manner, if other alternative methods can be used for weed control in these areas; what best practice can be learned from other authorities, and whether this includes stopping the use of weed killers containing glyphosate?

RESPONSE

The Council does use weed-killer to manage vegetation growth on paths, verges and hard standing where the active ingredient used is glyphosate, a legally approved (UK and Europe) non-selective systemic weed killer.

The effective use of this weed killer allows us to manage our open spaces (e.g. around obstacles such as lampposts, cemetery paths and Highway streets) in a cost effective manner. That said we do try to minimise usage and we also utilise other forms of weed/vegetation control such as strimming and mulching of shrubberies.

Benchmarking has recently been carried out via APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence). Some authorities have used Foam Stream Systems. These systems do work on hard standing areas, but more frequent visits are required. Also, due to the restriction of the hoses, packing and unpacking when the vehicle needs to move means that they have limited use. They wouldn't be suitable for treating long linear areas along footpaths, highways and housing estates, although could well be a great alternative for play areas, game courts, public realm etc. We understand that they can't be used on landscaped areas as they would have a detrimental effect on plants and soil structure.

In conclusion there are some alternatives to glyphosate however they all come with their own factors or environmental factors that must be considered when making a decision on what control measures are being used, this would also include additional treatments due to weed control being less effective.

- Additional or increased costs for alternative products,
- Increased resources and costs for additional labour and vehicles including fuel.
- Environmental factors, additional significant water usage, CO2 emissions.
- Public disruption, application in busy areas, hoses, foam, hot steam. (hoses, pipes trailer, generators are not suitable for many areas tangled / a trip point)
- Effectiveness of treatment/need for additional treatments and site visits (resources and costs)

Officers are keeping an open mind regarding alternatives and continue to use all chemicals intelligently.

Councillor Warren noted the response from Officers and stated that the use of glyphosate will be banned in Europe from December 2022 therefore asked that a report be brought to a future meeting of this Committee in this regard due to public concern.

In response, the Acting Head of Environmental and Commercial Services agreed to this request.

7 Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan - Funding Opportunity

Under reference to paragraph 10 of the Minute of the meeting of the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee on 18 January 2022, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informed the Committee of funding opportunities that could help to deliver the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan and sought the authorisation to submit Expressions of Interest to the funders by no later than 31 July 2022.

During discussion surrounding the Town Centre Improvement Plans, the previous success of the 4 Towns Partnership was highlighted in relation to sharing funding and ideas, and it was queried whether consideration could be given to re-establishing the 4 Towns Partnership.

In response, the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) advised that if Members would like to see the 4 Towns Partnership reinstated, this would need to be the subject of a report where resource implications could be outlined and offered to circulate information amongst members in the first instance so that a Notice of Motion could be brought for consideration to the Committee if this was to be considered further. This was agreed.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed:

- (i) to approve the submission of Expression of Interests to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland to support delivery of the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan, with no financial or contractual obligations to Council;

- (ii) if successful, to consider a further report in November / December 2022 concerning submission of applications for the development phase; and
- (iii) that information including resource implications in relation to the possible reinstatement of the 4 Towns Partnership be circulated to members following the meeting.

8 Marine Safety and Operational Summary of 2021-2022 and Update for Q4 2021-2022

Under reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of the meeting of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee dated 20 March 2018, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informed the Committee on matters of Marine Safety and compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code for the year 2021/22 and details of Q4 2021/22.

Following discussion where officers answered Members' questions in relation to pilot training, maintenance costs and activity of the dredger, safety related works at Buckie Harbour, CCTV at Buckie Harbour, monitoring of life saving equipment and green harbour plans, the Committee joined the Chair in commending the Buckie Harbour Master who had successfully promoted the use of Buckie Harbour at the recent Skipper Expo 2022 in Aberdeen and thereafter agreed to note the safety performance, fulfilling its function as Duty Holder under the Port Marine Safety Code.

9 Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Indicator Framework Report 2020-21

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informed the Committee of the performance of Moray Council in the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development, Indicators Framework Report 2020-21.

Following consideration, the Committee noted that the Council had paid out Covid 19 Business Support Funds of £33 million and joined the Chair in commending the staff in the effective administration of this large amount of money to support local businesses and thereafter agreed to note the performance of the Council's economic development activity and benchmarking against other local authorities through the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group Indicator Framework Report.

10 Performance Report (Economic Growth and Development Services) - Period to March 2022

Under reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of the meeting of Moray Council dated 7 August 2019, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informed the Committee of the performance of the service for the period to 31 March 2022.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to note:

- (i) performance in the areas of Service Planning, Service Performance and other related data to the end of March 2022; and

- (ii) the actions being taken to improve performance where required.

11 Performance Report (Environmental and Commercial Services) - Period to March 2022

Under reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of the meeting of Moray Council dated 7 August 2019, a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) informed the Committee of the performance of the service for the period to 31 March 2022.

During discussion surrounding the performance of the Catering Team, it was noted that they had received the Soil Association "Food for Life Served Here" bronze award in recognition that a minimum of 75% of dishes are freshly prepared and free from undesirable trans fats, sweeteners, additives and all genetically modified ingredients, which was commended by the Committee.

During further discussion in relation to the Rothes Play Park Programme, it was noted that positive feedback towards the Open Space Team had been received at the Rothes Community Council and it was asked that this be passed on to the Team.

In response, the Environmental Protection Manager thanked the Committee for the commendation which he would ensure was passed on to the Team.

In relation to the cost of providing commercial services, it was noted that these costs had remained consistently low and the Service were commended in this regard.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- (i) agreed to note performance in the areas of Service Planning, Service Performance and other related data to the end of March 2022;
- (ii) agreed to note the actions being taken to improve performance where required
- (iii) joined the Chair in commending the performance staff in the following Services:
 - the Catering Team in achieving the "Food for Life Served Here" bronze award in recognition that a minimum of 75% of dishes are freshly prepared and free from undesirable trans fats, sweeteners, additives and all genetically modified ingredients;
 - the Open Space Team in providing the Rothes Play Park Programme; and
 - Commercial Services in relation to maintaining low costs for the provision of the service.

12 Question Time

Under reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee dated 22 March 2022, Councillor Warren stated that some people are not aware of the Dial M Service, in particular those who may not use social media and asked that consideration be given to advertising the service in other ways over and above social media platforms.

In response, the Acting Head of Environmental and Commercial Services advised that she would explore other ways to advertise the Dial M Service.

Under reference to paragraph 14 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee dated 22 March 2022, Councillor Warren again highlighted the struggles Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are having with rising energy costs and asked if the Chair would consider writing to the UK Government highlighting this issue and ask for support for SMEs in this regard.

In response, the Chair agreed to write to the UK Government highlighting the struggles of SMEs in relation to rising energy costs and ask for support for SMEs in this regard.

Under reference to paragraph 14 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee dated 22 March 2022, Councillor Warren sought an update in relation to the success of the Scottish Workplace Challenge.

In response, the Consultancy Manager advised that 39 organisations had taken part and Moray Council had been 8th overall achieving 338 sustainable journeys equalling 1912 miles saving £348. With regard to the overall carbon reduction, the Consultancy Manager did not have this information available however agreed to circulate this to the Committee following the meeting.

Councillor Warren thanked the Consultancy Manager for the update and stated that she hoped the Council would take part again next year.

Councillor Divers made reference to pedestrian crossings and queried whether there was a change in the contract which had resulted in delays to the crossings at Forres, Elgin and New Elgin and sought an update as to when this would take place.

In response, the Acting Head of Environmental and Commercial Services agreed to provide this information to the Committee following the meeting.

13 Dallachy Gate Fee [Para 8 and 9]

As Councillor Van Der Horn was taking part in the meeting by watching the live webcast, he could not take part in this item as it is confidential and not webcast live.

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance) asked the Committee to note a revision to the gate fee at Dallachy Landfill site.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to approve the Chief Executive's use of delegated authority as per the briefing presented at Corporate Management Team (CMT) on 28 April 2022 as set out in paragraph 4.17 of the report.