

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN

FRIDAY 30 JUNE, 2017

Present: Councillors D A Aitchison, M Boulton, J Cooke, J B Cox, A Forsyth (as substitute for Cllr B A Topping), R Grant, PJ Johnston, D Lonchay (as substitute for Cllr A Wallace), S Macdonald (as substitute for Cllr G Graham), and I Mollison (as substitute for Cllr J Latham).

Apologies: Councillors G Graham, J Latham, B A Topping, and A Wallace.

Officers: - **Strategic Development Planning Authority:** Strategic Development Plan Manager and Senior Planner.
Aberdeen City Council: Planning and Environmental Policy Manager, Legal Advisors (L Cameron and F Closs), and Planner (S Omondi).
Aberdeenshire Council: Head of Planning and Building Standards, Planning Service Manager (B Stewart), Accountant (B Allan), Senior Information and Research Officer (S Shaw), and Committee Officer (J McRobbie).
Audit Scotland – Senior Audit Manager (A MacDonald.)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The Strategic Development Plan Manager welcomed all to the first meeting of the Strategic Development Planning Authority following the local government elections of May 2017.

There had been circulated a report by the Strategic Development Plan Manager, advising Members of the process for the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority.

Cllr Grant **moved**, seconded by Cllr Macdonald, that Cllr Marie Boulton be elected Chair.

There being no further nominations,

The Authority unanimously resolved that Cllr Boulton Chair the Authority.

Cllr Boulton thereafter called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair of the Authority.

Cllr Mollison **moved**, seconded by Cllr Lonchay, that Cllr Cox be elected Vice Chair.

There being no further nominations,

The Authority unanimously resolved that Cllr Cox be Vice Chair of the Authority.

2. SEDERUNT AND DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

Apologies were submitted from Cllrs Graham, Latham, Topping, and Wallace.

Cllr Macdonald declared an interest in item 4, (Housing Land Audit,) as Chair of Langstane Housing Association, but as the interest was not considered significant, indicated that she would remain and take part in the discussion.

3. MINUTE OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY MEETING OF 22 MARCH, 2017

The Authority had before them and **resolved** to approve as a correct record the Minute of Meeting of 22 March, 2017.

4. HOUSING LAND AUDIT 2017

There had been circulated a joint report by the Interim Head of Planning and Sustainable Development (Aberdeen City Council) and the Head of Planning and Building Standards, (Aberdeenshire Council), detailing the results of the Housing Land Audit (2017), as appended to the report, and its implications for the housing land supply.

The report indicated that the Audit, measuring the quantity of land available for new housing in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, demonstrated, to the Scottish Government standard (Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and Planning Advice Note (PAN) 2/2010), that more than the minimum of five years effective land supply of housing land was available in both housing market areas.

The Authority heard further from the Senior Information and Research Officer of the details of the Audit and there were questions on (a) the Scottish Government's definitions of constrained sites, particularly where the constraint was defined as 'marketability'; and (b) the relationship between market constrained smaller rural sites (up to 10 houses) and the fall in the number of smaller housebuilder firms.

The Authority resolved: - to note the contents of the report.

5. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING CONSULTATION – RESPONSE TO ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL (FOOTBALL STADIUM, TRAINING PITCHES AND FOOTBALL ACADEMY)

The Authority were advised that this report had been withdrawn on the advice of the SDPA's legal advisor and that the matter would be resolved as quickly as possible.

The Authority resolved:-

that officers respond to the application (in consultation with the chair and Vice Chair) if the legal uncertainty can be overcome.

6. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY BUDGET POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2017 – REPORT BY TREASURER

The Authority had before them a report dated 20 June, 2017, by the Treasurer to the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) which presented the budget monitoring position for 2016/17 as 31 March, 2017.

The report advised that, as at 31 March, 2017, both Councils had contributed equal amounts of £95,000 to the budget, £11,000 more than the budget approved on 23 March 2016. This was the result of a late adjustment to the 2015/16 accounts which resulted in expenditure, previously included, being excluded. The surplus created had subsequently been used as income within the 2016/17 accounts. The surplus of £40,000 would be transferred to Reserves and would either be used to offset any potential costs arising from the legal challenge to the SDPA's Supplementary Guidance (Strategic Transport Fund) currently before the Supreme Court, or to reduce the contributions for partner Councils going forward.

The Authority resolved:-

- a) To note the budget monitoring position as at 31 March, 2017; and
- b) To approve the transfer of £40,000 to Reserves.

7. 2017/17 ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN

There had been circulated a report by the Strategic Development Plan Manager informing the Authority of the 2016/17 Annual Audit Plan, dated March 2017, provided by Audit Scotland, which set out the audit work to be undertaken to provide an opinion on the Authority's financial statements and stewardship of financial matters.

The Authority heard further from Anne MacDonald, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland, that the three areas on which external audit would focus were (a) risk management override of controls; (b) changes in accounting requirements; and (c) Aberdeenshire Council's new payroll system.

Questions were asked on how the new payroll system was performing and Mr Allan reported that whilst he was not aware of any operational issues from the Human Resources side, it appeared that information was slower in coming to the Finance Service. Ms MacDonald confirmed that Audit Scotland were not aware of any issues regarding the payment of salaries, and that some initial teething issues on tax coding appeared to have been resolved.

The Authority resolved:-

To note the external audit plan as reported.

8. UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2016/2017 – REPORT BY TREASURER

The Authority had before them a report dated 20 June, 2017 by the Treasurer to the Strategic Development Planning Authority, presenting the Unaudited Annual Accounts for 2016/17.

The Authority heard from Mr Allan, Accountant, that the audited statement of accounts would be returned for final approval in September, 2017.

The Authority resolved:-

To note the unaudited accounts for 2016/17 as set out in the report.

9. PLANNING PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016/17

There had been circulated a report by the Strategic Development Plan Manager, requesting Members' consideration of a Planning Performance Report for 2016/17, its publication on the Authority's website, and its submission to the Scottish Government by 31 July, 2017.

Having heard further from the Strategic Development Plan Manager that the performance report was combined with the Authority's Annual Report, and would set out what the Authority was, and what it was designed to achieve, and had achieved over the past year, it was noted that that Section 3 of the report would be updated, to take account of carbon emissions data at local authority level published earlier in the week.

There was discussion of the presentation of statistical information and Members were advised that the format of the Planning Performance Report was prescribed by Scottish Government, and

The Authority resolved:-

- (1) That the narrative on rights of attendance at SDPA meetings (compared to NESTRANS) be clarified;
- (2) That the pictures in section 6 be captioned;
- (3) That section 3 be updated with new information about carbon emissions; and
- (4) In all other respects to approve the Planning Performance Plan, as amended, for submission to the Scottish Government and publication on the Authority's website.

10. SDPA BULLETIN – JUNE 2017

The Authority had before them an information bulletin prepared by the Strategic Development Plan Manager which informed Members on key issues relating to the work of the Authority where no decisions were currently required. Oral updates were provided on each item since publication.

Details contained within the bulletin included:-

(1) Strategic Transport Fund Update

In respect of the legal challenge in the Supreme Court to the Strategic Transport Fund, the case was heard at The Supreme Court sitting in Edinburgh on 13 June and the decision is awaited. This was the final stage in the legal process and the court's decision may be issued in time to be reported to the Authority at its next meeting.

(2) Local Development Plans

It was reported that both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire's Local Development Plans had been adopted, the first two second generation local

development plans nationally, contrasting with some areas where the first generation plan had not been completed.

The Aberdeen City Local Development Plan, adopted on 20 January, 2017 had initially been subject to legal challenge, on the allocation of sites in the Milltimber / Peterculter area; that challenge has been withdrawn. All planned Supplementary Guidance has now been approved with the latest, relating to Planning Obligations, being approved on 21 June, 2017.

Aberdeenshire's Local Development Plan had been adopted on 17 April, 2017, and the period for legal challenge had expired without challenge. There had been 9 additional elements of Supplementary Guidance approved as part of the Plan.

(3) Strategic Development Plans

It was reported that work on the initial consideration of a Main Issues Report (MIR) for consultation, as part of the replacement strategic development plan, scheduled to be considered at this meeting, had been delayed pending the outcome of the Supreme Court challenge to the Strategic Transport Fund, the work of the planning review, and the two recent elections. The report would come to the next meeting, to be held on 20 September, 2017. Given the changed membership of the Authority, the delay would allow for a further workshop on the issues before the Main Issues Report was approved for consultation.

The report indicated that, of the other strategic development plans across the country, (a) Tayplan, more than five years old, was awaiting Ministers' approval but that as Fife had not yet adopted their local development plan, there might be further delay; (b) that there had been last minute representations to Scottish Ministers after the Clydeplan examination and the plan was still awaiting Ministers' approval; and (c) that SESplan, where the extant strategic development plan had been approved in 2013, had submitted their plan to the Ministers following its approval at a meeting on 26 June, 2017.

(4) Transport Scotland's Rail Infrastructure Strategy Consultation

Responses to the Transport Scotland consultation on Rail Infrastructure, closed on 24 February 2017, and including points made by the Authority as well as Nestrans, leading on the north east perspective, were available to view online. The Scottish Government High Level Output response was anticipated over the summer. Two of the more pertinent issues for the Authority were noted to be a proposed move to a more flexible, pipeline approach to scheme delivery (which might reduce certainty about the delivery as well as the timing of rail infrastructure, and the greater focus on service connectivity rather than reducing journey times.

(5) Household Projections

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) had published its 2016 Mid-Year estimates of population which indicated that the number of people leaving the area exceeded those arriving by about 300, bringing to an end a 14 year period of continuous net in-migration. It was likely that this tied closely to activity in the oil and gas sector.

(6) Housing Market Activity

Data from the Scottish Government (Housing Statistics for Scotland) and the Registers of Scotland (Monthly Residential Property Market Statistics) indicated that during the year to end 2016, City and Shire accounted for 10% of all property sales by value and 12.8% of transactions, a sharp reduction in peak since 2013. The average price was £206,952, approximately £22,000 less than peak but still higher than the Scottish average by £40,000.

Rental values had also fallen over the last two years in the Aberdeen area, with average rents falling, across the different property sizes, by 31% since the end of 2014.

The north east property market levels were therefore more in line with national levels and appeared to have stabilised, the falling sale prices appeared to be stabilising or slowing down, and rental values had fallen more significantly than sale prices to levels seen at the last recession's market bottom.

(7) Planning Applications of Strategic Importance

Two applications of strategic importance were currently subject to Authority response – (a) 161429/PPP – for commercial retail development at Prime Four Business Park, adjacent to the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route junction with the A944 (allocated as employment land in the 2017 Aberdeen Local Development Plan); and (b) an application by Ashfield Land for a mixed-use development with a large retail component at Blackdog, on the A90/AWPR junction to the north of Aberdeen.

The Authority were advised that the application at Prime Four had been withdrawn by the applicant, following the publication of a report recommending refusal, and that the Blackdog proposal, referred to Scottish Ministers following objection from Aberdeen City Council, had had its original 28 day period of consideration (which would have expired on 28 June, 2017), extended by Ministers for an additional 28 days.

(8) Batwind

Aberdeenshire Council had recently granted consent to an application from Statoil to install batteries, associated with their Hywind floating project turbine. This was part of a 30MW offshore windfarm and the Batwind project would give an additional 1MW battery capacity. The project was being taken forward in partnership with the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult, the Scottish Government, and Scottish Enterprise and was very experimental. If successful, its impact on the future delivery and efficiency of renewable energy products could be significant, by evening out peaks and troughs of energy production to be released to the grid when it is more valuable. It could also reduce the need for wasted energy when generation levels outstripped demand. Turbines would be sited offshore Peterhead, with the batteries in Peterhead itself.

(9) Scottish Government Consultation – “Places, People and Planning”

The Authority had been one of 474 respondents to the Scottish Government’s consultation, “Places, People and Planning”, considering the matter at its meeting on 22 March. Both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils had responded separately, along with NESTRANS, Community Planning Aberdeen, NHS Grampian, Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, four Aberdeen City and 9 Aberdeenshire Community Councils (including Newmachar, not mentioned in the report), Old Aberdeen Heritage Society and the North East Mountain Trust, along with various national bodies. The next steps in the process, outlined in a letter from the Scottish Government’s Chief Planner on 17 May, 2017 indicated that the responses were to be independently analysed, with a final report expected to inform decisions by Ministers informing future legislation. It was anticipated that a Planning Bill would be drafted towards the end of 2017.

A position statement issued on 29 June indicated that there would not be responses to individual submissions, but would allow opportunities for further response to the Government. If the original proposals were to be adopted, there would be a great need for clarity on the practicalities of replacing strategic development plans with a national planning framework by 2020.

The Authority resolved:-

- (1) That the Chair and Vice Chair approve any further submission to the Scottish Government relating to the consultation on their position statement;
- (2) That future such reports to the Authority continue to note progress on important and innovative projects such as Batwind and Hywind; and
- (3) To note, in all other respects, the content of the bulletin and oral updates.

11. DATE OF FUTURE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY MEETINGS

The Authority noted the scheduled meeting dates for the 2017/18 diary:-

- 20 September, 2017 at 10.00am at Aberdeen City Town House;
- 20 December, 2017 at 2.00pm at Woodhill House; and
- 21 March, 2018 at 2.00pm at Aberdeen City Town House

Cllr Marie Boulton
Chair