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ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

<u>To:</u>   Councillor Jennifer Stewart, <u>Convener</u>; Councillor John West, <u>Vice-Convener</u>; and Councillors Adam, Collie, Dean, Donnelly, Graham, Ironside, Jaffrey, Leslie, Malone, May, Kevin Stewart, Yuill and Wisely.

Town House,
ABERDEEN 13th January, 2010

CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

The Members of the **CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE** are requested to meet in Committee Room 2 - Town House on **THURSDAY, 21 JANUARY 2010 at 2.00 pm**.

RODERICK MACBEATH
ACTING HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

B U S I N E S S

MINUTE, COMMITTEE BUSINESS AND MOTIONS LIST

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

2.1   Statutory Performance Indicators 2008/2009 - Report by Director of Corporate Governance (Pages 25 - 30)

Please note that colour copies of Appendix A will be available to view at the meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS

3.1   Support Staff Review - Report by Director of Corporate Governance (Pages 31 - 36)

3.2   Catering Services Review - Report by Director of Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure (Pages 37 - 48)

3.3   Local Code of Corporate Governance - Report by Chief Executive (Pages 49 - 52)

3.4   Peer Review - Report by Chief Executive (Pages 53 - 56)

3.5   Final Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015 - Report by Director of Housing and Environment (Pages 57 - 120)

ITEMS NOT FOR PUBLICATION

4.1   Mackie Hall, Craibstone - Report by Director of Corporate Governance (Pages 121 - 128)

4.2   Matters Under Investigation - Verbal Update by City Solicitor

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Should you require any further information about this agenda, please contact Martin Allan, telephone (52)3057 or email mallan@aberdeencity.gov.uk

CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 8th December, 2009. - Minute of Meeting of the CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE. <u>Present</u>:- Councillor Jennifer Stewart, <u>Convener</u>; Councillor John West, <u>Vice-Convener</u>; and Councillors Adam, Collie, Crockett (substituting for Councillor Graham from article 7), Dean, Donnelly, Graham (to article 6), Ironside (to article 4), Jaffrey, Leslie, Malone, May, Kevin Stewart, Wisely (to article 5) and Young (substituting for Councillor Ironside for articles 5 and 6).

<u>Also Present</u>:- Councillor Boulton for article 3.

WELCOME

The Convener began the meeting by noting that this was to be the last meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee in 2009 and as such, wished a Merry Christmas to officers and members of the press and public.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

1. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 5th November, 2009.

The Committee resolved:-
to approve the minute as a correct record.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS STATEMENT

2. The Committee had before it a statement of Committee Business prepared by the Head of Democratic Services.

The Committee resolved:-
(i)   in relation to item 10(i) (Catering Services Review), to note that a full report would be put before the Committee in January, but that initial feedback had been received from APSE which showed:- (a) that service standards were consistent with the rest of Scotland; (b) that there had been a mixed review of the properties where food was prepared, mainly due to the age of some of the buildings in comparison to the new 3Rs properties; (c) that the cost of meals was higher, but that the uptake of primary meals was far higher than

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in other areas; (d) that the uptake of secondary school meals was lower but that this was typical for schools in urban areas where there was a greater selection of other food outlets available; (e) that the subsidy and cost of preparation was lower than other areas; (f) that no service fell below the statutory level expected; and (g) that there were some areas for improvement, such as the current variability of menu planning, a lack of management and performance reporting, and inconsistency with provision across the service;

(ii)   in relation to item 10(ii) (Catering Services Review), to note that catering at Summerhill was only provided on an "as requested" basis for training and meetings, that the Service had made a profit of £3,499 over the last two months, and that staff were attempting to find alternative sustainable venues for meetings and therefore as the number of meetings held in Summerhill diminished, the catering would cease;

(iii)   in relation to item 11 (Greenbank Crescent, East Tullos), to note that the investigation undertaken by the Monitoring Officer had yielded no robust evidence that either an Elected Member or an officer had released confidential information to the Press and Journal, and therefore to remove the item from the business statement;

(iv)   to remove item 16(i) (Becoming Effective Corporate Parents) as a report on implementing initiatives to improve the discharging of corporate parenting responsibilities would be put before the Council on 24th March, 2010; and

(v)   in relation to item 17 (Services in the Community – Next Steps), to remove the item from the agenda subject to the Committee's decision on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation later on the agenda.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Dean declared an interest in relation to motion 1 (Councillor Boulton – Car Park Charges at NHS Hospitals) by virtue of her appointment as a Board Member of NHS Grampian and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the item.

MOTIONS LIST

3.   The Committee had before it a Motions List prepared by the Head of Democratic Services.

The Convener noted that the letter from officers to NHS Grampian in relation to motion 1 (Councillor Boulton – Car Park Charges at NHS Hospitals) and the

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response received had been circulated in the Committee's Information Bulletin and as such, she planned to move that the motion be discharged and removed from the motions list.

At this juncture, Councillor Boulton joined the Committee and was invited to speak.

Councillor Boulton, seconded by Councillor Donnelly, then moved:-
    that the Council write to Nicola Sturgeon, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing asking her to reconsider her decision on the scrapping of car park charges at NHS hospitals and that the motion remain on the Committee's Motions List.

As an amendment, the Convener, seconded by Councillor Kevin Stewart, moved:-
    that the motion had been discharged and therefore should be removed from the Motions List.

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (2) – Councillors Boulton and Donnelly; for the amendment (12) – the Convener; the Vice-Convener and Councillors Adam, Collie, Graham, Ironside, Jaffrey, Leslie, Malone, May, Kevin Stewart and Wisely; absent from the division (1) – Councillor Dean.

The Committee resolved:-
(i)   to adopt the amendment and therefore discharge the motion and delete it from the Motions List; and
(ii)   in relation to Motion 2 (Ward Renaming), to note that no response had been received as yet from the Scottish Government, and that officers had therefore sent a reminder letter requesting a response.

ABERDEEN RESIDENTS SURVEY – CG/09/137

4.   With reference to Article 3 of the minute of the meeting of the Continuous Improvement Committee of 21st April, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Corporate Governance which presented the results of the Aberdeen Residents Survey which had been commissioned by the Continuous Improvement Committee on 13th January, 2009. Incorporated in the report were details of the ongoing work to explore key issues which had emerged from the survey findings.

At its meeting of 13th January, 2009, the Continuous Improvement Committee had approved the engagement of an external resource to conduct Council-wide research on customer views and satisfaction levels with Council services. The Committee had asked that the results of the research be used to address user

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needs within the Council's corporate, service and team planning arrangements, and requested that services assess their arrangements for additional service specific customer research, with an annual report to be presented to Committee on these arrangements, incorporating the results obtained and any action taken in response.

The report advised that the appointed consultant Lowland Market Research, had undertaken a face-to-face, in-home survey of 1300 citizens across all wards of the Council, with individuals selected to ensure that the sample was representative of the city's adult population in terms of gender, age group, ethnicity and working status. These individuals were then asked 50 questions on a range of quality of life and service specific indicators which covered their experiences of living in both Aberdeen and their local neighbourhood area. It was noted that the survey had incorporated a range of questions which were currently being piloted nationally. It was hoped that if the pilot was successful, that a bank of questions would then be made available Scotland-wide, allowing for future customer research exercises undertaken by the Council to be benchmarked against other local authorities. The results of the survey were appended to the report.

It was noted that as a result of the survey, several focus groups would be set up to explore some of the findings in more detail, namely, the complaints handling process; communication with residents and information giving; opportunities for involvement in decision making; crime and anti-social behaviour; Northfield ward issues; and George Street/Harbour ward issues. It was proposed that officers could have some involvement with these groups, and work was underway to involve key officers in the groups in order to facilitate discussion with residents. It was noted that any issues not covered by the focus groups could be explored through the Citizens' Panel.

Finally, the report advised that a full evaluation of the survey methodology would be undertaken following completion of the focus groups, and that this would include sampling, suitability of the face-to-face interview approach, questionnaire design and the relevance of the demographic and geographic variable utilised. A report on the outcomes would then be submitted for consideration by the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee in 2010.

The report recommended:-
(a)   that the Committee note the completion of the survey;
(b)   that the Committee approve the ongoing focus groups and plans for further exploration of survey findings; and
(c)   that the Committee approve a further report to be presented for the Committee's consideration on completion of the focus group and survey evaluation processes.

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The Committee resolved:-
(i)   to commend officers for the good results achieved in terms of customer satisfaction with Council services, particularly in the Museums and Galleries and Roads and Street Lighting Sections;
(ii)   to thank Mike Cheyne and his team of officers for fixing the Christmas lights problem which had been raised by the Convener;
(iii)   to request that officers include young people in the six planned focus groups to ensure that their views were represented; and
(iv)   to otherwise approve the recommendations contained in the report.

SCOTTISH INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION 2009 – EPI/09/047

5.   With reference to Article 9 of the minute of the meeting of 10th September, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure which detailed the results of the latest Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) which had been released on 29th October, 2009.

At its meeting on 10th September, 2009, the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee had approved a report entitled "Achieving Our Potential: Tackling Poverty and Income Inequality in Aberdeen City". As part of this report, it had been agreed that the Committee would receive a report on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, so that the results of the SIMD could inform the Council's anti-poverty strategy.

The report advised that the SIMD was the method by which the Scottish Government identified small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Scotland. The SIMD was based on areas known as data zones, which allowed for a comparison of relative deprivation at a small area level across Scotland. It was noted that there were 6,505 data zones in Scotland, with 267 of these in Aberdeen, and an average population of around 780 people per data zone.

Aberdeen had 27 data zones in the most deprived 15% of Scottish data zones as measured by the overall deprivation index. The report noted that the city had the fourteenth highest rate of deprivation in the country when measured as a proportion of the overall population.

Appended to the report was a detailed summary of the SIMD results for 2009.

The report concluded that the overall level of deprivation in Aberdeen remained much lower than in some other local authority areas, but that the 27 data zones in the city were among the most deprived in Scotland.

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The report recommended:-
that the Committee note the content of the report and agree that the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) results be used to inform the Council's anti poverty strategy.

The Committee resolved:-
(i)   to note with concern the rise in education, skills and training deprivation figures and to request that a report on how to tackle this issue be submitted to a future meeting of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee; and
(ii)   to otherwise approve the recommendation contained in the report.

MATTER OF URGENCY

The Convener intimated that she had directed in terms of Section 50(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and in accordance with Standing Orders, that an additional page submitted by officers in connection with the following item be tabled, as it provided members with an update on the report before them for consideration.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Kevin Stewart declared an interest in the following item by virtue of his position as a part-time employee for Brian Adam, MSP, but did not consider it necessary to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of the item.

FUNDING SETTLEMENT – MOTION BY COUNCILLOR GRAHAM – OCE/09/015

6.   With reference to the motion submitted by Councillor Graham to the Council Meeting on 12th November, 2008, namely:-
"That this Council calls upon the Scottish Government to increase its 09/10 allocation of funding to Aberdeen City Council in order to prevent further cuts to services to the elderly, disabled and those less fortunate within Aberdeen. Furthermore, this Council Administration honours their promise to the people of Aberdeen during the protest march back in April, 2008, by instructing the Chief Executive to write to the Scottish Government demanding that Aberdeen City Council receives a fairer funding settlement consistent with

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the Scottish average. That the leadership writes to all Aberdeen City constituency and North East list MSPs calling on them to support Aberdeen City Council's plea for a better funding settlement."

The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Executive which provided an update on the position relating to the Scottish Government's review of local government finance distribution. It was noted that work was ongoing to press the case for fairer funding for the City Council and that the Council's submission on Local Government Finance had been considered by the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee on 1st September, 2009. The issue had also been raised with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth on his visit to the Council on 30th July, 2009.

The report recommended:-
(a)   that the Committee note the position relating to the Scottish Government's review of local government finance distribution;   and
(b)   that the Committee request the Chief Executive to continue to press the case for fairer funding for the City Council.

The Committee then considered a tabled paper from the Head of Service, Office of Chief Executive, which detailed the statement made by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth on 26th November, 2009. Following the review of the existing needs-based grant distribution mechanism, the Scottish Government had determined that there were no genuine anomolies in the methodology and as such, the grant distribution indicators were retained unchanged.   In the funding settlement prepared by the Scottish Government, Aberdeen City Council was ranked second bottom out of the thirty-two Scottish local authorities on a per capita funding basis.   The Committee then heard from the Director of Corporate Governance who advised that the Council was looking at the implications of the funding settlement and would continue to press the case to the Scottish Government for fairer funding.

Councillor Graham, seconded by Councillor Adam, moved:-
        that the Committee resolve (i) to note the intolerable position relating to the Scottish Government's review of Local Government finance distribution; (ii) to instruct the Leadership Board to take all possible steps to mobilise all party and all sector opposition to this manifestly unfair settlement and to report back to the next meeting of the Committee; and (iii) to agree recommendation (b) in the report.

As an amendment, the Convener, seconded by the Vice-Convener, moved:-
        that the Committee accept the recommendations contained in the report, and that the Chief Executive write to the Scottish Government on the matter;

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that the Leadership Board and Chief Executive continue to press the case for a fairer funding settlement for Aberdeen; that officers investigate the benefits to the Council of tax increment financing and a change in the floor level; and that all political parties come together to put their weight behind the campaign for a fairer funding settlement.

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (5) – Councillors Adam, Collie, Donnelly, Graham and Young; for the amendment (8) – the Convener; the Vice-Convener; and Councillors Dean, Jaffrey, Leslie, Malone, May and Kevin Stewart; absent from the division (1) – Councillor Wisely.

The Committee resolved:-
(i)   to adopt the amendment; and
(ii)   to otherwise note the report.

LOCAL ALCOHOL STRATEGY – ABERDEEN ALCOHOL AND DRUGS PARTNERSHIP – H&E/09/117

7.   The Committee had before it a joint report by the Directors of Housing and Environment and Social Care and Wellbeing which sought Council support for the local Alcohol Strategy produced by the Aberdeen Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.

The report advised that the local alcohol strategy had identified several high level outcomes, namely:-
- through education, prevention and communication, people of all ages will be equipped to make informed choices about their alcohol use and will be actively involved in being part of the solution;
- services will focus on supporting recovery from alcohol related harm. Access to support and treatment including training, employability and palliative care will be improved;
- communities will be protected from criminal and anti-social behaviour related to alcohol use through the use of intelligence and enforcement and proactive relationships with communities;
- children and young people will be valued and supported, and outcomes and opportunities for children and young people will be improved;
- the influences and contributions of culture, licensing, licensed trade, the hospitality industry, the alcohol producers and the business community will be integral to the strategy.

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It was noted that Aberdeen City Alcohol and Drugs Partnership would be accountable for monitoring and evaluating the quality of service and funding allocated to support these outcomes.

The strategy comprised four priority areas of work, namely, reducing consumption; supporting families and communities; developing positive attitudes and positive choices; and improving support and treatment. Each of these areas contained a range of actions which would be further developed and implemented over the next 10 years. Appended to the report was the draft Local Alcohol Strategy.

The Committee then heard that the strategy was to be launched at the Citadel on 14th December, 2009.

The report recommended:-
that the Committee endorse the local alcohol strategy produced by Aberdeen Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.

The Committee resolved:-
(i)   to thank Leslie Brown, Community Safety Strategist, for the work which had gone into producing the report; and
(ii)   to endorse the strategy as recommended in the report.

BYELAWS – CG/09/158

8.   With reference to Article 2 of the minute of the meeting of 10th September, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Corporate Governance which provided information on the procedural and legal issues relating to the promotion and enforcement of byelaws. The report detailed the procedure for promotion of a byelaw, and the possible effects of non-compliance, but did acknowledge the difficulties which could be faced in the enforcement of byelaws.

It was noted that a register of all byelaws had to be kept at the Council offices and made available for inspection by the public if required.

The report recommended:-
that the Committee note the contents of the report.

The Committee resolved:-
(i)   to note that due to the recent change to the Council's Standing Orders, the reference to the Council's Common Seal under the procedure section of the report no longer applied and should therefore be removed; and

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(ii)   to otherwise note the contents of the report.

UPDATE ON THE REVENUES AND BENEFITS SHARED SERVICES PROJECT – CG/09/144

9.   With reference to Article16 of the minute of the Continuous Improvement Committee meeting of 21st April, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Corporate Governance which provided an update on the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Initiative and sought a decision from the Committee on how the Council should progress with the initiative.

At its meeting on 21st April, 2009, the Continuous Improvement Committee had resolved to continue participation in the project on the understanding that further work was to be undertaken on the business case and cost benefits, and that once this work was completed, that the relevant Committee of the Council would then consider the case for further investment in the scheme. The Committee had also requested that the involvement required by elected members be investigated before any further decision was taken on the matter. The report advised that although work on the business case was ongoing, limited progress had been made thus far and an updated business case was expected in two to three months' time.

In the meantime, a submission for additional funding for the project had been prepared and submitted to the Scottish Government, with no response received as yet. It was noted that participation in the project would require significant investment and substantial additional resources would be required to support any implementation and at present, there was no evidence available to suggest that the Council's performance would significantly improve through participation in the scheme.

Appended to the report was the application for additional funding from the Scottish Government.

The report recommended:-
(a)   that the Committee note progress to date; and
(b)   that the Council continue participating in the initiative until the full business case was completed when a further decision would be taken on the City Council's involvement.

The Committee resolved:-
to note that officers at Moray Council were currently preparing the business case and that it was unlikely to be received by Aberdeen City Council until either March

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or April, 2010, at which point a report would come before the Committee and the Council's participation in the scheme would be reconsidered.

MATTER OF URGENCY

The Convener intimated that she had directed in terms of Section 50(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and in accordance with Standing Orders, that an additional page submitted by officers in connection with the following item be tabled, as it proposed a second option to be considered by members, prepared following feedback from the Disability Advisory Group.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Dean declared an interest in the following item by virtue of her position as a Director of Grampian Society for the Blind, but did not consider it necessary to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of the item.

REVIEW OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE DISABILITY ADVISORY GROUP – CG/09/159

10. With reference to Article 5 of the minute of the meeting of 10th September, 2009, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Corporate Governance which presented a review of the remit, membership and constitution of the Disability Advisory Group (DAG).

As part of the wider review of all the Council's sub committees and working groups, the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee, at its meeting on 10th September, 2009, had requested that officers review the current status of DAG. It was noted that although over one hundred individuals were currently members of DAG, only around thirty or so attended meetings on a regular basis. Of those thirty, around twelve members made regular contributions to the business of the meeting. As a result of the large membership, it had proven difficult to contact members and sustain consistent attendance at meetings.

The report advised that the current arrangements for DAG were not conducive to

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the Council and others delivering satisfactory outcomes for people with disabilities. It was therefore proposed that the membership of the group be amended to a smaller, strategically focused steering group consisting of around twenty members, which would meet every eight weeks. The wider membership of disability interest groups and individuals would then meet twice a year as a Forum to be briefed on any issues arising from the steering group meetings. Members of the wider Forum could also approach representatives on the steering group with any issues they wished to raise. It was suggested that the selection process of representatives for the steering group could be undertaken at the wider Forum meetings.

The report proposed that the steering group comprise three community representatives with disabilities (with the authority to co-opt two others as required) who would be elected at the biannual Forum meetings; up to five elected members; and up to twelve representatives of public and voluntary sector organisations working for and advocating on behalf of people with disabilities.

At this juncture, the Committee heard from Mr Roddy MacTaggart, Strategist for Disability and Race Equalities, who advised that the contents of the report had been discussed with members of the Disability Advisory Group at its meeting on 26th November, 2009. Mr MacTaggart advised the Committee that the Group had been concerned at the balance of representation on the Steering Group and the lack of places proposed for individual members of the Group who would not otherwise be represented by a public or voluntary sector organisation. As such, he had prepared a second option for consideration by the Committee, which proposed that the representation of the Steering Group comprise up to seven individual representatives with disabilities who would be elected at the bi-annual Forum meeting; up to five elected members; and up to seven representatives of public and voluntary sector organisations working for and advocating on behalf of people with disabilities (with the facility to co-opt others as required). The additional representatives would be co-opted at particular meetings only for discussion of specific items in their field of expertise.

The report recommended:-
(a)   that the Committee note the progress of the review to date;
(b)   that the Committee approve the draft proposal to establish a smaller Steering Group within the wider membership of the Disability Advisory Group;
(c)   that the Committee instruct officers to develop and implement the proposals in conjunction with Disability Advisory Group members.

The Convener, seconded by Councillor Leslie, then moved:-
    that the Committee accept option 2 (up to seven individual representatives, up to seven representatives of public and voluntary sector organisations;

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and up to five Elected Members) and agree that the group can co-opt individuals for specific purposes and items as and when required with a further review of the amended arrangements in one year.

As an amendment, Councillor Adam, seconded by Councillor Crockett, moved:-
that the Committee postpone acceptance of option 2 until the views of the wider Forum could be sought on the proposal at the next meeting of the Disability Advisory Group in February, 2010.

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (9) – the Convener; the Vice-Convener and Councillors Dean, Donnelly, Jaffrey, Leslie, Malone, May and Kevin Stewart; for the amendment (3) – Councillors Adam, Collie and Crockett; absent from the division (2) – Councillors Ironside and Wisely.

Councillor Crockett noted his concern at the proposal that the members of the general Forum would vote to elect the representatives from the voluntary and public sector organisations as he suggested that if there were a greater number of Forum members with a particular disability, then this could exclude organisations with a smaller voting membership from becoming members of the Steering Group.

The Committee resolved:-
(i)   to adopt the motion; and
(ii)   to otherwise approve the recommendations contained in the report.
- JENNIFER STEWART, Convener.

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CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE BUSINESS
21 January, 2010

	Minute Reference	Committee Decision	Update	Lead Officer(s)	Report Due	Report Expected (if known)
1.	Council Budget 14.02.08 Article 2 (Appendix A)	**Central Services** The Council agreed that it wanted to see a detailed improvement focus on Central Services with recommendations for reductions in unit costs, increased productivity and improvements to services. The Council agreed that recommendations for these processes should go to an early meeting of the Continuous Improvement Committee. At its meeting on 24 February, 2009, the Continuous Improvement Committee resolved to continue to receive regular reports on Central Services Review.	A report will go before CMT w/c 25th September, before presentation to Committee on 8th December, 2009. The paper outlines the proposed methodology for the review and allocation of support staff to the new Council structure and as such encompasses all aspects of Council support. It is important that all members of the CMT consider the paper and the associated implications of implementation prior to presentation to Committee. The Director of Corporate Governance wishes to discuss the review process with the Corporate Governance Senior Management Team and CMT prior to the report being submitted to Committee and has requested that the report now be submitted to the January meeting. **A report entitled 'Support Services Review' is on the agenda.**	Chief Admin Officer	**08.12.09**	21.01.10
2.	Continuous Improvement 06.05.08 Article 10	**Corporate Governance** The Committee agreed that the refreshed Local Code of Corporate Governance be brought to its meeting on 17 June 2008, having been updated in light of the improvement agenda set out in the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning and in line with the new Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.	Reports on Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Management Structures will be put before Council at its meeting on 18th November, 2009. A further report will be submitted to Council in December, followed by a Corporate Governance report to Corporate Policy and Performance Committee in January 2010. **A report entitled 'Local Code of Corporate Governance' is on the agenda.**	Head of Service, Office of Chief Executive	21.01.10	

	Minute Reference	Committee Decision	Update	Lead Officer(s)	Report Due	Report Expected (if known)
3.	Continuous Improvement 09.12.08 Article 20	**Monitoring Officer Report – PIDA** The Committee resolved to request officers to undertake a review of the current whistleblowing policy to examine the achievability of the timescale set down therein and to report back to the Committee at its meeting on 24 February, 2009. At its meeting on 2 June, 2009, the Continuous Improvement Committee resolved to request that the outstanding report be submitted to the earliest meeting of the Council (including Committees) where the issue could be discussed.	The City Solicitor is working on reviewing the whistleblowing policy and, as part of the review, will be providing examples of cases from other authorities to staff to assist in clarifying when a complaint could be classed as falling under the whistleblowing policy. Officers will also circulate a questionnaire to staff on the whistleblowing policy. A report will be put before the Committee at its meeting on 21st January, 2010. **A verbal update will be provided at the Committee meeting on 21st January, 2010.**	City Solicitor	**24.02.09**	21.01.10
4.	Continuous Improvement 13.01.09 Article 11(C)	**HMIe Action Plan and Review** The Committee agreed to endorse the peer review arranged (Renfrewshire Council) and request officers to submit a report on the implementation of a peer review across all Council services to the Committee within two cycles.	The Chief Executive is in discussion with colleagues through SOLACE to identify workable means by which reciprocal peer review arrangements might be developed for the Council in partnership with appropriate local authorities in Scotland. Directors will be tasked with bringing forward recommendations to elected members after the 2009 recess on the role peer review will play in the performance management of each of the new Directorates. At its meeting on 10th September, 2009, the Committee noted that the Chief Executive would work with the new CMT to establish the role of peer review, with a report back to Committee in two cycles. **A report entitled 'Peer Review' is on the agenda.**	Chief Executive / CMT	**08.12.09**	21.01.10

	Minute Reference	Committee Decision	Update	Lead Officer(s)	Report Due	Report Expected (if known)
5.	Continuous Improvement 21.04.09 Article 16	**Shared Revenues and Benefits Services – Feasibility Study Update** The Committee resolved:- (i) to approve the next steps as detailed in the report; and (ii) to receive further updates as appropriate; and to request officers to provide information on when elected members would become involved in this initiative and at what level within the next progress report on this matter to the Continuous Improvement Committee.	A report will be prepared when further information is available from the North East of Scotland Local Authorities (NOSLA) project team. Further information on Elected Member involvement will also be made available at that time. Work is now underway on reviewing financial aspects of the proposal. Preparation is ongoing in relation to seeking further funding from the Scottish Government for the initiative. At its meeting on 8th December, 2009, the Committee considered a report on the matter and resolved to note that officers at Moray Council were currently preparing the business case and that it was unlikely to be received by Aberdeen City Council until March/April 2010, at which point the Council's participation in the scheme would be reconsidered.	Head of CRM	29.04.10	
6.	Resources Management Committee 05/05/09 Article 45	**Mackie Hall, Craibstone** To instruct an investigation into how this situation arose, and for officers to report to a future meeting of the Continuous Improvement Committee.	At its meeting on 8th December, the Committee heard that a report would go before the January meeting. **A report is on the agenda.**	City Solicitor	**05.11.09**	21.01.10
7.	Policy and Strategy Committee 27.09.05 Article 29	**Byelaws** The Committee resolved to instruct the Corporate Director for Legal and Democratic Services (1) to invite the Procurator Fiscal to meet with the Convener of the Committee in the first instance (along with representatives of Grampian Police) to discuss local issues including the enforcement of drinking in public places byelaws; and (2) to gather	The Policy and Strategy Committee on 22.01.08 instructed the City Solicitor to write to the Scottish Government reiterating the Council's position on air guns, also referred to in Councillor Collie's Notice of Motion, that byelaws be introduced to ban the use of air weapons in Aberdeen, subject to exemptions for competitive events and training in controlled conditions. Work on the new drinking in public places byelaw is progressing.	City Solicitor	21.01.10	

	Minute Reference	Committee Decision	Update	Lead Officer(s)	Report Due	Report Expected (if known)
		information on prosecution in relation to the enforcement of drinking in public places byelaws in other local authority areas in the country and to report these issues to Committee at a future date.	At its meeting on 10th September, 2009, the Committee requested that officers contact the Scottish Government to stress the difficulties faced by the Council in progressing new byelaws. Officers have written to the Scottish Government and are awaiting a response. **At its meeting on 8th December, 2009, the Committee heard that officers had sent a second letter to the Scottish Government requesting a response, as no response had been received thus far.**			
8.	Resources Management 10/03/09 article 37	**Domestic Central Heating Replacements** The Committee agreed to receive two further reports :- (1) a report following the receipt and evaluation of new tenders for the replacement of domestic central heating for approval prior to the tender award; and (2) a report back on the outcome of an investigation to be carried out to ascertain why procedures went wrong regarding the matter.	(1) Tender process procedure awaiting approval by Legal Agents. Resultant tenders will be reported thereafter. (2) This investigation has been completed and officers are now awaiting agreement from the City Solicitor. At its meeting on 5th November, 2009, the Committee heard that a report on this matter would go before the Committee at its meeting on 8th December, 2009. **As changes have now been made to the recommendations in the report, the City Solicitor has advised that the report must be recirculated to Members and officials for comment and will therefore be submitted to the Committee on 4th March, 2010.**	(1) Director of Housing (2) City Solicitor	**16.06.09**	04.03.10
9.	Resources Management 10/03/09 article 43	**Catering Services Review** The Committee instructed officers to progress a catering services review for all of the Council's catering services and report back to the appropriate Committee towards the end of 2009.	At its meeting on 8th December, 2009, the Committee heard that a full report would be put before the Committee in January, but that initial feedback had been received from APSE which showed:- (a) that service standards were consistent with the rest of Scotland;	Head of Shelter and Environment	**08.12.09**	21.01.10

	Minute Reference	Committee Decision	Update	Lead Officer(s)	Report Due	Report Expected (if known)
		(Catering Services Review cont.)	(b) that there had been a mixed review of the properties where food was prepared, mainly due to the age of some of the buildings in comparison to the new 3Rs properties; (c) that the cost of meals was higher, but that the uptake of primary meals was far higher than in other areas; (d) that the uptake of secondary school meals was lower, but that this was typical for schools in urban areas where there was a greater selection of other food outlets available; (e) that the subsidy and cost of preparation was lower than other areas; (f) that no service fell below the statutory level expected; and (g) that there were some areas for improvement, such as the current variability of menu planning, a lack of management and performance reporting, and inconsistency with provision across the service. **A report is on the agenda.**			
10	Scrutiny Panel 19.01.09 Article 2	**Confidential Business** The Panel agreed to instruct officers to investigate, in consultation with appropriate Councillors, all appropriate and viable alternative methods other than investigations to address the issue of leaked reports and report back to the next meeting of the Panel on 2 March, 2009.	This will be taken forward as part of the Chief Executive's overall governance report, and will therefore be submitted to the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee in January 2010, following a report to Council on 16th December, 2009. **A report is on the agenda entitled 'Local Code of Corporate Governance'.**	Head of Service, Office of Chief Executive	**08.12.09**	21.01.10

	Minute Reference	Committee Decision	Update	Lead Officer(s)	Report Due	Report Expected (if known)
11	Corporate Policy & Performance 10.09.09	**Single Outcome Agreement 2008/09 Performance Report** The Committee resolved:- in relation to the percentage of household waste recycled, (a) to note that a report on the draft waste strategy, including an implementation plan, would go before the Housing and Environment Committee for consideration and amendment in November, which would then be submitted to the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee thereafter for approval as a Council-wide strategy; and (b) to request that officers incorporate detailed information on the recycling facilities available in each area into the report to the Housing & Environment Committee.	At the Housing & Environment Committee on 19th November, the strategy was approved to go out for consultation from 2nd December to 25th February. It will then go before the Waste Management Working Group in March before being presented to the Housing & Environment Committee on 13th April and finally Corporate Policy and Performance Committee on 29th April.	Head of Economic & Environment Sustainability	29.04.10	
12	Corporate Policy and Performance Committee 10.09.09	**Review of Sub Committees and Working Groups** The Committee resolved:- to note that a meeting would be organised between the Council, the new Chief Executive of the Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations, and the Joint Chairs of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group to discuss the remit of the Group, and this would also be reported back to the Committee at its meeting on 8th December, 2009.	Following an initial meeting with the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing, and a subsequent planned meeting of the chairs of the Voluntary Organisations during early December, a proposal is expected late January 2010. Once in receipt of all relevant information, the Director of Social Care and Wellbeing will report back to Committee.	Director of Social Care and Wellbeing	**08.12.09**	04.03.10

	Minute Reference	Committee Decision	Update	Lead Officer(s)	Report Due	Report Expected (if known)
13	Corporate Policy and Performance Committee 10.09.09	**Review of Access to the Internet for Staff and Members** The Committee resolved:- (i) to approve recommendation 3 contained in the report, subject to a review in six months' time; and (ii) to note that officers would submit two reports to a future meeting of the Committee, (1) a report detailing the outcomes of the six-monthly review and (2) an update on the ongoing discussions about the possibility of Corporate Communications utilising social networking sites as a means of communication with those sections of the public with whom the Council might not regularly have contact.	An initial report investigating the potential suitability and effectiveness of social networking sites for Council use will be submitted to the committee in January. There are significant areas of research to be carried out for the gathering of data and contacts to enable the social networking to become an effective and practical extension of the existing web provision. As such, it is requested that the report be submitted to the March meeting of the Committee.	Head of Service Design and Development Marketing Manager	04.03.10 **21.01.10**	04.03.10
14	Corporate Policy and Performance Committee 10.09.09	**Becoming Effective Corporate Parents** The Committee resolved:- (i) to note that Elected Member training would be organised to look at the development of the Corporate Parenting Charter, as well as introducing the newly produced DVD on the subject, however the development of the Corporate Parenting Policy would take more time to complete.	**An email was sent to Elected Members on 23 December 2009, offering training at either 10am or 2pm on 8th February 2010, with an additional session offered on 16th February. The session will allow Elected Members to view the Looked After Children DVD and aims to raise awareness of the roles and responsibilities around corporate parenting. The session will also allow Members to input into the corporate parenting charter for Aberdeen City Council. The DVD has previously been circulated to Conveners.**	Director of Social Care and Wellbeing	21.01.10	

	Minute Reference	Committee Decision	Update	Lead Officer(s)	Report Due	Report Expected (if known)
15	Finance & Resources Committee 11 Nov 09	**Community Planning Partnership – Fairer Scotland Fund** The Finance & Resources Committee resolved to instruct the Director of Corporate Governance to provide twice yearly updates in February and October to the Aberdeen City Alliance and the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee on the outcomes achieved through the investment of the Fairer Scotland Fund.		Director of Corporate Governance	04.03.10	

	Motion	Date of Council Meeting	Committee Motion referred to / date/ decision of Committee	Action taken / Proposed Future Action	Responsible Head(s) of Service	Due Date	Is authority sought to remove motion from list?
1.	Motion by Councillor Graham and Councillors Wisely, Cassie & Yuill The Council resolved to instruct officers to carry out the necessary consultations to rename the new ward of Northfield and Kingswells/ Sheddocksley to Northfield/Mastrick and Kingswells/ Sheddocksley / Summerhill; and Airyhall/ Broomhill/Garthdee be changed to Mannofield/ Broomhill/Garthdee.	15.08.07	Policy and Strategy Committee on 04/09/07 Agreed that a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to the relevant Minister seeking authority to change the ward names in Aberdeen following appropriate consultation with the local communities.	Officers in the City Solicitor's team are engaging with the Scottish Government in order to progress this. A formal request has been intimated which indicates the proposed names for each ward and provides a brief explanation in respect of each. The process in terms of going forward is that the change of name will require a Parliamentary Order. Before the Order is laid down, there is a period of public consultation. This is led by the Scottish Government in consultation with the Council. Officers are awaiting confirmation that the Scottish Government is happy with the proposed names and justifications and have also asked for confirmation of the time line in terms of progressing this so that Members can be advised accordingly	City Solicitor	**08.12.09**	No
	Councillors Fletcher and Kirsty West "The Council notes that Ward 5, "Hilton/Stockethill" includes the historic Burgh of Woodside, and regrets the loss of its name within the ward description. This Council resolves to instruct officers to carry out the necessary actions to rename the Ward.	27.06.07	To approve the terms of the motion and instruct the City Solicitor and Head of Democratic Services to report on how the terms of the motion can be met.	A report is due to be submitted to Committee on 8 December, 2009. **At its meeting on 8th December, 2009, the Committee heard that no response had been received from the Scottish Government.**	City Solicitor Head of Democratic Services		

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		Motion	Date of Council Meeting	Committee Motion referred to / date/ decision of Committee	Action taken / Proposed Future Action	Responsible Head(s) of Service	Due Date	Is authority sought to remove motion from list?
2.		Motion by Councillor Graham "That this Council calls upon the Scottish Government to increase its 09/10 allocation of funding to Aberdeen City Council in order to prevent further cuts to services to the elderly, disabled and those less fortunate within Aberdeen. Furthermore, this Council Administration honours their promise to the people of Aberdeen during the protest march back in April 2008 by instructing the Chief Executive the write to the Scottish Government demanding that Aberdeen City Council receives a fairer funding settlement consistent with the Scottish average. That the Leadership writes to all Aberdeen city constituency and North East list MSPs calling on them to support Aberdeen City Council's plea for a better funding settlement.	12.11.08	The Committee approved the terms of the motion and a background report was submitted on 21 January.	At the meeting of 3 March, 2009, the Committee agreed the recommendations in the report and requested that a letter, signed by all party leaders, be sent to partners across the city, such as NHS Grampian and the Chamber of Commerce. This was to be sent along with a copy of the previous Leadership Board letter attached to show the cross-party work which the Council was undertaking to pursue a fairer funding settlement and to seek support across the city. **At its meeting on 8th December, 2009, the Committee considered an update report on the matter and agreed (a) that a letter from the Chief Executive in connection with the matter be sent to the Scottish Government prior to the Christmas break; (b) that the Chief Executive and the Leadership Board continue to press the case for a fairer funding settlement; (c) that officers investigate the possible benefits to the Council of a change in the floor level; and (d) to request that all political parties put their weight behind the campaign for fairer funding.**	Head of Service, Office of the Chief Executive	04.03.10	No

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Corporate Policy and Performance
DATE	21st January 2010
CORPORATE DIRECTOR	Stewart Carruth
TITLE OF REPORT	Statutory Performance Indicators 2008/09
REPORT NUMBER	CG/10/020

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents comparative rankings for the Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for the 2008/09 year, showing Aberdeen City Council's position on 105 SPIs. The performance out-turns and officers' detailed analysis of the performance was previously reported to the Committee on 5th November 2009.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:-

i. Note the ranking on the 2008/09 Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) and the positive movement in terms of the percentage of SPIs in the upper and second quartiles;

ii. Note that, as part of the Council's performance management system, each Service reports to the relevant Committees of the Council showing performance against Statutory Performance Indicators. This includes recommendations for actions for further improvement.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

There are no direct implications arising from this report, however, it presents outcome performance information across the range of council services. The Council's and partners' management of that performance will have considerable impact on the community.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS
None.

6. REPORT

6.1   Background

6.1.1 The Council's Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for the 2008/09 year were reported in detail to the Committee on 5th November, 2009. At that time it was advised that comparative rankings for all Scottish local authorities would be available towards the end of the calendar year and that, once known, these would be reported to the Committee. This report advises the Committee of these rankings.

6.2   2008/09 Performance

6.2.1 The performance and rankings for each SPI are reported in Appendix A. Previous year's information is also shown where available. Audit Scotland have made a large number of changes to those SPIs for which it ranks council performance. There are several SPIs which are ranked for the first time and for which there is therefore no previous ranking to indicate a direction of travel.

6.2.2 The number of SPIs ranked by Audit Scotland for 2008-09 by quartile is:

	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07
Top quartile	30 (29%)	14 (20%)	13 (21%)
Second quartile	32 (30%)	23 (33%)	19 (30%)
Third quartile	18 (17%)	21 (30%)	18 (28%)
Bottom quartile	25 (24%)	12 (17%)	13 (21%)
Total ranked SPIs	105 (100%)	70 (100%)	63 (100%)

While there have been substantial changes to the SPIs ranked by Audit Scotland, there has been a slight improvement in the overall rankings for Aberdeen City. In 2008-09, 59% of ranked SPIs were in the top or second quartiles, compared to 53% in 2007-08 and 51% in 2006-07.

Overall, those indicators where Aberdeen City Council was previously ranked in the upper quartile have shown continued good performance. Indicators which have moved in to the upper quartile in 2008/09 include element of:-

- Criminal Justice;
- Academic Attainment for Looked After Children;
- The cost if refuse collection;
- Noise Complaints.

The increased proportion of SPIs in the lowest quartile has been influenced by the inclusion of measures which were not ranked in the previous year, including:-

- Children's Respite
- Housing Repairs

6.2.3 In terms of actual performance, rather than rankings, the movement of the 105 SPIs ranked by Audit Scotland is:

	2008-09
Improved	59
Declined	38
Not comparable	8

6.3 <u>Monitoring Arrangements</u>

6.3.1 The committee should note that review of SPI performance is a standing item within the Council's Performance Management Framework and is regularly reported to Service Committees as well as through the Service Management structures. The consideration given to each SPI by Committees and Senior Managers provides the detailed analysis necessary to accurately interpret the reported data and assess the impact on service users and the actions necessary to improve.
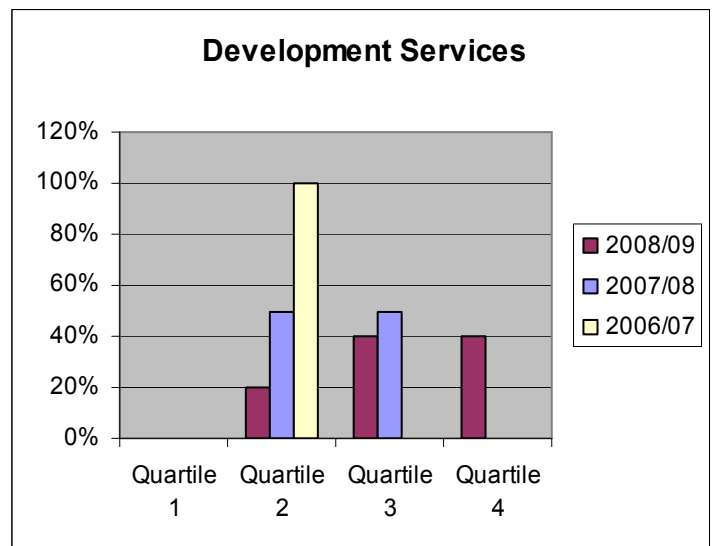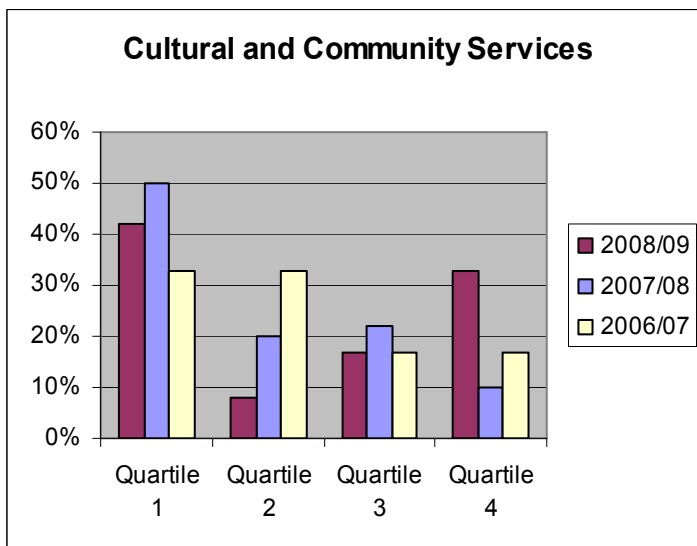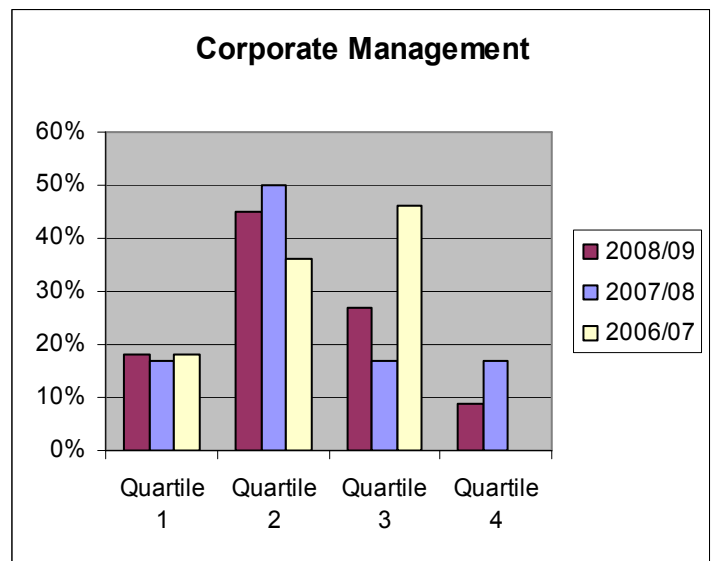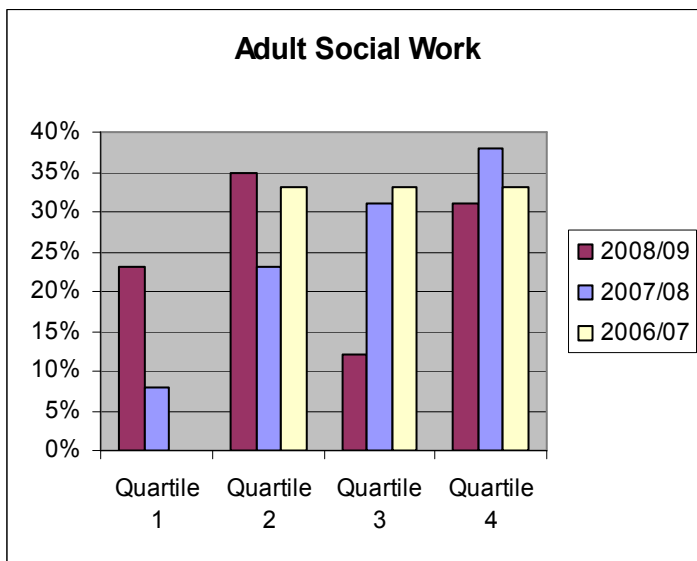
7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

The percentage of indicators ranked in each quartile for every Audit Scotland topic is shown below.

All Ranked SPIs - % in Quartiles

Quartile	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
Quartile 1	29%	20%	21%
Quartile 2	30%	33%	30%
Quartile 3	17%	30%	28%
Quartile 4	24%	17%	21%

Adult Social Work

Quartile	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
Quartile 1	23%	8%	
Quartile 2	35%	23%	33%
Quartile 3	12%	31%	33%
Quartile 4	31%	38%	33%

Corporate Management

Quartile	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
Quartile 1	18%	17%	18%
Quartile 2	45%	50%	36%
Quartile 3	27%	17%	46%
Quartile 4	9%	17%	

Cultural and Community Services

Quartile	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
Quartile 1	42%	50%	33%
Quartile 2	8%	20%	33%
Quartile 3	17%	22%	17%
Quartile 4	33%	10%	17%

Development Services

Quartile	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
Quartile 1			
Quartile 2	20%	50%	100%
Quartile 3	40%	49%	
Quartile 4	40%		

Education & Children's Services
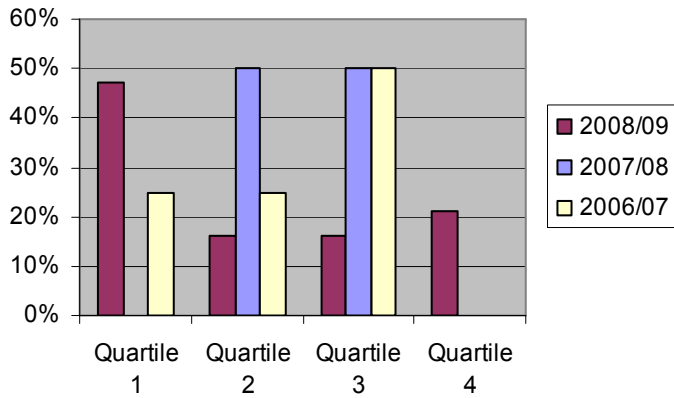
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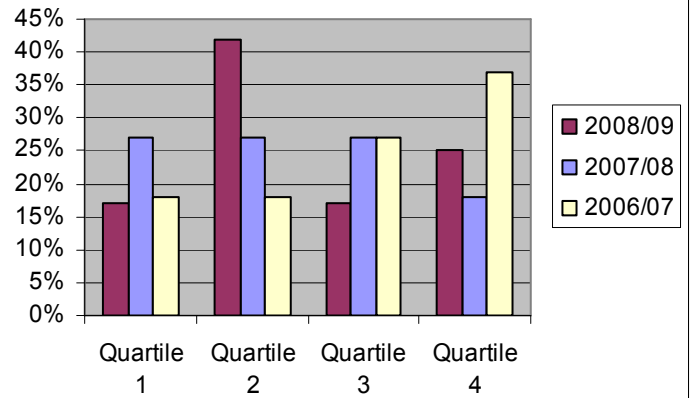
Protective Services

Roads and Lighting

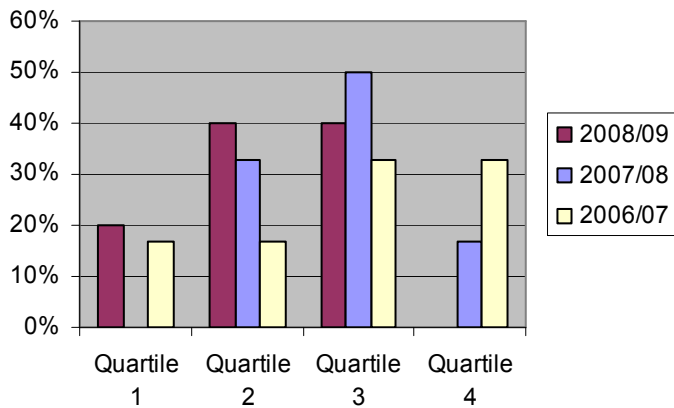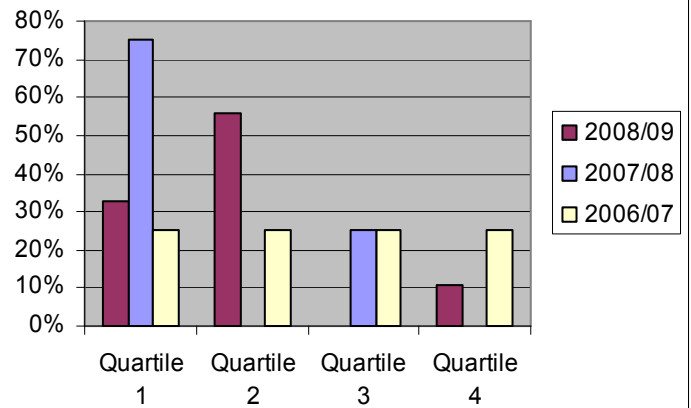## Waste Management
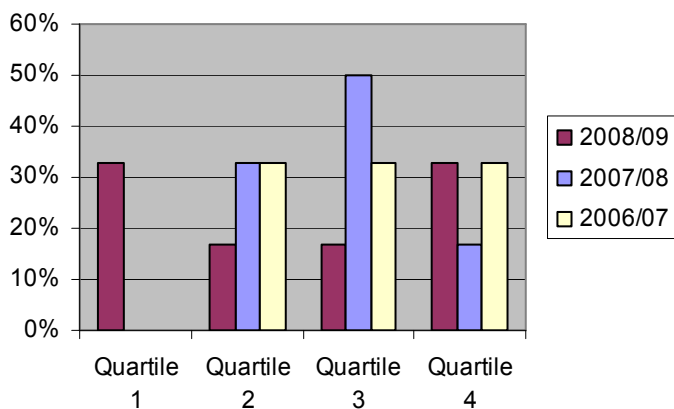
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Agenda Item 3.1

COMMITTEE	Corporate Policy and Performance
DATE	21 January 2010
DIRECTOR	Stewart Carruth
TITLE OF REPORT	Support Staff Review
REPORT NUMBER:	CG/10/016

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the current temporary realignment of support staff to the new structure and inform of the approach and timing to be taken with regard to the review and permanent allocation of support staff to the new structure, as part of the overall restructuring that will follow the appointment of the Heads of Service. This approach takes cognisance of the Directorate needs and the implications of new technology and methodologies.

The general term support staff used in this report includes all staff, both full-time and part-time who provide clerical, administrative, secretarial, reception and similar roles in all areas of the Council except schools.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

Members are asked to:

i) note the work that has been undertaken by the OSMs (Operational Support Managers) in realigning the support staff on an interim basis to the new structure; and

ii) instruct Officers, lead by the Chief Administration Officer, to continue to support the work outlined in this report relating to the review of support staff.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications directly arising from this paper. The full financial implications will be detailed in the next report to Committee when the impact of new technology and methodologies will be measured together with the support staff review.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

This project is directly relevant to the following points:

Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking (VDFL). Efficient Council & Fair Funding.

To achieve the vision of being a leading local authority, Aberdeen City Council must constantly both review its operation and activities and secure fair funding. This includes 'Modernise service delivery and ensure there is appropriate investment in staff training, equipment and accommodation'.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There is no direct legal, resource, personnel, property, equipment, sustainability and environmental, health and safety and/or policy implications and risks contained within this report. The next stage of the review will have a number of implications and these will be investigated and fully reported at that point.

6. REPORT

6.1   The recent realignment of support staff became effective on1st September 2009.

6.2   It was necessary to undertake this temporary realignment of support staff, in the new structure for two reasons:
   i.   the support staff must be aligned to a Directorate within the new structure and in the case of some support staff the Service they were allocated to no longer exists
   ii.   to ensure the on-going support required in the Directorates by providing support services and continuity of business.

6.3   In respect of the substantial alignment of support staff then a research project was undertaken by the Chief Administration Officer in March 2009. The purpose of that research was to conduct an audit of all support staff Council wide (except schools) at post level.

6.4   Support staff in schools can be reviewed as a separate distinct group and maximum benefit would be realised if this was after the roll-out of InfoSmart, WorkSmart and the action plans from the Diagnostic Pathway Programme (DPP) to schools.

6.5   The research identified the work that the support staff undertakes and the processes involved together with related issues. The information and statistics gathered in the research is crucial to understanding the base line from which the support staff can be allocated to the new service structure.

6.6   The research established there are 863 support staff posts which equates to 722 FTEs (Full Time Equivalents). These figures do not include school support staff.

6.7   This number of posts accounts for a significant proportion of the total workforce (approximately 10%) and therefore of the annual costs to Aberdeen City Council. As of 11th January 2010 the total figures of staff employed by Aberdeen City Council are 10,997 which equates to 7,439 FTE.

6.8 Now that this figure has been established the proportion of staff undertaking support staff work can be benchmarked re proportions and content of work profiles with other local authorities and other organisations generally. This will inform the future level of support staff allocation that is necessary for Aberdeen City Council to have a support staff workforce that is effective, efficient and meets the needs of the external and internal customer using the most suitable systems and processes for each identified role.

Support Staff are categorised into two:

(i) Direct
Direct support staff which are those who report directly to and are line managed by a Head of Service, Service Manager or other officer; and

(ii) Indirect.
Indirect support staff which are those managed by either an OSM or a member of staff who reports to the OSM.

The findings further indicated that 28% of support staff posts are in Indirect Posts and the same percentage figure is true when applied to total support staff expressed as FTE. The management of indirect staff is largely consistent across all Services. The remaining 72% of support staff are managed by a range of line managers which can lead to inconsistencies in work undertaken, skills and the training and development of support staff. This review would address this in a positive way gaining maximum benefit for the teams being supported and realising opportunities for the support staff.

6.9 The allocation and skill based training of support staff will require a process to identify business needs and then match needs with skills and experience. The process by which the allocation of support staff to the new Service teams is proposed is outlined in 6.10 below.

6.10 A major review of the business needs of the Service teams is required. This can only take place when the teams in each Directorate are known. The Heads of Service (HOS) will be appointed during February/March 2010 and it is expected they will take up post as soon as possible thereafter, however, it is acknowledged there may be a lead in period of up to three months. The HOS will be aligning their teams and services as one of their first key tasks. At this point the review of support staff needs to take place for each service and focus on
   i.   what are the impacts of new technology and methodology on the tasks to be carried out, including InfoSmart, WorkSmart, Corporate Management Asset System (CAMS), Consilium and the planned move to Marischal College
   ii.   what are the requirements of the team by tasks and volume
   iii.   a skills audit of the support staff
   iv.   identification of training needs
   v.   agreement with the teams and Directorate on needs

      vi.   agreement with the teams and Directorate on proposals to meet their needs

      vii.   agreement with HR and Committee on allocation of support staff

6.11   Only when the above steps are carried out can a detailed plan be provided with recommendations which will reduce the unit costs, increase productivity and improve service delivery.

6.12   The roles of support staff will change and this may require using a different skill set as well as using a wider range of skills to facilitate multi-tasking. The change in roles will be a consequence of deploying new technology enabled processes such as InfoSmart and WorkSmart and also the shift in focus to meet the business needs of each of the Service teams.

6.13   From this information and analysis the allocation of support staff to teams at appropriate levels, with the right skills, located in the right place can begin. An ongoing programme for support staff will then be put in place including training plans, both at team level and individual level, succession planning, work force planning and together with HR colleagues analysis of recruitment, retention and morale can be evaluated and lessons learnt for the future.

6.14   Using this methodology, which is a needs led approach, will ensure the business needs of all teams within the Council are met in the most effective and efficient manner with maximum outputs while simultaneously providing realistic development and career progression opportunities for support staff.

6.15   Work is already well underway to measure and analyse the impact of new technology in the Directorates under the auspices of the Joint Work Programme (JWP). This is the work detailed at 6.10 above. The JWT is lead by the Change Manager in each Directorate and also includes the ICT Account Manager allocated to the specific Directorate, Project Leaders and Directorate representatives. A JWP plan is being prepared for each Directorate in full consultation and agreement with the Directorate representatives and details each project involving technological systems. The JWP is at different stages in different Directorates but the implementation plan includes key milestones, timescales, resource implications for the Directorate (both to implement and post implementation) and quantifiable efficiencies.

    As the teams become established within each Directorate stage (ii) of the work relating to the Support Staff Review will begin, that is, establishment of the requirements of the team by skills and volume.

    Equally, where appropriate, consideration will be given to developing a central support team, e.g. Finance Creditors, where that provides the greatest efficiency in all regards of service provision.

6.16   Further research in tandem with the approach outlined above will focus on bench marking with other authorities and organisations to ensure that Aberdeen City Council employs best practice and achieves best value for spend. Some of the work and contacts relating to the DPP (Diagnostic Pathway Program) can be used for bench marking together with other national and local statistics.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None for this report

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Agenda Item 3.2

COMMITTEE   Corporate Policy and Performance

DATE   21 January 2010

DIRECTOR   Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT   Catering Services Review

REPORT NUMBER: EPI/10/027

1.   PURPOSE OF REPORT

      The purpose of the report to provide the Committee with:

      (i)   A briefing on the outcomes of the best value review of Catering
              Services that was carried out on following instruction in March
              2009.
      (ii)   Detail of the recommendations made following the consultancy
              work undertaken as part of the review by the Association for Public
              Service Excellence (APSE).

2.   RECOMMENDATION(S)

      It is recommended that the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee:

      (i)   Note that based on the evidence gathered as part of the review
              process there are no commercial or other grounds to justify any
              early consideration of out-sourcing these services.
      (iii)   Agree that the detailed use of information gathered for and by the
              review to develop clear strategies and service improvement plans,
              would represent a more effective use of available council resources
              at this time.
      (ii)   Instruct officer to develop a comprehensive action plan dealing with
              the organisational and strategic issues from the recommendation
              and to report back to this Committee in two cycles time.

3.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

      Further areas for potential saving are being identified by catering services.
      These include the potential to make use of spare capacity within pupil
      transport vehicles to deliver meals to schools which do not have cooking
      kitchens on site, rather than use taxi delivery. Also staffing levels are
      being checked to ensure that there is not an over allocation of staff hours
      within school kitchens if either uptakes of meals or the school role is
      reducing.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The review of catering services provided within Aberdeen City Council premises has demonstrated significant links to the health issues within the Aberdeen City Profile in the Single Outcome Agreement 2009 - 2010.

The actions resulting from the Catering Services Review must take cognisance of the anti Poverty Strategy with regard to the provision of healthy eating and free school meals in designated areas of deprivation.
The outcomes and in particular the promotion and support for healthy eating will link to further plans within the curriculum in schools and policies supporting children.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

6. REPORT

6.1 Background

6.1.1 As part of the redesign of Facilities Management the former Resources Management Committee requested that a review be undertaken of all catering carried out within Aberdeen City Council premises. This included school catering, social services catering and civic/other catering services. The scope of the review did not include those catering services currently (or planned to be) subject to external provision such as meals on wheels or Council venues with public catering facilities, other that the Beach Ballroom.

6.1.2 The Best Value Consultancy within the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) was commissioned to undertake the review.

6.1.3 The review sought to measure both the direct service delivery and the systems, procedures and structures which support the current 'internal' catering services against national benchmarks/best practice as well as the Council's wider duty of best value in relation to the delivery of these services. Accordingly, in addition to 'comparative' measures on process, cost and service delivery, the review consulted widely with delivery staff, corporate and strategic stakeholders, health agencies, head teachers, parents and pupils, carte managers, residential and day centre customers, trade unions and other stakeholders on 'satisfaction' levels with the current and aspirations for the future organisation and delivery of these services.

6.2   Review

6.2.1   A significant part of any 'best value review' is the challenge process. This concentrated on how well the current services are delivered, financial and contractual arrangements, management and support structures, an assessment of 'added value' from the service, procurement, environmental and other related issues. The main areas that were looked at were:

- Current service delivery
- Food standards
- Food Hygiene, Health and Safety
- Catering staff
- Overview of catering facilities
- Marketing and promotion
- Service Support structures
- Financial reporting
- Systems and procedures
- Assessment of 'Added Value' work by services
- Review of Food Procurement and Sustainability
- Review of Free Meal Uptakes

6.2.2   At the outset of the review, particular emphasis was placed on Consultation with stakeholders, from Corporate and partner agencies, to front line service users. This was achieved by direct one to one and telephone interviews, discussions during site visits, focus groups with pupils, by the distribution of questionnaires to Head Teachers and parents and the completion of 'clip board' surveys on behalf of their residents by care staff.

6.3   Performance Comparisons

6.3.1   The review sought to:

- Consider all available performance data and Accounts supplied by the Council
- Draw comparisons with APSE 'Performance Networks' data for Education and 'Other' Catering
- Consider any other source data available for benchmarking purposes.

6.3.2   Education Catering

Comparative data has been taken from the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Performance Networks programme for Education Catering, to which the Authority has subscribed for a number of years.
A thorough audit of data submissions made over the last three years was undertaken to validate and ensure consistency in the most recent return for the year ending March 2009 and against which both regional and national comparisons on financial performance and efficiency have been made for the review. This includes comparison with outcomes from up to 20 other Scottish Authorities who submitted data for that year.

Tables across the full range of indicators for this service will be available within our final report, from which the following highlights have been drawn from available data.

PI No.	PI Description	Scottish Ave	'Top Quartile' (Where relevant)	Aberdeen
1a)	Price (parental charge) per Primary Meal	£1.58	N/A	£1.70
1b)	Secondary Free Meal Allowance	£1.70	N/A	£1.95
4	Free Meal Uptake (Primary only)	79.8%	83.2%	85.6%
6a	Free Meal Uptake (Secondary)	53.5%	59.0%	46.8%
8	Paid Meal Uptake (Primary Only)	38.6%	42.0%	67.2%
10a	Paid Meal Uptake (Secondary)	33.6%	40.1%	32.1%
12	Total Cost Per Meal (Inc. CECs)	£2.70	N/A	£2.41
17b)	Primary Food Only Costs per Meal	£0.74	N/A	£0.52
31b	Subsidy per Meal (Excluding Free Meal Costs)	£1.18	N/A	£1.13
16b	Overhead Ratio	18.2%	N/A	9.5%
13	Meals served per Staff Hr.	7.16	7.96	TBC
23	QA and Stakeholder Consultation	43	53	35
24	HR and People Mgt.	41	65	50

From reference to previous years and other accounting data, the following observations provide an accurate statement of performance in this service:

- The higher than national average prices charged in Aberdeen do not appear to be a negative driver on service uptakes and support the maintenance of a below average 'subsidy' in this service.
- Primary paid and free meal uptakes compare well with Scottish averages and have shown a consistent rise over the last three years.
- The national fall in Secondary meal uptakes is a particular issue requiring attention in Aberdeen
- All 'key cost' indicators in Aberdeen are competitive with current Scottish outcomes.
- Consistent with the wider observations made in this review, it is clear that 'Off site' management and support resources fall well below the levels present in most education catering service structures and appropriate to the sustainable delivery cost and service outcomes.

6.3.3   Civic and Other Catering

Aberdeen does not currently subscribe (or make data returns) to APSEs Performance Networks programme for Civic and Other Catering and data for national comparison purposed is therefore limited. Further, by the very specific trading nature of these types of catering outlet, direct comparators

are often not available. From bespoke data from information held, the consultants and the PN 'Other catering' programme, it can be noted that:

- Average spends and Gross Profit percentages achieved at the Beach Ballroom are consistent with effective commercial venues in the general category of function / event catering.
- Core staffing arrangements are in keeping with effective event catering operations. External 'commercial' organisations may however secure temporary or 'event' staff on conditions below those appropriate to the fair employment practices applied by the Council.
- Average spends and uptakes with the Town House and Kittybrewster are consistent with the menu offer, locations and current markets being served. In this respect, a recommendation was made that a wider review of Council policy (involving consultation with all entitled users of Council facilities) be considered in the future. A review of staffing levels is currently being undertaken to identify potential cost savings.
- This review did find evidence of the core commercial disciplines (within operational management) that are appropriate to the effective management of performance in this sector. There is also awareness that in the longer term, enhanced financial outcomes are unlikely to be found without material change in the environments and markets currently being served.

6.3.4 Social Care Catering

There is no current basis for viable cost and efficiency comparisons in this service area. The only direct catering cost identified within individual Centre Accounts is that of food, for which each centre does however set an annual budget. Accordingly, there is a heavy reliance upon sound practices and good housekeeping by catering and care staff (in relation to controlling food waste) and the effective allocation of staff hours, and this was evidences in the site visits to centres undertaken as part of the review.

6.4   **Option Appraisal and Recommendations**

6.4.1 On the basis of the evidence gathered for this review, APSE were of the opinion that there are no commercial or other ground to justify any consideration of out-sourcing these services at this time. Indeed, in the current climate, there is little evidence that the 'external market' is likely to offer, maintain or react to the level of competitiveness or flexibility of outcome found in and required by the service areas or customer groups covered by this review.

However they identified and it was acknowledged by Council officers that there are a number of strategic, organisational and service delivery issues which require detailed consideration and analysis by the Authority, to inform effective service delivery and structural decisions in the future.

In this respect, from the information gathered for and by this review to support and inform the establishment of a Service Improvement Planning

framework for ongoing development and detailed action planning by the Authority, they believe represents the best option to provide:

- o The most 'flexible' route to securing and delivering 'best value' during a period of significant structural change within the Authority
- o The most effective use of available council resources.
- o The balance of evidence gathered through consultation with service users

6.4.2 APSE were also asked to consider the potential benefits of consolidating the Council's catering interests / activity under a single Catering Management structure. In this respect, they considered the following to be relevant:

- o In the three distinct areas of catering covered by this review, each has its own distinct market / customer base and whilst core 'catering' and commercial skills apply to each, the type and level of engagement with those customers and measurement of service 'outcomes' differs significantly between them.
- o In Social Services, staff involved in the delivery of food to residents often have a wider 'care' role making their direct line management by other than care professionals, inappropriate.
- o The need for and type of marketing appropriate to each group requires completely different skill sets at all levels within each service.

There are however skills and importantly, processes, systems and procedures within each service area, that are common to the safe and effective delivery of any catering service, and where these represent good or best practice within the Authority, they should be shared and accessible to each service area in the interests of economy and efficiency.

Notably, this should apply to 'performance management' quality assurance, food hygiene and health and safety systems and procedures, and the existence of a single reference and advisory point within the Council's catering establishment for these and other benchmark processes, would not require the consolidation of line management responsibilities.

Not withstanding the need (otherwise identified within this report) for a review of management and support service resources within education catering, it is in this area (as part of the Facilities Management Structure) that we see the greatest potential for such a service to be developed.

6.5 **Service Improvement Planning**

6.5.1 Inherent in any approval of this recommendation is the need to commence detailed 'Service Improvement Planning' at both a 'Strategic' and 'Operational' level.

To aid in that process, APSE have carried forward key observations / recommendations made throughout their report under these two key headings. Under each, they have identified a number of 'Key Areas for

Improvement'. Some of these inevitably appear under both the Strategic and Operational Headings and where this is the case, in can be assumed that Strategic / political policies and priorities are needed to drive or will be informed by operational considerations in that area.

Each of these key areas for improvement needs to be set out in a clear activity plan for each individual catering service areas, against which tasks, timeframes, targets and measurement of outcomes can be planned and implemented. The development of these activity plans will take a few weeks to finalise as it involves a number of services and individuals and will therefore require a further report. However, in the first instance an indication of the services involved and the potential timescales is set out in Appendix 1 with comments on sub-actions.

7.   REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8.   BACKGROUND PAPERS

APSE Report – Aberdeen Catering Review Prepared December 2009

APPENDIX 1

Key Improvement Areas	Involvement	Provisional Timescale to Develop Plans	Comments
Investment Planning	Education, Culture and Sport Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Social Care and Well Being	By 30 April 2010	Linked to: • School Estates • Property Strategy • Corporate Asset Management • Free School Meals
Performance Management – Systems and Procedures	Education, Culture and Sport Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Social Care and well Being Corporate Governance	By 28 February 2010	Linked to: • Corporate Governance • Identify Management Information Requirement
Policy Direction / Clarification	Education, Culture and Sport Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Social Care and well Being NHS HMIE Health Focus Groups	By 31 May 2010	Linked to: • Partner services to ensure the healthy eating agenda forms part of policy and that existing policies are taken on board as part of food preparation • Will require Heads of Service in post.
Communications / Leadership	Education, Culture and Sport Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Social Care and well Being Corporate Governance Office of Chief Executive (Corporate Communications) HR	By 28 February 2010	Linked to: • Communication plan linking back to policy and direction • Improved links between front line staff and senior management

Key Improvement Areas	Involvement	Provisional Timescale to Develop Plans	Comments
Structures and Resources	Education, Culture and Sport Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Social Care and well Being Corporate Governance	By 31 May b2010	Linked to: • Provide a single point of contact • Linkage to IT policy and roll out of eProcurement
Added Value	Education Catering (Facilities) Civic and Other Catering Social Care Catering	By 30 April 2010	Linked to: • Policy Development • Promotion and Marketing • Communication
Food Procurement	Education Catering (Facilities) Civic and Other Catering Social Care Catering CPU	By 31 March 2010	• Procurement Support to Social Service and 'Other' Catering Outlets • PECOS system roll out
Access to Catering Advisory Service	Education Catering (Facilities) Civic and Other Catering Social Care Catering	By 30 April 2010 with task completion by end of 2010	Linked to: • Policy and structural change at Head of Service level and manager level below. Thereafter will require to address: • Systems and Procedures • QA • Food Hygiene • Health and Safety • Training • Menu Planning
Menu Planning	Education Catering (Facilities) Civic and Other Catering Social Care Catering	Education Catering will have rolled out this action for after Easter school holidays.	• Standard menu to be introduced in all primary schools for trial during summer cycle (April to October)

Key Improvement Areas	Involvement	Provisional Timescale to Develop Plans	Comments
Employment Conditions and Staff Training	Education Catering (Facilities) Civic and Other Catering Social Care Catering HR		• Training Plans • TU Consultation • CPD
Marketing and Promotion	Education Catering (Facilities) Civic and Other Catering Social Care Catering Corporate Communications	By 31 May 2010	• Marketing Plans • Customer Consultation
Service Level Agreements	Education Catering (Facilities) Education, Culture and Sport	By 31 March 2010 with SLAs in place for new 2010/11 school year.	• Review and update School Catering SLAs
Quality Assurance Procedures	Education Catering (Facilities) Civic and Other Catering Social Care Catering	By 30 June 2010	• Extend current QA registration to all primary school catering • Train staff in documentation
Service Development (based on Head Teacher Feedback)	Education Catering (Facilities) Education, Culture and Sport	By 31 May 2010 with SLAs in place for new 2010/11 school year.	• Greater engagement between schools and catering service • Whole school approach
Management Resources and Support Structures	Education Catering (Facilities) Civic and Other Catering Social Care Catering	By 31 May 2010	• Roles and Responsibilities • Support Services resources • Staff and TU Consultation • Agree Support Network across Services
Identify potential benefits from centralised food production for Corporate Dining Centres	Civic and Other Catering Education, Culture and Sport	By 31 March 2010	

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Corporate Policy and Performance

DATE: 21 January 2010

LEAD OFFICER: Chief Executive

TITLE: Local Code of Corporate Governance

REPORT NUMBER: OCE/10/003

1.   PURPOSE OF REPORT

      At its meeting on 6 May 2008 the Continuous Improvement Committee agreed that the Council's refreshed Local Code of Corporate Governance be brought to its meeting on 17 June 2008 having been updated in light of the improvement agenda set out in the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning and in line with the new Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

      This report brings to the Committee an update on progress to date on this matter.

2.   RECOMMENDATION

      That the Committee resolves to note the position relating to the development of a refreshed Local Code of Corporate Governance for the Council and agrees that the Code be brought to its meeting on 29 April 2010.

3.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

      While this report has no direct financial implications, its subject matter relates indirectly to the overall financial position of the Council.

4.   SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

      The subject matter of the report relates, directly or indirectly, to all Council policy objectives and principles, to the delivery of the Council's Interim Business Plan and to all aspects of *Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking* and the Single Outcome Agreement.

5.   OTHER IMPLICATIONS

      As with Service and Community Impact above, the subject matter of the report relates to all the Council's activities in serving the City.

6. REPORT

At its meeting on 6 May 2008 the Continuous Improvement Committee agreed that the Council's refreshed Local Code of Corporate Governance be brought to its meeting on 17 June 2008 having been updated in light of the improvement agenda set out in the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning and in line with the new Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

Taking as its definition that "governance is about how local government bodies ensure that they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner". The Framework noted above and developed jointly by SOLACE (the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) and CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) states that governance "comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which local government bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and, where appropriate, lead their communities". The Framework is built around six principles as follows:

❑ Focusing on the Purpose of the Authority and on Outcomes for the Community and Creating and Implementing a Vision for the Local Area

❑ Members and Officers Working Together to Achieve a Common Purpose with Clearly Defined Functions and Roles

❑ Promoting Values for the Authority and Demonstrating the Values of Good Governance through Upholding High Standards of Conduct and Behaviour

❑ Taking Informed and Transparent Decisions which are Subject to Effective Scrutiny and Managing Risk

❑ Developing the Capacity and Capabilities of Members and Officers to be Effective

❑ Engaging with Local People and Other Stakeholders to Ensure Robust Public Accountability

The intention reported to the Continuous Improvement Committee in May 2008 was to refresh the Council's existing governance arrangements making use of the guidance produced by SOLACE and CIPFA. This intention remains, but the Committee will be mindful that later in May 2008 the Accounts Commission's public hearing took place and was followed by the Commission's findings and recommendations which included a finding that the Commission had "concerns about the governance arrangements within the Council, particularly the need for more effective member scrutiny". As a result, the Commission recommended that "the Council should ensure that robust and effective governance arrangements are in place including officers producing reports that outline policy options, members receiving all papers in accordance with the timescales laid down by the Local Government (Access

to Information) Act and the Council's Standing Orders, and members attending appropriate training courses".

The Committee will be aware that the Council's Leadership Board worked closely throughout the remainder of 2008 with the External Support Group facilitated by COSLA (the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) and SOLACE in addressing all of the findings and recommendations made by the Commission and an update report relating to the Local Code of Corporate Governance was provided to the Continuous Improvement Committee at its meeting on 13 January 2009. This report noted that elected member training had been commissioned from and delivered by CIPFA and that the Council's Scrutiny Panel had been established and was operational, but also made clear that the External Support Group had stressed throughout to the Leadership Board that the key priority to be addressed by the Council was the need to ensure that the organisation is returned to financial stability.

Notwithstanding the ongoing priority to address the finances of the Council, the report to the Continuous Improvement Committee in January 2009 indicated that work was underway on the Council's governance arrangements and that this work would be informed by feedback from elected members who participated in the CIPFA training, the advice received from the External Support Group, the views of the Independent Financial Adviser and most crucially it would synchronise with the work on the Council's organisational structures being brought forward early in 2009 by the Chief Executive. It would take in all aspects of the Council's governance arrangements including Standing Orders, the Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations and Codes of Conduct and would map them out to ensure clarity in their operation both for elected members and officers.

Since January 2009, reports have been taken to Council by the Chief Executive on revisions to the Council's decision-making structure, revisions to the Council's management structure at Director and Head of Service level and revisions to the Council's Standing Orders.

In its Best Value progress report on the Council published in July 2009, Audit Scotland notes "the Council has implemented a new management structure to improve clarity and accountability; it has agreed revised political decision-making structures and is implementing new governance arrangements".

In its findings on the progress report the Accounts Commission states it is "encouraged by the prompt and decisive action taken by the Council, and taking in to account the timescale, commends the Council on its progress across a range of activity; we welcome in particular the steps taken to establish new management structures and new senior management team, the early signs of changes in the organisational culture and the progress in implementing a corporate performance management process".

Given the progress made in revising the Council's governance arrangements, the next step now is to complete the work on a refreshed Local Code of Corporate Governance which will bring each of these strands of activity

together. It is recommended that the Committee resolves to note the position agrees that the Code be brought to its meeting on 29 April 2010.

7.   REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8.   BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE:	Corporate Policy and Performance
DATE:	21 January 2010
LEAD OFFICER:	Chief Executive
TITLE:	Peer Review
REPORT NUMBER:	OCE/10/002

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

At its meeting on 13 January 2009, the Continuous Improvement Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive relating to the Council's Action Plan in response to the HMIe (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education) report on the joint inspection of services to protect children and young people in Aberdeen City. The report made reference to arrangements made with Renfrewshire Council for that local authority to provide the City Council with peer review support relating to child protection services.

The Continuous Improvement Committee agreed to endorse the peer review and to request officers to submit a report on the implementation of a peer review across all Council services to the Committee within two cycles.

This report brings before the Committee an update on the position relating to the use of peer review within the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee resolves to note the position relating to the use of peer review within the Council.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

While this report has no direct financial implications, its subject matter relates indirectly to the overall financial position of the Council.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The subject matter of the report relates, directly or indirectly, to all Council policy objectives and principles, to the delivery of the Council's Interim Business Plan and to all aspects of *Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking* and the Single Outcome Agreement.

5.   OTHER IMPLICATIONS

As with Service and Community Impact above, the subject matter of the report relates to all the Council's activities in serving the City.

6.   REPORT

Following the Accounts Commission's public hearing in May 2008, the Commission's findings stated the City Council lacked a full appreciation of the seriousness that it faced at that time and that it lacked the capacity to carry forward the changes that were needed.   External support, including peer review, was recognised as a means by which both to increase self-awareness and to increase capacity within the Council.

Audit Scotland's Best Value progress report on the City Council published in July 2009 states that "the Council has recognised the need to build capacity within the organisation and has done this by actively securing external support and by developing its existing capacity".   The report notes external help secured as follows:

- CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) – to carry out training for elected members and provide placements to give additional accountancy support to develop systems and review schemes of delegation and financial regulations
- Consultants – to lead and support work on bank reconciliations and develop the Council's internal audit programme
- CIPFA/IPF (Institute of Public Finance) – to support the development of the Asset Management Strategy
- Independent support and challenge on housing improvements as recommended by the Scottish Housing Regulator
- City of Edinburgh Council – on homelessness services
- Renfrewshire Council – for peer review on child protection services
- West Lothian Council – for peer review of financial management

Audit Scotland also noted the City Council's constructive engagement with the External Support Group facilitated by COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) and SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives).   The Accounts Commission commended the City Council on its progress across a range of activity.

In addition, a number of Council services are active members of partnerships with other local authorities to provide mutual quality assurance schemes including for example the Public Analyst Laboratory, Environmental Services and Commercial Premises and Trading Standards.   The Council is a member of a number of benchmarking groups and it should also be noted that the Council itself is often called upon to provide advice and examples of good practice to others.

The Committee will be mindful of the fact that in the intervening period since the Continuous Improvement Committee's meeting in January 2009 a new

team of Directors has been appointed, with the last to take up post beginning work in September 2009, and that recruitment to a new team of Heads of Service is due to be complete by March 2010.

The new senior management group, working with the elected members, is responsible for driving forward the improvements identified within the Best Value progress report and will continue to make use as appropriate of peer review, external support and advice from other local authorities, from other parts of the public sector, the voluntary sector and the private sector. Although the External Support Group will soon be formally stood down, the Chief Executive's colleagues in SOLACE have made clear to her that informal support will continue to be made available to the City Council.

As stated in the Council's response to the Accounts Commission's findings on the progress report – "given the centrality of clear responsibility and accountability in the Council's new organisational structures at both Committee and Directorate level, and given the fundamental requirement for robust self-assessment as national scrutiny arrangements are transformed the importance of the Council's corporate performance management processes are fully appreciated both by elected members and officers. In seeking to deliver against timescale and within budget the priorities enshrined within the Single Outcome Agreement and *Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking* it is recognised that performance management arrangements within the Council must be kept continually under review".

In moving this agenda forward at a Council-wide level, the Corporate Management Team is currently in discussion with colleagues at Perth and Kinross Council with a view to adopting that authority's *How Good is Our Council?* guide to evaluating services making use of quality indicators. The intention being to put in place within the Council arrangements to ensure an accurate level of self-awareness to allow meaningful and fruitful engagement with Audit Scotland and its partner inspection bodies as shared risk assessment is developed over the coming months.

Further reports on these matters will be brought to Committee in future cycles and in the meantime it is recommended that the Committee notes the position relating to the use of peer review within the Council.

7.   REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8.   BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE:	Corporate Policy and Performance
DATE:	21 January 2010
DIRECTOR:	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT:	Final Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy (2010-2015)
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/10/004

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the adoption of the Final Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy (2010-2015), which has been subject to formal public consultation. The strategy has been submitted to Housing & Environment Committee on 11 January 2010 for approval and sought that it be referred to Corporate Policy and Performance Committee for adoption.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

a) Approves the Final Nature Conservation Strategy (2010-2015) for adoption.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no additional revenue costs associated with the adoption of the strategy.

It should be noted that this strategy may have capital and revenue implications as a result of future projects required to implement the strategy. However, the Council's ability to implement the final strategy will be governed and influenced by resource constraints and other competing priorities.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

This strategy has direct links with the administration's Vibrant and Dynamic & Forward Looking requirement to 'adopt and implement policies which safeguard Aberdeen's green belt and green wedges'.
This strategy will also assist the Council in delivering a number of Single Outcome Agreement National Outcomes including: -
  1 – 'We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe';

10 - 'We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need'; and
12 - 'We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations'.

This strategy has been designed to have a positive impact on Aberdeen citizen's quality of life, therefore, an 'Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment' has been conducted. The summary of the assessment is as follows: -

The Nature Conservation Strategy includes everyone and will have significant positive impacts on all groups. It promotes sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 through public participation, community engagement, and knowledge sharing in a nature conservation context. It aims to promote quality of life for all citizens that live, work and visit Aberdeen City through improving biodiversity.

For example, the young, old and people with disabilities will benefit from wildlife gardens or will be encouraged to get involved with their creation in facilities such as schools, sheltered housing or hospitals.

There is, however, potential for some negative impacts to the group 'Race'. Gypsies or Travellers that set up unauthorised camps on designated sites important for nature conservation may be requested to move to another site. The creation of official halting sites by the Council will address this potential issue.   Changes to the nature conservation strategy are, therefore, not required.

A monitor and review process has been included in the strategy, and information gathered as part of this process will be used to amend actions required to implement the strategy and will inform future nature conservation strategies.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There may be potential operational and development implications that will arise from this strategy. For example, changes may be required to some operational activities that could have a negative impact on biodiversity, or developers may be required to include more consideration for nature conservation through design.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 states that 'it is the duty of every public body and office holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions.'   The lack of an updated Nature Conservation Strategy places the Council at risk of not meeting this and other associated legal obligations.

The strategy outcomes must comply with the Health and Safety processes within the Council.

6. REPORT

6.1   Background

Aberdeen City's natural heritage is a key element to the City's character and is vital to its citizen's enjoyment and quality of life. It helps create the City's identity and makes it a pleasant and attractive place to live, work and visit. It is important to protect, preserve, enhance and promote the City's natural heritage in order to ensure a wildlife-rich environment for current and future generations.

With the assistance of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and other groups, Aberdeen City Council developed and adopted a Nature Conservation Strategy in 1994 in a bid to preserve and enhance the quality of the environment, to protect plants and animals and their habitats and to provide opportunities, where possible, for greater public access to sites.

While the current Nature Conservation Strategy has been an important tool in a Land Use Planning context, changes in legislation, the development of new policies and strategies, increased development within the City as well as a shift in the dynamics of the natural environment has brought about the need to update the current strategy.

The updated Nature Conservation Strategy will help the Council, through delivering all its functions, comply with the requirements of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) 1992 which commits the UK to help protect and restore the functioning of natural systems and to halt the loss of biodiversity in the European Union. The Council will also be more able to comply with the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 which imposes a duty on every public body to further the conservation of our natural environment. This Strategy will also assist the Council deliver the requirements of the North East Local Biodiversity Action Plans which have been developed to meet the commitment of the CBD by taking action to conserve locally important species and habitats.

Along with Land Use Planning, this strategy has been designed to support all Council functions and will help to inform other future Council plans, policies and strategies such as the forthcoming Open Space Strategy and new Local Development Plan.

A plan will be required to implement the strategy once it has been adopted.   A Monitoring Group will also be required to monitor progress of the implementation of the strategy.

6.2   Process to Date

In 2007, an expert working group made up of relevant Council officers and representatives from external organisations (including Scottish Natural Heritage, Aberdeen Greenspace, East Grampian Coastal Partnership and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) was established to review the Nature Conservation Strategy for Aberdeen (1994), and assist in the development of an updated

Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy. A workshop involving the wider Council also took place to assist in the development of the strategy. The draft updated strategy was finalised with the endorsement of the expert working group and was subject to a formal public consultation exercise which ran for 8 weeks between 7th September and 2nd November 2009.

During this period, articles informing the public of the consultation including where to obtain access to the strategy were released in a number of local newspapers (Press & Journal, Evening Express and the Aberdeen Citizen), plus, the Council's website and on the Zone. A Council officer conducted presentations at the Environmental Forum and Land Use Forum, plus, appeared on the 'Around with a Ranger' show at SHMU community radio based in Woodside. All Community Councils were contacted and provided with details of the consultation along with hard copies of the draft strategy plus comment forms. Hard copies were made available at the Council's main offices, The Point, and all libraries within the City. A page on the Council's website was also created providing further details of the consultation along with access to the strategy and an online response form.

The results of the public consultation have been taken into account within the attached final strategy.

6.3   Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

As part of developing the strategy, a full Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken in line with The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. This has been conducted in consultation with the Consultation Authorities (Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, and Historic Scotland). The SEA has assisted in identifying any significant effects of the strategy, both positive and negative, on the environment. The SEA Environmental Report was also subject to full public consultation at the same time as the strategy. The results of the public consultation have been taken into account within the attached final strategy.

6.4   Appropriate Assessment (AA)

Due to the presence of a number of species of European importance such as the Atlantic salmon, European otter and Freshwater pearl muscle, the River Dee is designated as a freshwater Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is a statutory designation as per the Habitats Directive (79/409/EEC). In order to comply with this Directive, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been considered. A full AA was not required as the strategy objectives do not generate any significant negative effect on the River Dee SAC.

6.5   Consultation Results Summary - Strategy

A total of 16 responses were received for the strategy and are broken down into the following groups: -

- Members of the public – 3
- Community Councils – 1
- External Organisations – 4
- Council Officers – 8

All groups were in support of the strategy and there were no major changes required as a result of the consultation process. Most respondents' comments were linked to grammatical issues with only a couple of respondents concerned that the strategy was not specific enough particularly with how it is to be implemented. All comments have been addressed and reflected in the final strategy where appropriate.

6.6   Consultation Results Summary – Environmental Report

As part of the SEA process, the consultation authorities were pleased with the content of the Environmental Report and were also in support of the strategy. No significant changes were required for the Environmental Report as a result of the consultation process.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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01224 814610

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

These are listed in the Nature Conservation Strategy.

The Aberdeen City Council
Nature Conservation Strategy
2010-2015

Our Vision

'The City of Aberdeen is recognised for taking a lead in nature conservation.'

Our Aim

To conserve Aberdeen City's natural heritage for the benefit of our biodiversity, citizens and visitors, for current and future generations.

Our Objectives

1. Protect, preserve and enhance Aberdeen's natural heritage (page 25).
Action is required to stop the decline in biodiversity through the protection and restoration of habitats and species important to the City of Aberdeen on Council owned land.

2. Sustainably manage Aberdeen's natural heritage (page 29).
The Council needs to plan and manage the use of its own land in a way that assists in reversing the decline in biodiversity. The Council should also take up opportunities to encourage private land owners to do the same.

3. Involve communities in caring for Aberdeen's natural heritage (page 34).
To make people aware of the importance and benefits of nature conservation, the Council needs to engage with everyone and get them involved at a local level.

4. Promote a greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of Aberdeen's natural heritage (page 39).
Being informed will improve knowledge and enhance people's experience of nature while at the same time help promote awareness and respect for the City's natural heritage.

All photographs supplied by: -
Environmental Sustainability and Aberdeen Countryside Ranger Service of Aberdeen City Council; and
East Grampian Coastal Partnerhip.

Agenda for Action

1. Maintain data on Aberdeen's natural heritage

2. Maintain the integrity of designated sites including identifying 'at risk' sites and restoring their value

3. Protect and enhance biodiversity in areas which are not designated

4. Increase the availability and ecological value of wildlife corridors

5. Seek opportunities to maintain, restore or enhance biodiversity associated with physical development

6. Consider and include nature conservation in all Council projects

7. Establish ways to make Council operational activities more beneficial to biodiversity

8. Seek ways of encouraging private land owners and businesses to adopt nature conservation practices

9. Manage invasive and non-native species which cause negative impacts on biodiversity

10. Influence site specific management plans fit for purpose

11. Establish ways of encouraging the public to improve biodiversity in their own gardens

12. Seek ways of encouraging nature conservation in community gardens and allotments

13. Work with health and education facilities to promote wildlife gardens

14. Encourage communities in partnership working to deliver nature conservation projects

15. Encourage citizens and communities to document and share knowledge

16. Improve Council staff knowledge and understanding of the importance of nature conservation in delivering their function

17. Increase public awareness of the benefits of nature conservation

18. Seek opportunities to improve access to natural heritage sites

19. Increase tourism through promoting the City's natural heritage

20. Promote and encourage responsible access to the City's natural heritage

Contents

Foreword

This year, 2010, is officially the International Year of Biodiversity; a time when the importance of life on earth and the value of biodiversity for our lives are being celebrated. It is, therefore, fitting that Aberdeen City Council has just adopted its new Nature Conservation Strategy for the City of Aberdeen.

Biodiversity is the variety of life from the smallest animal to the largest plant. This variety of life interacts with other areas within our natural environment and helps to create all the different landforms and landscapes that we also see around us.

Historical records for the City have shown a strong connection with our natural environment. For thousands of years, Aberdeen's natural resources have been important to our lives for food, water, fuel, shelter and many other uses which have helped to maintain our quality of life.

These natural resources are still crucial to our lives today and form part of our heritage, our natural heritage, and are important for recreation, tourism and our economy.

However, it is now recognised that we are having a real impact on our natural heritage. We have far fewer valuable habitats and species than we did before – for example, it is strange to think that bird species such as the black grouse and the capercaillie used to be found roaming in Aberdeen's once abundant forests and woodlands!

As a City, we need to play our part in stopping the decline in biodiversity. Indeed, the issue of biodiversity loss is now seen as important as tackling climate change. Halting the decline in biodiversity through nature conservation will also assist efforts to tackle greenhouse gas emissions which are contributing to climate change.

Over the next five years, the Aberdeen City Council's Nature Conservation Strategy will focus on more action on the ground where everyone can get involved be that individually or as part of their community.

This is an opportunity, not only for the Council to fulfil its legal duty to conserve nature, but also for the citizens of Aberdeen City to help conserve our important natural heritage. It is vital that we treat our natural heritage in such a way that can also be utilised, appreciated and enjoyed by our future generations.

1 SETTING THE SCENE

Introduction

Aberdeen City's natural environment consists of a variety of wildlife species and habitats, which is appreciated and enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

The different habitats, including river systems, coastal and marine, marsh, heath, woodlands, and many others are important for the survival of all our plant and animal species such as the red squirrel, European otter, Atlantic salmon, red kite and bottlenose dolphin. These different habitats and species create a diverse and interesting environment within and around the City.

This diverse environment provides the landscape in which we live, plus the natural resources which are important for our survival. It has been the foundation for the growth of Aberdeen's economy.

Utilising the natural resources from the forests, Rivers Dee and Don and the North Sea, Aberdeen has developed over the centuries from one of the major royal burghs of medieval Scotland to a large modern city prospering from oil and gas. Archaeological evidence indicates that people were living here, using the natural resources of land, sea and waterways, at least 8000 years ago.

However, human activities have had and are continuing to have a negative impact on our natural environment. Habitats are being fragmented or disappearing and associated species are declining in numbers, becoming isolated or threatening to disappear from our environment altogether. This can only have a negative impact on the resources that we depend on and our quality of life.

There is, therefore, a need to protect and conserve our natural environment for the benefit of biodiversity and for the citizens of Aberdeen now and into the future.

> **"…human activities have had and are continuing to have a negative impact on our natural environment."**

The Updated Strategy

Since the development of Aberdeen City Council's first Nature Conservation Strategy in 1994, much has changed including increased recognition of the need to protect our environment; improved nature conservation legislation; new policies and strategies at a local level; increased development within the City; and a shift in the dynamics of the natural environment.

After conducting a review of the 1994 Strategy, the decision was made that an updated Nature Conservation Strategy is required to reflect current needs. This Strategy has been developed for Aberdeen City Council to do just that.

> **"…an updated Nature Conservation Strategy is required to reflect current needs."**

Aberdeen City Council (the Council) has developed this Strategy in partnership with appropriate groups and interests at both a statutory and voluntary level including Scottish Natural Heritage, North East Local Biodiversity Partnership, Aberdeen Greenspace Trust Limited, East Grampian Coastal Partnership and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

An **'Agenda for Action'** has been designed to assist in meeting the overall vision, aim and objectives. Once the Strategy has been adopted, the development of an Implementation Plan will be required to implement the objectives and associated 'Agenda for Action' at ground level.

This will be a five year strategy covering the period 2010-2015 and will be monitored on a yearly basis.

This Strategy will replace the current *Nature Conservation Strategy for Aberdeen (1994).*

This Strategy has been developed in line with the requirements of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

Who is the Strategy for?

The focus of this Strategy is on nature conservation for the sake of biodiversity and our natural heritage plus the natural resources that we depend on.

The Strategy also focuses on the citizens of Aberdeen so that they can have the opportunity to actively take part in nature conservation and enjoy nature and the environment in a sustainable way.

This Strategy considers all groups including individuals, community groups, voluntary groups, partnerships, developers, businesses and private landowners.

To do this, **the Strategy has been developed for the use of Aberdeen City Council**, particularly with regards to: -

1. The objectives of the Council's relevant policies, plans and strategies.
2. Any Elected member or officer who will be making decisions, or officer conducting operations or delivering projects that may have an impact on our local natural environment.
3. The services provided for the citizens of Aberdeen in a nature conservation context.

This Strategy makes it clear that it is important that everyone in Aberdeen has the opportunity to help conserve our natural heritage.

> **"…This Strategy makes it clear that it is important that everyone in Aberdeen has the opportunity to conserve our natural heritage."**

Tree planting in Aberdeen

What is Nature Conservation?

Nature is all around us and provides us with life of all kinds. This variety of life is known as 'biodiversity' which is the diversity among and within plant and animal species in our natural environment.

Biodiversity can be found anywhere on land and at sea, including our very own gardens.

Biodiversity and the way it interacts with the natural environment creates many different ecosystems[1] and landscapes and forms part of our heritage; our natural heritage.

Our natural heritage also includes geodiversity which is the diversity of minerals, rocks, soils, fossils and landforms. It is also the geological processes that make up the landform and the underlying structure of the Earth.

Our natural heritage refers to both biodiversity and geodiversity interests and the combination of these.

Nature conservation is, therefore, the conservation of our natural heritage.

> *"Biodiversity is simply the variety of life. It represents a new appreciation of nature, with the emphasis on the incredible diversity of varieties, species, habitats and ecosystems that exist all around us, and on their value to humans."*
>
> *Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in Your Hands, 2004.*

Red squirrels can be seen in gardens or in local woodlands in Aberdeen

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[1] Systems formed by the interaction of communities of organisms with their environment.

Why Have a Nature Conservation Strategy?

Conserve our Natural Heritage
The need for the Strategy is firstly to conserve our natural heritage for the benefit of biodiversity. This Strategy considers individual species, habitats, and whole areas which include interesting geodiversity and landscapes, plus catchment areas such as those associated with river systems. It considers all areas of differing ecological value, species and habitats regardless of the level of protection afforded.

Maintain Quality of Life
We also need the Strategy to help conserve our natural heritage for the benefit of our own quality of life. Biodiversity and geodiversity are concerned with more than habitats, species, landforms and landscapes, but also about the natural resources on which we depend.

> **"…We also need the Strategy to help conserve our natural heritage for the benefit of our own quality of life."**

The benefits we receive from the natural resources we depend on can be divided into four areas: -

1.   Production benefits;
2.   Ecological/Ecosystem benefits;
3.   Social benefits; and
4.   Cultural benefits.

Examples of these different natural resource benefits are listed in Table 1.

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Maintain Quality of Life – Continued

Table 1: Natural Resource Benefits

1. Production Benefits	2. Ecological/Ecosystem Benefits
• Food • Pharmaceuticals • Genetics • Durable material (timber, natural fibre) • Energy (hydro, biofuels) • Industrial products (oils, rubber, plastics) • Ecotourism • Biological control	• Soil formation & protection • Clean air/water • Nutrient storage • Seed dispersal & pollination • Weather/climate control • Pest control • Salinity control
3. Social Benefits	4. Cultural Benefits
• Open space • Lifestyle enhancement • Recreation • Educational value • Scientific value • Aesthetic beauty - landscapes	• Tradition • Heritage • Local character • History

Table 1 demonstrates that people depend on the environment for many things, but above all we need healthy food and water, medicines, shelter and a clean environment in which to live.

Legal Obligations

This Strategy is also the Council's response to the various legislation and obligations at European, UK and at Scottish level which have been developed to help conserve our natural heritage. Table 2 notes some of the various legislation and obligations relevant to the Council.

Table 2: Legislation & Obligations

Bern Convention 1979	Bonn Convention 1979	EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) 1979	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) 1992
EU Biodiversity Action Plan 2006		**NATURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY**		Convention on Biological Diversity 1992
Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy 2005				UK Biodiversity Action Plan 1994
Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004	Scotland's Biodiversity; It's in Your Hands. Strategy 2004	EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) 2000	EU Biodiversity Strategy 1998	The Conservation (Natural Habitats &C) Regulations 1994

At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity was signed by 150 government leaders including the UK Government. The aim is to achieve: -

> *"…a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth."*
>
> *Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992.*

Legal Obligations - continued

Subsequently, UK and EU Biodiversity Action Plans, legal obligations and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy have been developed to assist EU member states meet the requirements of the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992.
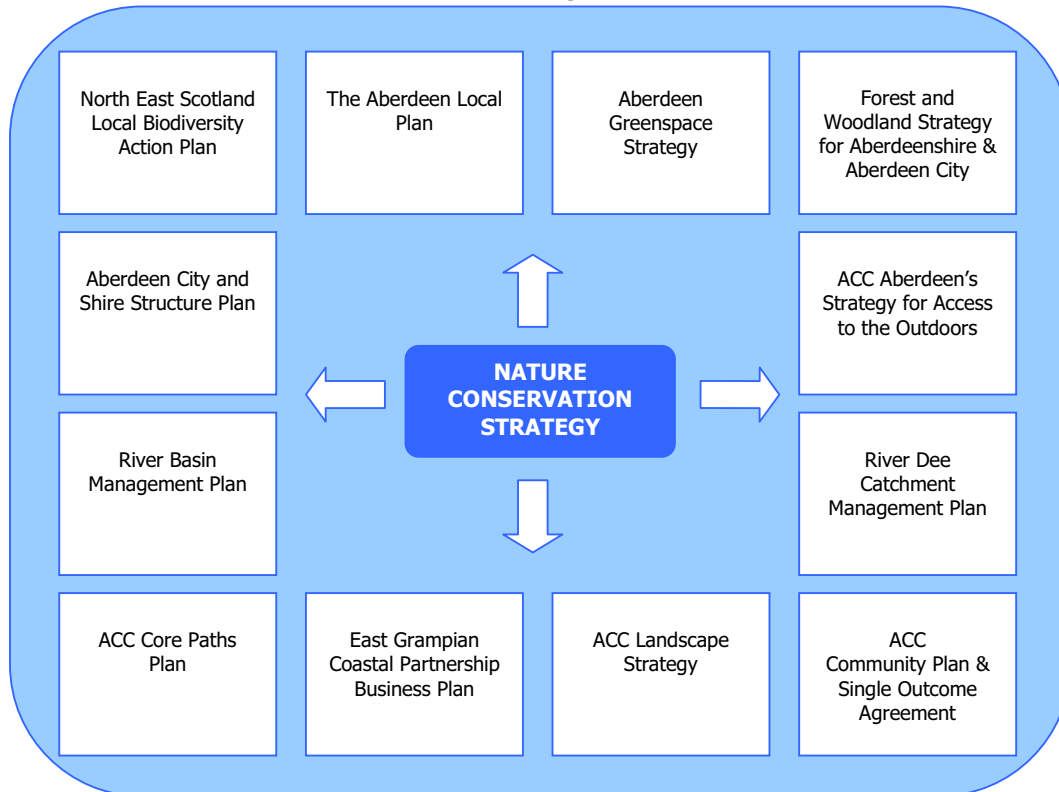
The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 also places a legal duty on local authorities to further the conservation of biodiversity, enhance natural features and protect wildlife. To comply with this duty, the Council must consider nature conservation in everything that it does.

Appendix A provides a brief summary of each legislation and obligation noted in Table 2.

Local Priorities

There are a number of policies, plans and strategies (Table 3) which contain various actions to help conserve habitats and species that are important at European, national and local levels. This Strategy is in response to these local priorities.

Table 3: Local Policies, Plans & Strategies

North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan	The Aberdeen Local Plan	Aberdeen Greenspace Strategy	Forest and Woodland Strategy for Aberdeenshire & Aberdeen City
Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan			ACC Aberdeen's Strategy for Access to the Outdoors
	NATURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY		
River Basin Management Plan			River Dee Catchment Management Plan
ACC Core Paths Plan	East Grampian Coastal Partnership Business Plan	ACC Landscape Strategy	ACC Community Plan & Single Outcome Agreement

Of particular importance is the North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (NELBAP) which is a locally driven process developed to meet the requirements of the UK and EU Biodiversity Action Plans and ultimately the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992.

The Council will continue to support the NELBAP and contribute to the development and implementation of the various associated plans in a bid to halt the decline in our biodiversity.

Local Records Centre

In response to the development of the NELBAP, a local records centre called the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC) was setup in the year 2000. NESBReC collects, stores, manages and disseminates biological data for all types of organisations and groups including local authorities. The data they collect includes all forms of biodiversity and not just priority habitats and species. This type of initiative helps local authorities meet their nature conservation priorities and obligations.

> **"…This type of initiative helps local authorities meet their nature conservation priorities and obligations."**

The Council will continue to support NESBReC so that the information that it provides is up to date and reliable. In return, NESBReC will continue to provide information that will assist the Council make decisions in a nature conservation and land use context, and for contributing to and implementing biodiversity action plans.

This facility is accessible to the public making it available for anyone to obtain information and to contribute to the database. Further details can be found at http://www.nesbrec.org.uk/.
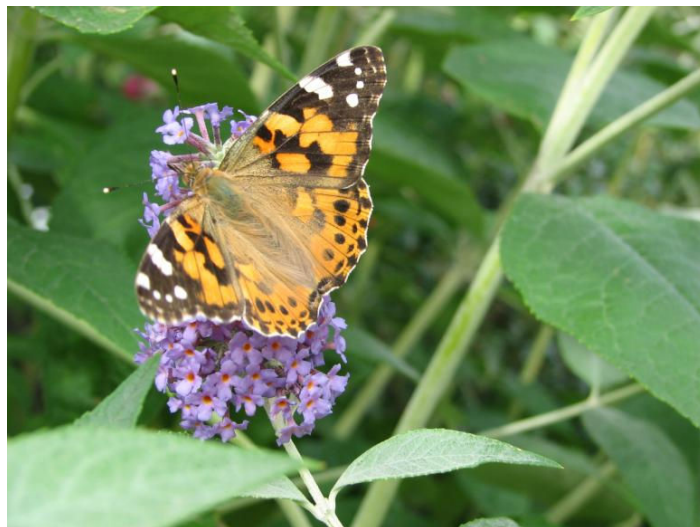
A Painted lady butterfly feeding on Buddleia

Sustainable Development

To ensure that our natural heritage is preserved for current and future generations, and that we are not living beyond our means, decisions that may have an impact on our natural environment have to be done with sustainable development in mind.

Sustainable development is the consideration of all environmental, social and economic aspects; they are all inextricably linked. Sustainable development is…

> *"…development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."*
>
> *Our Common Future, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987.*

With sustainable development as the core aim, Agenda 21 is a plan of action implemented globally and locally and considers human impacts on the environment. Agenda 21 considers many issues including how decisions and actions involving the natural environment can affect us. Agenda 21 promotes, among others, public participation in any decision making process, and informing the public through appropriate methods of communication.

The Council has developed its own Local Agenda 21 Strategy, and to help drive this forward, the Aalborg Commitments[2] were signed by the Council in 2004 and cover many sustainable development issues including biodiversity.

Both Agenda 21 and the Aalborg Commitments form part of the Council's Community Plan which states *'Aberdeen's natural and built environment is protected and the City plays its part in protecting our planet'*.

Action on the ground for this Strategy will, therefore, involve engagement with communities through the Council's Community Planning process.

Links will be made via community councils and Challenge Fora such as the Land Use Forum and Environmental Forum, plus, Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future whose aim is to have a strong economy and excellent quality of life.

Sustainable development (and Agenda 21) is, therefore, important for our environment, the citizens of Aberdeen and our economy, and is a cross cutting theme of this Strategy.

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[2] Further information on the Aalborg Commitments can be found at the Councils website on www.aberdeencity.gov.uk under sustainable development.

Climate Change

There are many aspects to consider for truly sustainable development and climate change is one of them. Although it is not completely clear what the overall impacts (both positive and negative) will be on our natural heritage, a shift in species populations, ranges, migration patterns and reproductive behaviour are already evident both on land and at sea as a result of climate change.

What is known is that climate change and biodiversity are interlinked. Biodiversity loss and climate change go hand in hand and both threaten the availability of our natural resources in the future.

> **"…a shift in species populations, ranges, migration patterns and reproductive behaviour are already evident both on land and at sea as a result of climate change."**

Other than aiming to improve areas of low ecological value and conserve areas of high ecological value using current best practice, it is difficult to know how to manage these sites for a changing future.

A programme of scientific research is ongoing at UK and global levels to establish tools that will assist in predicting the changing behaviour of species as a result of climate change.

If this Strategy is to be for the benefit of nature conservation and sustainable development, there will be a need to monitor progress in the development of guidance which will help the Council deal with the effects of climate change and future nature conservation.

The Council will continue to conserve nature following current best practice and will be prepared to adapt its procedures based on the influences of climate change and associated appropriate guidance from relevant experts.

Common blue butterfly found at the Donmouth Local Nature Reserve

Aberdeen's Natural Heritage

Aberdeen's natural heritage consists of a variety of interest and can generally be divided into habitats and species. Aberdeen's natural heritage also has other interests including geology, landforms and landscapes.

Many habitats, species and other natural heritage interests can be important at European, UK, Scottish and local levels and have been afforded some level of protection through the various legislation, obligations and action plans mentioned.

However, given that many species move around and don't stay within boundaries, other habitats, species and natural heritage interests that do not have the same level of protection can be just as important for nature conservation.

This Strategy, therefore, considers all habitats, species and other natural heritage interests regardless of whether they are found within or outside protected areas.

> **"…This Strategy… considers all habitats, species and other natural heritage interests regardless of whether they are found within or outside protected areas."**

Woodlands provide a diversity of benefits including clean air, preventing flooding, acting as a carbon store, reducing noise, plus, important habitat for wildlife and as a landscape and recreational resource

Habitats

Habitats are a mix of biological and geological features that provide suitable growing conditions for plants, plus shelter, food and breeding sites for animals.

The setting for the variety of habitats found in Aberdeen can be both semi-natural and manmade. Box 1 provides examples of semi-natural habitats found in Aberdeen.

Box 1: Semi-natural Habitats

- Woodland
- Heathland
- Wetlands
- Grassland
- Water bodies
- River systems
- Coastal dune systems
- Marine

Development, agriculture, afforestation and inappropriate management have eroded many of the semi-natural habitats and there are only a few areas of semi-natural vegetation remaining within the built-up-areas of the City.

Heathland with heather overlooking Kingswells

Habitats - Continued
Box 2 provides examples of manmade habitats found in Aberdeen.

Box 2: Manmade Habitats

- Parks
- Gardens
- Railway embankments
- Roadside verges
- Disused quarries
- Landfill sites
- Buildings
- Bridges

Although manmade habitats tend to support a restricted range of native species, they are often supplemented by a variety of garden escapes making them diverse and interesting areas.

Wildflowers growing along a roadside in Aberdeen

Many of the habitats found in Aberdeen are impossible to re-create, therefore, it is important that every effort is made to conserve these remaining areas.

Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015

Species
The City of Aberdeen has a wide range of individual species and can be grouped as follows: -

- Mammals
- Birds
- Fish
- Amphibians & reptiles
- Butterflies & moths
- Other invertebrates
- Vascular plants
- Other plants

Otters can be found at both the rivers Dee and Don or in nearby tributaries

The Sea pea, which is nationally scarce, is found only in a small area of the Aberdeen coast

Common or Harbour seals can be found basking at Donmouth

Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015

Species - Continued
Table 4 provides a small sample of protected, priority or important species found in Aberdeen.

Table 4: Protected, Priority or Important Species

SPECIES	IO	UKBAP	NR/S	ISP	NELBAP
Bottlenose dolphin	✓	✓			
Red squirrel		✓		✓	✓
Peregrine falcon	✓				
Tree sparrow		✓			
Atlantic salmon	✓			✓	
Cousin German moth		✓	✓		
Great Yellow Bumble Bee		✓			✓
Sea pea			✓		✓
Wych elm					✓
Fringed hoar-moss			✓		

IO: International Obligations
UKBAP: UK Biodiversity Action Plan
NR/S: Nationally Rare or Scarce at UK Level
ISP: Important to the Scottish Public
NELBAP: North East Scotland Biodiversity Action Plan

Species which are not protected, important nationally and locally, or classed as a priority are still important for biodiversity and nature conservation. Efforts will be taken to conserve all species regardless of their level of protection.

Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015

Other Natural Heritage Interests

The geological interest in Aberdeen provides a platform for a variety of habitats. For example, the coastal strip between Balnagask to Cove includes coastal grassland, heathland, rocky cliffs and rock pools.   Nigg Bay and Cove Bay have particular geological interest which has been recognised at UK level.

The geology and the different landforms found in Aberdeen help to create the interesting landscapes which contribute to the City's identity and quality of life.

Geology, landforms and landscapes are very much linked to nature conservation.   Sites which are valued for their natural heritage often have associated visual or landscape importance.

> **"…Geology, landforms and landscapes are very much linked to nature conservation."**

This Strategy will link into Aberdeen City Council's Landscape Strategy which considers the enhancement of landscapes and wildlife habitats together.

Information on the geology at Nigg Bay

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Site Protection Systems
To assist in protecting valuable habitats and species, various site protection systems (designations) have been introduced at international, national and local level. The City of Aberdeen has a number of site protection systems at various levels which help the Council fulfil its legal obligations to protect these areas.

Table 5 notes the various site protection systems currently present in the City of Aberdeen.

Table 5: Site Protection Systems in the City of Aberdeen

Designation	Status & Source	Number
• Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	• Statutory - Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) & the Conservation (Natural Habitats &C) Regulations 1994	1
• Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	• Statutory - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 & the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004	3
• Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS) *Includes both District Wildlife Sites (DWS) and Sites of Interest to Natural Science (SINS)*	• Non-Statutory - Local authority	80
• Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	• Non-Statutory - Local authority	4

Statutory designated sites are those recognised at international level such as the European Commission's Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and those recognised at UK and Scottish level, for example a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Non-statutory designated sites are set at a local level to further protect locally important landscape settings and valuable wildlife habitats.

Scottish Planning Policy is currently being updated and there is an indication that in the future, the system for local non-statutory designated sites will be made simpler. They will all be known as Local Nature Conservation Sites and will have to meet the same set of criteria. These future changes will be considered during implementation process for this Strategy.

Appendix B provides a brief summary of each designation. Appendix C notes the locations of all designated sites currently found in Aberdeen.

Site Protection Systems - Continued

General distribution of Designated sites throughout the City of Aberdeen.
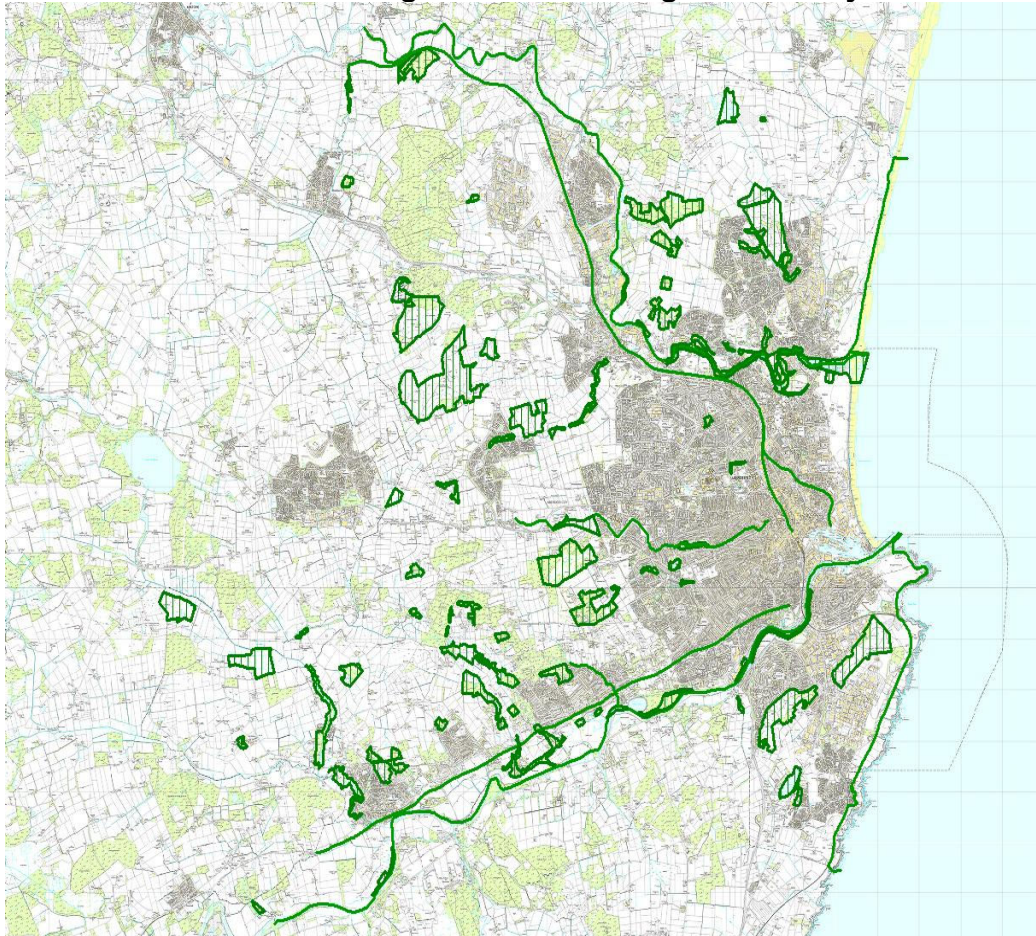
© Crown Copyright Reserved License No. 100023401 (2008)

KEY REFERENCES: -

Convention on Biological Diversity:
http://www.cbd.int/

EU Biodiversity Action Plan (EUBAP):
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/index_en.htm

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP):
http://www.ukbap.org.uk/

North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (NELBAP):
http://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/

North East of Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC):
http://www.nesbrec.org.uk/

2 THE STRATEGY

Aims and Objectives

The Nature Conservation Strategy will focus on conserving areas at risk from adverse development and any activity which has a negative impact on our natural heritage. The focus is also to ensure that habitats, species, other natural heritage interests, and the people of Aberdeen, whether they are residents or visitors, benefit from protecting our environment. The focus will also be to look after our environment in a way that leaves an environment fit for our future generations.

The aim of this strategy is, therefore: -

To conserve Aberdeen City's natural heritage for the benefit of our biodiversity, citizens and visitors, for current and future generations.

To achieve this, the objectives of the Strategy are to: -

1. *Protect, preserve and enhance Aberdeen's natural heritage;*

2. *Sustainably manage Aberdeen's natural heritage;*

3. *Involve communities in caring for Aberdeen's natural heritage; and*

4. *Promote a greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of Aberdeen's natural heritage.*

To assist in meeting the aim and associated objectives, an **'Agenda for Action'** has been developed for each objective.

The Agenda for Action will help to set the scene for the development of an Implementation Plan which will be required to implement the adopted Strategy.

The objectives and Agenda for Action will not be considered in isolation. The Implementation Plan's own actions may link to more than one objective and any action or number of actions from the Agenda so long as there is no duplication.

OBJECTIVE 1*:* Protect, preserve and enhance Aberdeen's natural heritage

Action is required to stop the decline in biodiversity through the protection and restoration of habitats and species important to the City of Aberdeen on Council owned land.

State of our Natural Heritage

i.   To be able to conserve our natural heritage, there is a need to establish which habitats, species and other natural heritage interests are present within the City.

ii. Some data on habitats and species is already available, particularly on locally important or designated sites but it may be inadequate or out of date.

iii. Audits or surveys will be required and information gathered can be added to existing data or form new baseline data.

iv. A review of existing and new data will be required enabling measurement of the current state of our natural heritage.

v.   Such information will help to establish if there have been any changes in the level of biodiversity present, or in other words, the ecological value of our natural heritage.

Heron in the River Don near Woodside

Integrity of Designated Sites

i.   If it is revealed that some integrity of Council designated sites has been lost, then steps will be required to make sure that the ecological value is not reduced any further.

ii. Where sites have had their ecological value reduced, it is important to attempt to identify the cause so that action can be taken to rectify the situation where possible.

iii. Any site or sites that have been identified as being 'at risk', action will be taken to prevent any degradation.

iv. Management practices may need to be amended to help maintain the integrity of designated sites.

v.   For designated sites located on private land, opportunities will be sought to work with private landowners so that nature conservation is effective on both Council and privately owned land.

vi. Maintaining the ecological value of designated sites will help to maintain its 'designated' status.

vii. Opportunities will also be taken to identify sites where the designation status could be increased.

Non-Designated Sites

i.   While there is a duty to safeguard and enhance our natural heritage within all statutory and non-statutory designated sites, many habitats both semi-natural and manmade have no protection at all.

> ### *Semi-Natural and Manmade Habitats*
> Many species are far ranging and simply protecting a variety of semi-natural habitats is not always sufficient to protect some of them. Indeed, it is within these areas that much of the City's wildlife resources are located along with strategically placed and important wildlife corridors. Species may be found on roofs; bridges; within new and in derelict buildings; or on brown field sites. Important species such as birds, animals and insects, as well as their nest, roost and feeding sites should be identified. Opportunities should also be sought to link into existing or help to develop new NELBAPs for priority or locally important species.

ii. There is a need to consider potential ways of protecting biodiversity found in non-designated areas which are both semi-natural and manmade.

iii. This will demonstrate that the Council recognises that wildlife species cross boundaries and the areas beyond designated sites also require conservation measures.

iv.   As well as establishing ways to protect non-designated sites, potential new designated-sites will also be identified.

v.   In non-designated areas with low or some ecological value, efforts will be taken to improve the biodiversity within them. The initial focus will be on target or regeneration areas of the City.

vi.   By improving such sites, new habitats can become available for species to move into.

vii. The availability of new habitats will assist in increasing the range and diversity of species present throughout the City.

viii. Improving biodiversity in previously ecologically poor sites can also add to or enhance the landscape character or features of that area.

ix.   Other relevant sites can include brown field and contaminated sites which are deemed unsuitable for development.

x.   Enhancement of such sites will also add value to neighbouring communities and improve their quality of life.

Wildlife Corridors

i.   Wildlife corridors contain a network of different habitats and can be a mix of semi-natural and manmade habitats as noted on pages 15 and 16.

ii.   A network of habitats are often of greater value that single habitats and are important for allowing species to move easily between them.

iii. They help to enhance the connectivity between sites that have some ecological value, they prevent sites from becoming ecologically separated from other sites and prevent the isolation of species.

iv.   Species populations are maintained through the availability of wildlife corridors such as green corridors, transport corridors and waterways.

> ### *Waterways and the Water Environment*
> Our water environment is important for our economy, recreation, tourism, as a source of water supply for our homes and businesses, and our overall quality of life. The water environment is also important for our natural heritage. Our rivers, lochs, estuaries, seas and associated tributaries are important habitats for many species and also act as corridors enabling species to increase their range and access to other habitats.   The River Dee, for example, is designated as a Special Area of Conservation due to the presence and importance of Atlantic salmon, European otter and Freshwater pearl mussel which depend on this habitat for survival. However, pressures on our water environment such as pollution can affect water quality and have a negative effect on individual species and biodiversity as a whole. The Council will continue to work with other organisations and take action which helps to achieve the Water Framework Directive's aim of good ecological status of our water environment by 2015.

v.   Ways of ensuring that corridors are available for the benefit of our habitats and species need to be identified.

vi.   Opportunities will be sought to create new wildlife corridors and improve or restore the ecological value of existing ones where appropriate.

vii.   These actions will not only be important for species that are currently found within the City, but also for species that will move north in search for cooler conditions in response to climate change.

viii.   Work associated with wildlife corridors and nature conservation will link into the Council's future Open Space Strategy.

The River Dee is a Special Area of Conservation

Agenda for Action

1. Maintain data on Aberdeen's natural heritage.

2. Maintain the integrity of designated sites including identifying 'at risk' sites and restoring their value.

3. Protect and enhance biodiversity in areas which are not designated.

4. Increase the availability and ecological value of wildlife corridors.

OBJECTIVE 2: Sustainably manage Aberdeen's natural heritage

The Council needs to plan and manage the use of its own land in a way that assists in reversing the decline in biodiversity. The Council should also take up opportunities to encourage private land owners to do the same.

Land Use Development

i.   Land use development is generally detrimental to biodiversity and there are policies contained within the current Development Plan to help maintain the integrity of our natural heritage.

ii. These policies assist in tackling conflict between the need to protect biodiversity plus other natural heritage interests and the need for new and improved communities.

iii. This Strategy will continue to support these policies and will also help to inform future Strategic Development, Local Development Plans and Supplementary Guidance so that continued protection is offered to all designated sites plus sites not designated but still important for nature conservation.

iv. Opportunities will also be sought through new Development Plan policies and guidance for improving biodiversity on development proposal sites.

v.   Some examples include setting specific conditions to enhance biodiversity as part of gaining planning permission or developer contributions to help improve our natural heritage where the ecological value will be reduced, species displaced and where development sites currently have little or no ecological value.

vi. Implementation of buffer strips along water courses and water bodies that are adequate for each site are another way of protecting and promoting biodiversity as part of development management.

vii. Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SUDS) for decreasing the amount of surface runoff can also be designed to benefit to biodiversity.

viii. As well as new developments, there are opportunities for the design of the redevelopment of old buildings to provide or maintain roost and nesting spaces for bats and birds.

ix. Creativity and competition will be encouraged among developers especially in areas where there is little green space.

x.   For example, green roofs; living walls; window boxes; hanging baskets; bird boxes; swift bricks; invertebrate boxes; native planting; and hedging can all help improve biodiversity especially where space is limited.

xi. Improvements that will benefit and improve green corridors, biodiversity, landscape, plus, recreational and public access will be sought.

Hanging baskets at the Denburn car park

Council Projects

i. When planning for and delivering projects that do not require planning permission but may have an impact on biodiversity, the Council will need to ensure that these projects consider nature conservation objectives.

ii. The Council will need to think of a way to ensure that this happens, for example through guidance, so that it becomes part of the process in dealing with projects affecting Council land.

iii. Whatever method is applied, it should help all Council officers meet nature conservation obligations and priorities when they are involved with any Council project.

iv. It will also assist elected members to make informed decisions.

v. Overall, the Council will be able to meet the obligations associated with this Strategy as well as the requirements of other Council local policies and plans which relate to nature conservation.

Council Operational Activities

i. Many of the operational activities conducted by the Council can have an impact on our natural heritage.

ii. These impacts can be both positive and negative. For example, reducing the amount of pesticides is beneficial to biodiversity, while a strict grass cutting regime on all greenspaces will reduce biodiversity interest.

iii. The Council needs to adopt management practices that reduce or minimise the negative impacts on our biodiversity and other natural heritage interests on all Council land including parks, gardens, playing fields, sports pitches and so on.

iv. This may be through adopting nature planting schemes which attract and help increase biodiversity; continuing to use as few chemicals and pesticides as possible when controlling weeds; reducing or minimising the use of peat or peat based products; and developing environmentally friendly grass cutting regimes and verge maintenance programmes where practical.

v. Opportunities should be taken to incorporate nature planting schemes into areas where grass has been left uncut. Areas of uncut grass with or without planting schemes should occur in places that are appropriate, safe and practical to do so.

vi. The management practices that the Council adopts need to build on what is already being done to help biodiversity so that they become even more environmentally friendly.

vii. This Strategy will link into Aberdeen City Council's current Public Open Spaces Grounds Maintenance Policy and help to inform future similar policies.

Private Land Owners & Businesses

i. For the Council to realise its vision of taking a lead in nature conservation, it will look for opportunities to encourage private land owners and businesses to improve biodiversity on their own land including farms, buildings and existing developments.

ii. The Council could, for example, collaborate with other organisations with similar nature conservation objectives to achieve their vision.

iii. This will help to replace the loss or reduction of biodiversity in as many areas within the City other than just on Council owned land.

iv. Taking some simple steps such as improving planting, nesting and roosting opportunities could be encouraged including more regular management practices that improve biodiversity on privately owned land.

v. This type of action will also help to improve the connectivity between businesses, private and Council owned land, plus urban and rural natural environments.

Invasive Species

i. There will be a need for the Council to continue its involvement in tackling invasive or non-native species that could have an adverse effect on the natural heritage in the City.

ii. This will help to maintain good conditions for the survival of valuable species.

iii.   Tackling invasive or non-native species will also help to prevent irreversible damage to sensitive or vulnerable species.

iv.   The Council wants to establish if current control measures conducted are effective or not. This information needs to be fed back at the correct level so that it can inform future policy.

v.   The Council will identify new control of invasive or non-native species projects where relevant which are based on national policy and guidance.

vi.   An increase of invasive or non-native species may reflect the effects of climate change on our natural heritage.   Opportunities should, where possible and appropriate, be sought to assist in measuring any new trends within the City.

vii.   Given that invasive or non-native species are found across boundaries, a partnership approach will be sought with other appropriate agencies and local authorities.

viii.   Any work associated with the control of invasive or non-native species will be conducted in line with Aberdeen City Council's Animal Policy which is concerned with animal welfare.
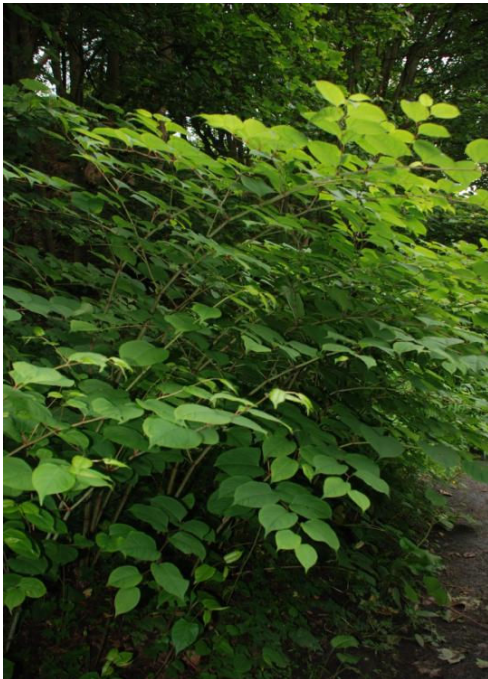
Japanese knotweed

> ### *Invasive species*
> Invasive or non-native species are becoming more common and some can be detrimental to our native species. Species such as Japanese knotweed and mink can often out-compete some of our native animal or plant species. This can cause irreversible damage particularly to sensitive or vulnerable species and habitats. Actions are in place at a Scottish level to tackle invasive or non-native species and the Council is already playing its part through, for example, the drive to improve conditions for the native red squirrel. It does, however, need to be borne in mind that some invasive species can also be native and that non-native species can become naturalised within our environment and bring positive benefits to biodiversity.

Management Plans

i.   Management plans for areas such as designated sites, parks and gardens will be important for the successful sustainable management of nature conservation in both Council and privately owned land.

ii. The Council will establish what management plans already exist, for which sites and identify what form they are in.

iii. The Council will also evaluate how effective these existing management plans are both on Council and privately owned land.

iv. There will be a need to take action to ensure the appropriate implementation of these plans on Council owned land and that monitoring regimes are developed to support them.

v.   They will also need to be regularly reviewed and updated to guarantee that they are fit for that specific site.

vi. Where feasible, new areas will be identified that could benefit from the implementation of management plans.

vii. The Council will, therefore, need to develop appropriate processes to help staff achieve this on Council owned land and identify ways of encouraging private land owners to manage their own plans effectively.

Agenda for Action

5.   Seek opportunities to maintain, restore or enhance biodiversity associated with physical development.

6.   Consider and include nature conservation in all Council projects.

7.   Establish ways to make Council operational activities more beneficial to biodiversity.

8.   Seek ways of encouraging private land owners and businesses to adopt nature conservation practices.

9.   Manage invasive and non-native species which cause negative impacts on biodiversity.

10. Influence site specific management plans fit for purpose.

Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015

OBJECTIVE 3: Involve communities in caring for Aberdeen's natural heritage

To make people aware of the importance and benefits of nature conservation, the Council needs to engage with everyone and get them involved at a local level.

Starting in Our Gardens

i.   Neat and tidy or intensively managed private gardens have been the trend for some time, but such a sterile environment can have a negative effect on our biodiversity.

ii. Private gardens make up about 12 per cent of our greenspace in Aberdeen[3] and are, therefore, important for nature conservation.

iii. Making our gardens environmentally friendly will help to provide an important network of greenspaces by linking urban areas to the wider countryside.

iv. This network will provide an important corridor for our wildlife and make our gardens healthier, livelier, colourful, interesting and enjoyable.

v.   By increasing the biodiversity interest in our garden, our knowledge of nature conservation can be improved.

vi. Ways of enhancing the nature conservation value of private gardens with the involvement of local people and their communities will be explored.

Ponds and thoughtful planting can improve biodiversity in gardens

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[3] Aberdeen Greenspace Mapping, Aberdeen City Council, October 2007.

Community Gardens & Allotments

i.   Many people live in properties where there is little or no garden space at all.

ii.   Increasingly, there is a realisation that there are many benefits to having access to some greenspace.

iii.   Community gardens are becoming more important, and allotments are once again becoming popular.

iv.   Both Community gardens and allotments can help to improve our health through the encouragement of physical activity; they provide a place to relax; and are valuable to local communities.

v.   The Council will seek ways of encouraging more community gardens in places where gardens or greenspace is limited.

vi.   Where appropriate, the enhancement of existing community gardens will be encouraged so that they become more beneficial for both communities and biodiversity.

vii.   As a way of growing fruit and vegetables, allotments are popular with people looking for healthy and affordable food, and with the environmentally conscious who want to reduce their carbon footprint.

viii.   The Council will look at ways of encouraging people to use allotments and to encourage those that already use them, to do so in a way that helps to benefit biodiversity.

ix.   A link will be made into Aberdeen City Council's current Allotments Management Policy and will also inform the development of future allotments management policies.

Allotments are beneficial for people and nature

Health & Educational Facilities

i. Wildlife friendly gardens at facilities such as hospitals, sheltered housing, and nursing homes improve the immediate environment which is beneficial to the health and wellbeing of patients and residents.

ii. Wildlife gardens in educational facilities such as in schools, colleges, universities and so on, also provide many benefits.

iii. The benefits for children and students include a healthy outdoor space for physical activity, recreation, and bringing children and students together from different backgrounds.

iv. Wildlife gardens also provide a great resource for outdoor learning, improving practical and social skills while gaining direct contact with our natural heritage.

v. Wildlife gardens in educational facilities can encourage interest in nature conservation at a young age.

vi. The Council will identify ways of working with or encouraging health and educational facilities to improve nature conservation.

vii. This may include identifying schemes which are aimed at schools, for example, and encouraging the uptake of them such as the Bird Friendly Schools Project run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Eco-Schools Programme.

Primary school children planting for wildlife

Partnerships

i. Contact with other appropriate organisations or partners can help to increase the availability of projects that communities could get involved with.

ii. Partnership working provides benefits such as allowing potential access to funding streams, access to a wealth of experience from other partners, tools, resources, plus support and encouragement by working with others with the same objective.

iii. Opportunities will be sought for organisations such as Aberdeen Greenspace, the North East of Scotland Local Biodiversity Partnership, the East Grampian Coastal Partnership and others to link up with communities and work together to improve biodiversity in their local areas.

iv. As well as the Council's target or regeneration areas, there is a need for communities to identify greenspace or other appropriate areas that are currently undervalued and underused so that with the help of partners they can turn such areas into places that they will want to go to and appreciate, and at the same time, improve the environment for biodiversity.

> ***Working with Others***
> The aim to halt the decline in biodiversity cannot be achieved in isolation. This Strategy recognises the need to work with others, plus, the benefits and opportunities that this will bring to nature conservation, communities and individuals involved. It will enable people to work together to improve their natural heritage while achieving a community spirit and a sense of pride. Opportunities can be available to work with partners to promote nature conservation as well as enhancing an area that local communities will want to look after and appreciate. Collaboration with other local authorities is important for integrated action, so too is working with other organisations that have a shared vision for nature conservation including the NELBAP and NESBReC. This will help to minimise negative impacts to the environment locally and regionally.

Communities Sharing Knowledge

i.   As well as encouraging partnership working and working with others, sharing knowledge is essential for successful nature conservation.

ii.   Knowledge gained by communities and individuals can be important for establishing trends, for example, on species numbers and ranges.

iii. The Council will encourage communities and individuals to contribute to knowledge databases such as the NESBReC.

iv.   Knowledge shared can help to establish if the Council is meeting national and international targets at a local level.

v.   Sharing knowledge, for example, through local newspapers or newsletters can also empower people to take a lead in nature conservation and inspire others to take action.

vi.   Neighbouring communities could be encouraged to work with and learn from each other by sharing their knowledge.

vii. Sharing knowledge can enable citizens and communities to feel a sense of pride and achievement for the work that they have undertaken to improve biodiversity.

Learning how to build nest boxes for wildlife

Agenda for Action

11. Establish ways of encouraging the public to improve biodiversity in their own gardens.

12. Seek ways of encouraging nature conservation in community gardens and allotments.

13. Work with health and education facilities to promote wildlife gardens.

14. Encourage communities in partnership working to deliver nature conservation projects.

15. Encourage citizens and communities to document and share knowledge.

OBJECTIVE 4: Promote a greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of Aberdeen's natural heritage

Being informed will improve knowledge and enhance people's experience of nature while at the same time help promote awareness and respect for the City's natural heritage.

Improve Council Awareness

i.   All staff within the Council would benefit from understanding the importance of nature conservation whether their jobs deal directly with the natural environment or not.

ii.   This will help to keep Council staff up to date on nature conservation issues and progress, plus, prompt them to consider possible impacts to biodiversity when undertaking their daily tasks.

iii. The Council will develop ways of communicating the benefits of considering nature conservation when in different situations to all Council staff at all levels.

iv.   There needs to be consideration of what skills are currently available within the Council and whether existing services can be used to help improve nature conservation awareness.

v.   For example, the Council's Countryside Ranger Service currently promotes biodiversity including running events and walks for educational facilities, manages designated sites and provides advice to the Council on issues relating to our natural heritage.

vi.   The Council will build on existing services, infrastructure and processes to reach all staff.

vii. Opportunities will also be sought to build on joint working already seen between different departments within the Council.

viii. For example, the Countryside Ranger Service, Planning and the Archaeological Unit have all contributed to the development of information leaflets on various interests for the Council and the public.

ix.   Different sources of knowledge could be brought together to provide similar literature or information and in different formats for promoting nature conservation to all Council staff.

x.   This could be through information technology, posters, leaflets or workshops.

xi.   This action will ensure that each individual within the Council will fulfil their role of assisting the Council meet its legal priorities and obligations.

Improve Public Awareness

i.   Successful nature conservation will only happen if the citizens of Aberdeen fully understand the need to conserve nature.

ii.   There is a requirement to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the need and benefits to protect, preserve, enhance and promote Aberdeen's natural heritage for our current and future generations.

iii. The Council will need to demonstrate the importance of nature conservation and educate the public at all levels and think of the best ways of doing this.

iv.   There is a need to educate those that live and work in, plus, visit the City of Aberdeen.

v.   Improving public awareness through education and personal experience will help to improve attitudes towards the environment both at home and at work.

vi.   The Council will look for ways to promote and provide further educational opportunities that will benefit all of Aberdeen's citizens.

vii. For example, focusing on particular species or habitats that are familiar to people could act as a platform from which understanding can be achieved.

Displays and information boards at events such as the Highland Games are one way of improving public awareness of the importance of nature conservation

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Accessing Our Natural Heritage

i.   It is important that biodiversity is enjoyed by everyone and that our natural heritage is accessible.

ii.   It has long been understood that there are positive links between outdoor access and nature conservation.

iii. Enjoying nature is central to the outdoor experience as well as providing opportunities for exercise, and therefore, good physical and mental health and wellbeing.

iv.   Ensuring access to Aberdeen's natural heritage will provide benefits to both nature conservation and to the citizens of Aberdeen's quality of life.

v.   Along with sites that are currently accessible, the Council wants to provide, where possible, appropriate access to sites that are under used or not used at all.

vi.   The Council will also identify where more interpretation would be beneficial so that interesting information about our important habitats and species can be provided.

vii. This will help to increase the understanding of the importance of our natural heritage.

viii. The Council will ensure that access provision strikes a balance between meeting the needs of nature conservation and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

Areas such as Scotstown Moor are important for recreation and biodiversity

Sustainable Tourism

i.   Access to our natural heritage is also recognised as being important for tourism.

ii.   It can provide job opportunities, provide places for people to visit and contribute to the local economy.

iii.   The Council wants to promote our natural heritage in order to attract people to come and visit the City.

iv.   As well as making our natural environment attractive to visitors, working with other partners or organisations, for example Visit Scotland, could be another way of encouraging sustainable tourism within Aberdeen City.

v.   The Council will consider ways of using our natural heritage to promote tourism and to contribute to sustainable economic growth in the City of Aberdeen.

Bottlenose dolphins can be regularly seen from the Aberdeen shore including other dolphin species, porpoises and even some species of whale

Responsible Access

i.   As well as enjoyment, there is now greater recognition to look after nature when accessing the outdoors.

ii. The Council will encourage responsible access so that the displacement of species is prevented and that potential damage or degradation of important and protected habitats is minimised.

iii. Conflicts of interest will also need to be considered. For example, there is a need to ensure that sensitive sites such as archaeological and historic sites are not damaged through the provision of access or while the public are enjoying access to our natural heritage.

iv. The Council will consider ways of informing the public and visitors to access these sites responsibly. This will be done in a way that provides a balance between the need for respecting our natural heritage and enjoying the experience.

v.   This will be in line with the requirements of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (**www.outdooraccess-scotland.com**) and Aberdeen's Strategy for Access to the Outdoors.

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

As part of the drive towards improving nature conservation, due regard must be given to archaeology and cultural heritage. Aberdeen is abundantly endowed with evidence of human activity in the past, much of which has greatly influenced and sculpted the appearance of areas that we consider as 'natural' today. The City's Sites and Monuments Record contains details of at least 3500 known historical and archaeological sites, ranging in date from 8000 BC to the 1960s AD: that number is constantly growing as new discoveries and identifications are made. Aberdeen has an excellent record of presenting history, natural history and archaeology to the public in a holistic manner, through guided walks, interpretation panels and leaflets.

Nature and heritage conservation are inextricably linked. For example, an early 19th century 'consumption' dyke or a prehistoric burial cairn can be seen as both important historic monuments and as habitats for wildlife. However, the search for a greener and a more bio-diverse environment can sometimes include aspects that may compromise our heritage. Tree planting, path-laying, landscaping and forestry operations to enhance an area could seriously damage buried remains. A stand of beech trees, while not native, might be all that remains visible of a 19th-century estate.

Historic features can be crucial to people's character, sense of identity and sense of place and are important from a tourism and economic perspective. In Aberdeen, the aim will be to safeguard, enhance and promote archaeology, cultural heritage and biodiversity together, through careful consideration and partnership working by Council officers and others.

Agenda for Action

16. Improve Council staff knowledge and understanding of the importance of nature conservation in delivering their function.

17. Increase public awareness of the benefits of nature conservation.

18. Seek opportunities to improve access to natural heritage sites.

19. Increase tourism through promoting the City's natural heritage.

20. Promote and encourage responsible access to the City's natural heritage.

Nature walks can be enjoyed responsibly

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3 TAKING THE STRATEGY FORWARD

Aberdeen City Council Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015

Implementation

Implementation of this Strategy will require a commitment from the Council, its staff and stakeholders involved in its development. This will include continued partnership working, disseminating information, and providing financial and/or in-kind support.

Successful implementation will also need a commitment to developing the **Implementation Plan** required to deliver at ground level the objectives and associated 'Agenda for Action' from this Strategy.

Monitor and Review

To assist in the delivery of this Strategy, progress will be monitored and yearly reports will be provided to the Council and its stakeholders.

Successful implementation can be gauged through data collection including data collected by NESBReC, monitoring, completed projects, promotional activities, press releases and so on. This information will be reported through the Council's 'State of the Environment' Report which can be found at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk.

Information gathered on specific issues associated with the success of the Strategy will be reviewed and used to inform the development of future Nature Conservation strategies.

A **Monitoring Group** will need to be established to assist in the implementation of the Strategy.

Appropriate Assessment

Where any project developed to implement this Strategy could have an impact on the River Dee SAC, an Appropriate Assessment, as per the EU Habitats Directive, may be required.

The Nature Conservation Strategy will be updated every five years.

Sea thrift at Cove Bay

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Appendix A – Legislation and Obligations

Legislation and Obligations – Description Summary	
Bern Convention 1979	The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and natural habitats ensures conservation and protection of wild plant and animal species and their natural habitats listed in the Convention.
Bonn Convention 1979	The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals conserves migratory species and their habitats by providing strict protection for endangered migratory species listed in the Convention.
EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) 1979	Provides a framework for the conservation and management of, and human interactions with, wild birds in Europe.
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	Covers protection of wildlife (birds, and some animals and plants), the countryside, National Parks, and the designation of protected areas, and public rights of way.
EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) 1992	To take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species at a favourable conservation status, introducing robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance.
Convention on Biological Diversity 1992	Three main goals: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.
UK Biodiversity Action Plan 1994	UK Government's response to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Outlines the UK Biodiversity Action Plan for dealing with biodiversity conservation.
The Conservation (Natural Habitats &C) Regulations 1994	Transposes the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) into UK law. Public bodies have a general duty, in the exercise of any of their function, to have regard to the Habitats Directive.
EU Biodiversity Strategy 1998	Linked to Convention on Biological Diversity and aims to anticipate, prevent and attack the causes of significant reduction or loss of biodiversity at the source.
EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) 2000	To establish a framework for the protection of inland surface waters (rivers and lakes), transitional waters (estuaries), coastal waters and groundwater.
Scotland's Biodiversity: It's in Your Hands, Strategy. 2004	Linked to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, this is a 25 year strategy to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Scotland.
Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004	Places duties on public bodies in relation to the conservation of biodiversity, and enhancement of natural features, protection of wildlife, and the preparation of a Scottish Fossil Code.
Scotland's sustainable Development Strategy 2005	Sets out action that Scotland will take to turn the shared priorities of the UK Framework for Sustainable Development into action.
EU Biodiversity Action Plan 2006	Specifies a comprehensive plan of priority actions, contains indicators to monitor progress and a timetable for evaluation.

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Appendix B – Site Protection Systems

Designation	Description Summary
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Statutory designation as per the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). Member States are required to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species at a favourable conservation status. Member States are required to introduce robust protection for habitats and species of European importance. This includes a national list of sites for evaluation in to form a European Network of Sites of Community Importance, which are designated by Member States as Special Areas of Conservation.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Statutory designation as per the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, and notified by Scottish Natural Heritage to form part of a national network. Scottish Natural Heritage must be notified of any intention to carry out any potentially damaging operation. All SSSI's are District Wildlife Sites.
Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS) *District Wildlife Site (DWS)*	Non-statutory designated sites indentified by Aberdeen District Council, with assistance from Scottish Natural Heritage, as Sites of District-wide importance for nature conservation. DWS cover a wide range of habitats including semi-natural woodlands, heathland, wetland, river system and large stretches of Aberdeen's coastline. Protection is through local plan policy.
Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS) *Site of Interest to Natural Science (SINS)*	Non statutory designated sites identified by the previous Grampian Regional Council as sites of regional importance for geology, geomorphology, botany, entomology, ornithology and freshwater biology during a study of Environmentally Sensitive Areas. All SINS are District Wildlife Sites. Protection is through local plan policy.
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Non statutory designated sites declared by Local Authorities to protect sites of local importance for nature conservation, education and amenity. Although LNR's have no statutory protection, declaration implies a commitment to give priority to nature conservation in the management of these areas. Managing rules or bye-laws can be used to control damaging activities. All LNR's are District Wildlife Sites. Protection is through local plan policy.

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Appendix C – Designated Site Locations

Designated Site Location	SAC	SSSI	DWS	SINS	LNR
River Dee	✓				
Balnagask to Cove		✓	✓	✓	
Tullos Hill			✓		
Don Estuary			✓	✓	✓
Balgownie/Blackdog Links			✓	✓	
Charlestown Wood			✓		
Loirston Loch			✓	✓	
Kincorth Hill			✓		✓
River Dee Valley			✓	✓	
River Dee/Kincorth			✓		
Bridge of Dee			✓		
Pitfodels Castle			✓		
Garthdee			✓		
Morrison Island/Shakkin' Briggie			✓		
Lover's Walk to St. Maik's Well			✓		
River Don Valley			✓		
Braes of Don			✓		
Crook of Don			✓		
Woodside			✓		
Lower and Upper Persley Woodland			✓		
Kinta Valley			✓		
Lochside/Denmore			✓		
Scotstown Moor/Perwinnes Moss		✓	✓	✓	✓
Newton of Shielhill			✓		
Corby Loch		✓	✓	✓	
Glashie How			✓		
Danestone House			✓		
Cornhill Hospital			✓		
Den of Leggart			✓		
Westburn of Rubislaw			✓		
Rubislaw Den			✓	✓	

Appendix C continued…

Designated Site Location	SAC	SSSI	DWS	SINS	LNR
Hilton Wood			✓		
Clerkhill Wood			✓		
Grandholme Moss			✓	✓	
Stoneyhill Wood			✓		
Monument Wood			✓		
Persley Quarries			✓		
Walker Dam and Rubislaw Link			✓		
Allan Park Pond			✓		
Deeside Old Railway			✓	✓	
Hazlehead Park			✓		
Den Wood, Hazlehead			✓		
North Burn of Rubislaw			✓		
Bucksburn Gorge			✓		
Den of Maidencraig			✓		✓
Cults Den			✓		
Cults Quarry			✓		
Murtle House/Newton Dee			✓	✓	
Hillhead Road			✓		
Burnbrae Moss			✓		
Farburn Wood			✓		
Gough Burn			✓		
Den of Moss-Side			✓		
Foggieton			✓		
Murtle Den			✓		
Blacktop			✓	✓	
Binghill Wood			✓		
West Hatton			✓		
Brimmond Hill			✓	✓	
Elrick Hill			✓	✓	
Tyrebagger Hill			✓		
Woodlands Wood, Beidleston			✓		

Appendix C continued…

Designated Site Location	SAC	SSSI	DWS	SINS	LNR
Moss of Auchlea			✓		
Rotten of Gairn			✓		
Guttrie Hill			✓		
Culter House Woods			✓		
Hill of Ardbeck			✓		
Culter Burn			✓		
Woodend Woods, Peterculter			✓		
Little Hill, Caskieben			✓		
Kinaldie Den			✓	✓	
Culter Compensation Dam			✓	✓	
Old Manse Wood			✓		
Baads Moss			✓		
Mid Anguston Quarry			✓		
Leuchar Moss			✓	✓	
Southlasts Mire			✓		
Aberdeen – Inverness – Kittybrewster Railway Line			✓		
Woodland Walks, Foggieton			✓		
Fields at Cairdhillock, Kingswells			✓		
Rubislaw Quarry			✓		

List of Acronyms

ACC   Aberdeen City Council

DWS   District Wildlife Site

LNCS   Local Nature Conservation Site

LNR   Local Nature Reserve

NELBAP   North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan

NESBReC   North East Scotland Biological Records Centre

SAC   Special Area of Conservation

SINS   Site of Interest to Natural Science

SSSI   Site of Special Scientific Interest

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