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To: Councillor Donnelly, Convener; Councillor Carle, Vice Convener; Councillor George Adam, the Lord Provost and Councillors Cormie, Delaney, Dickson, Graham, Jaffrey, MacGregor, Malik, Nathan Morrison, Reynolds and Stuart.

Town House,
ABERDEEN 13 April 2015

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

The Members of the **PETITIONS COMMITTEE** are requested to meet in Committee Room 2 - Town House on **TUESDAY, 21 APRIL 2015 at 2.00 pm.**

RODERICK MACBEATH
SENIOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

B U S I N E S S

PETITIONS SUBMITTED

1 **A Tree For Every Citizen / Deer Cull Disclosure Request**

We the undersigned petition Aberdeen City Council as follows:-

1. To immediately halt all planned deer culling in the city, at the very least until new population measurements can be taken. The SNH recent count shows a very low number of animals. We do not believe that having the small population which SNH guidelines recommend is viable for a healthy herd, we cite the previous larger number of animals on Tullos Hill (for instance) which existed for decades.
2. To explain how the SNH guidelines that are being used on Tullos, allowing for only 4-6 animals to be allowed to live on the hill, will result in a healthy herd and healthy gene pool. We remind the city that the SNH guidelines regarding deer are just that - guidelines, and there is no legal reason to follow them to the letter. The number of animals city wide, where possible by location, should be shared with the public.

3. To actively work with Police Scotland to detect and deter further illegal poaching, as happened on Tullos Hill in January of this year.
4. To erect deer crossing warning signs to motorists in strategic spots. The city seems to claim deer were indicated in 30 vehicle accidents recently, but no signs give motorists any warning of potential hot spots. Such signs are used to good effect elsewhere in the UK and throughout Europe. The city has indicated 'people ignore signs' - we feel that is not an acceptable way to try and prevent accidents. We note the city uses numerous signs directing motorists which are heeded.
5. To fully disclose all expenses the city has incurred in the last 8 years with regard to deer culling, tree planting, related consultants, fencing, herbicides, monies paid to the SNH, the Forestry Commission - any and all costs which planting during all phases of A Tree For Every Citizen scheme. The city is also to disclose any and all risk matrices created for the herbicides used (and indicate what chemicals were used) and the deer culling - or indicate whether such risk assessments were carried out.

The city was made aware of thousands of objections to the deer cull on Tullos Hill, which was carried out several years ago to aid the 'Tree For Every Citizen' scheme and to implement non-binding SNH guidelines. The city not only proceeded, but it insisted that the methodology it pursued was good value for money. Disclosing the requested information and carrying out the requested actions will determine the facts."

2 Pelican crossing on Greenbrae Drive, Aberdeen

"We the undersigned appeal Aberdeen City Council to install a pelican crossing on Greenbrae Drive, Aberdeen to ensure the safety of our children."

It has been brought to the attention of Greenbrae School Parent Council that the current road traffic system at the top of Greenbrae Drive (where the road meets Dubford Road) is dangerous for children.

The road layout was changed in 2014 and traffic travelling down Greenbrae Drive now have to give way for traffic proceeding up the drive.

Despite this change to the road layout, cars still travel on the drive at some speed and it is also causing confusion for children crossing the road.

The system leads children into a false sense of security as when they come to cross the road they see that the traffic in one direction is stopping and they often presume that the other side is going to do the same, this is not always the case.

We strongly feel that a pelican crossing should be installed at this point of Greenbrae Drive to make it safer for children crossing from the Greenbrae estate (where Greenbrae Primary is situated).

Greenbrae Drive is a very busy road at present with many commuters using it to access the nearby industrial estate and to join the A90 travelling northbound of the city.

With the new housing developments at Dubford and Sheilhill creating additional traffic in the area (Greenbrae is the zoned school for development) the amount of vehicles on the road is only going to continue to increase.

We appeal Aberdeen City Council to install a pelican crossing on Greenbrae Drive to ensure the safety of our children.

GENERAL BUSINESS

- 3 Minute of Previous Meeting of 24 April 2014 (Pages 1 - 4)
- 4 Involving Young People in Petitions (Pages 5 - 8)

Website Address: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk

Should you require any further information about this agenda, please contact Allison Swanson. Tel 01224 522822 or email aswanson@aberdeencity.gov.uk

The Petitions Committee will take one of the following decisions:

- (1) take no action and advise the lead petitioner of the Committee's reasoning; or
- (2) agree that the matter be subject of a report to the relevant Committee(s) –petitions can be referred with or without a recommendation; or
- (3) refer the matter to a relevant organisation with or without a recommendation.

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 24 April 2014. Minute of Meeting of the PETITIONS COMMITTEE.
Present:- Councillor Donnelly, Convener; Councillor Carle, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Delaney, Dickson, Lesley Dunbar, Graham, Grant, Kiddie, Malik, MacGregor (as substitute for Councillor Cormie), Nathan Morrison, Samarai, Stuart, Young (as substitute for Councillor Len Ironside CBE) and Yuill.

Councillor Thomson was in attendance to support the petition in his role as Cycle Champion for the Council.

Also in attendance:- Ms Skinner, Mr Tuckwood and Mr Williams, representatives from the Aberdeen Cycle Forum.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 19 SEPTEMBER 2013

1. The Committee had before it the minute of their previous meeting of 19 September 2013.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

WESTHILL CYCLE PATH IMPROVEMENTS

2. The Committee had before it the following petition which had been submitted by the Aberdeen Cycle Forum:-

“The Westhill Cycle Path provides a key link for cyclists between the area for Westhill and the Aberdeen City Centre. The Aberdeen Cycle Forum and the undersigned would like to see the path improved, in particular:

- (1) The narrow section of path near Prime 4 - either a new route must be constructed or the existing path should be brought up to cycling by design standards.
- (2) The required dismount/the need to cross the garage fore court at the 5 mile garage - either a new route must be constructed or a redesign of the through path at this point”.

The Convener explained the process and invited the lead petitioner to present their case to the Committee.

Ms Skinner, the lead petitioner spoke to the petition and advised that the current cycle route between Westhill and Aberdeen is well used by commuters coming into the City and expressed the view that the two areas identified above required to be improved for the safety of the cyclists and other road users who use that stretch of road. Currently the path is too narrow and forces cyclists to use the buffer area which is in place to provide a safe distance between the road and the cycle path. The area at the garage is currently impassable and cyclists are required to dismount and then cross the garage and due to the raised area and barriers, cycles have to be carried through that area.

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Ms Skinner provided photographic evidence to show the extent of the problems and requested that the Council address these issues.

Officers advised on the current position with the area surrounding the cycle path, in particular the Prime 4 development, phases one to three of which were in the process of being completed with a planning application for phase four still to be submitted. At the phase four planning stage, developers could be approached to look at improving the cycle route however it was not known when this application would be submitted.

Councillors sought clarification as to whether there was an engineering solution to improve the route and whether the improvements to the route had been costed, whereupon Officers advised that to widen the cycle path would have cost implications for supporting the path using an embankment or other means of a barrier which would also impact on the trees along the path and that the improvements to the cycle path had not been fully costed.

The Convener, supported by the Committee requested that Officers look at the path and provide detailed information, including fully costed options on what measures could be carried out to improve the path. He also requested that general information on all of the cycle routes in Aberdeen be provided along with any details of planned major improvements to them.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to thank the petitioners for their attendance and presentation;
- (ii) to request officers in consultation with NESTRANS, to submit a report to the Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee providing detailed information relating to the engineering and financial challenges with the proposed improvements to the Westhill Cycle Route at the Prime 4 development (increase the width of the cycle path) and the Five Mile garage (to improve the area where cyclists are required to dismount) and to include details of the current cycle path network within Aberdeen and any planned major improvements to them.

UNDER 18'S INVOLVEMENT IN PETITIONS

3. With reference to article 2, resolution (iv) of the minute of its meeting of 19 September 2013, the Committee discussed the current challenges with involving under 18's in the Petition process specifically on how the signatures could be collated and checked and whether there should be an under age limit. During the discussion the Committee agreed that all pupils should have the opportunity to participate and identified groups to be approached to gather their feedback on how young people could be involved with the process. Those included the Youth Council, Pupil Councils and the Pupil Voice.

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The Committee resolved:-

to request officers to submit a report to a future meeting of the Petitions Committee outlining the options and progress for the inclusion of young people in the petition process.

- **COUNCILLOR ALAN DONNELLY, Convener.**

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	PETITIONS
DATE	21 April 2015
DIRECTOR	Corporate Governance (Acting)
TITLE OF REPORT	Involving Young People in Petitions
REPORT NUMBER	CG/15/04
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report proposes ways of involving young people (those under 18) in the Council's petitions process.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to agree:-

- (1) That petitions submitted by young people be accepted under the petitions process where they have a minimum of five signatories which have been verified either by the school to which the pupils belong or the Youth Council;
- (2) That Education and Children's Services, pupil councils and the Youth Council be asked to support and promote the petitions process; and
- (3) That Council be recommended to establish a small sub committee of five members which can visit schools to hear petitions to avoid the need for schools to arrange visits during the school day to present petitions to this Committee at the Town House.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Any financial implications arising from widening access to the petitions process will be negligible, though the subject matter of future petitions may involve budgetary implications for services.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no other major implications, although the potential additional demands on school staff has been raised by Educations officials. The proposals in this report have been drafted in such a way as to minimise this.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 At its meeting of 24 April 2014 (Article 3 of the Minute of Meeting refers) the Petitions Committee called for a report on involving young people (those under 18 who are not on the electoral register) in the petitions process.
- 5.2 Discussions have been held with officers in Education and Children's Services, including those responsible for supporting Pupil Voice and Schools Councils (which would cover school pupils in the city) and the Youth Council (which would cover young people age 14 – 25, thereby including those who have left school but are not yet 18, and so do not appear on the electoral register).
- 5.3 The Committee was keen to encourage participation by young people in the democratic process but there needs to be a control over the subject matter of any petitions submitted, and there would undoubtedly be issues for schools if a group of pupils were invited to present a petition – schools would need to arrange transport and teacher support for a visit, and attending a scheduled meeting may present difficulties if children were to then miss other timetabled lessons. One way to address these may be to establish a small sub committee which could visit schools at a convenient time, for example during classes on citizenship, or modern studies. It is however proposed that schools be given the option of attending a meeting of the committee in the Town House if preferable.
- 5.4 Accordingly, it is proposed that in the first instance, School Councils, Pupil Voice and the Youth Council be asked to promote the petitions process to pupils and young people. Petitions could then be taken forward through those bodies who would be asked, with teacher support where appropriate, to help frame the terms of any petition so that it would be appropriate and not fail to be accepted once submitted.
- 5.5 Schools would be asked to ensure that five of the signatories (which would be the minimum for a petition from young people) were pupils of the school whose council submitted it; Pupil Voice and the Youth Council would be asked to confirm that any petition submitted through them had come from young people. It is acknowledged that some schools do not yet have a council, but officers are working to address this. In the interim, it may be possible to submit a petition through such schools as part of a classroom project.

6. IMPACT

- 6.1 Corporate – This proposal accords with Aberdeen – the Smarter City as it will help young people make a full contribution to the city, promote communities and encourage participation in active citizenship, decision making and democracy. It will develop young people's self esteem and assist in allowing them to achieve their potential.

- 6.2 From the perspective of Education and Children's Services, there will be implications in that school staff would be required to confirm that pupils signing a petition were indeed school pupils. By setting the minimum figure at five signatories, it is hoped that such impact will be reduced to a negligible level. However, the option would exist of allowing the petitions process to be included in classwork and participation or promotion of a petition could be a real opportunity to promote citizenship.
- 6.3 Public – Officers in Democratic Services have addressed the Youth Council and spoken to representatives of the University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University to promote participation in local democracy and this is another and very significant aspect of that work. It will also help address concerns raised during the recent City Voice exercise that the demands of the petitions process are too onerous (this feedback will be reported separately to Council).

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

- 7.1 The main risk in this area would be that signatories would not be resident in the city or would not be pupils of the school launching a petition, however by having school staff or Youth Council members verify signatures, this risk can be managed. Similarly, there is a risk that petitions would not be valid once received, and the school staff and Youth Council involvement should help ensure that these are framed appropriately.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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