

# ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL:

Powering Tomorrow's World

ABERDEEN, 10 May 2024. Minute of Meeting of the ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL JOINT COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Yuill, Chairperson; Councillor Stirling, Vice-Chairperson; Councillors Allard, Owen, Petrie and Radley; and Mrs Jennifer Craw, Professor Steven Olivier (as substitute for Professor George Boyne) and Sir Ian Wood.

Also in Attendance:- Julie Richards-Wood, Stuart Bews, Alan McKay, Mel Booth, Ross Stevenson, Aigul Gray, Graham Chandler, Mark Masson and Gogo Okafor (Aberdeen City Council); Councillor Cox, Mary Beattie, Paul Macari, Sarah Rochester, Jamie Dale, John Lovie and Colin Harvey (Aberdeenshire Council); Rab Dickson and Paul Finch (NESTRANS); Nat Anderson (Opportunity North East), Alastair Camelford and Adam Gould (Transport Scotland), Katie Vollbracht (Network Rail) and Professor Richard Neilson (National Decommissioning Centre).

**The agenda, reports and recording of the meeting associated with this minute can be located [here](#).**

**Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.**

## **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

1. The Clerk welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that apologies for absence had been intimated from Alan Wood.

## **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON**

2. The Clerk sought nominations for Chairperson of the Joint Committee, whereupon:-

Councillor Anne Stirling, seconded by Councillor Miranda Radley, moved:- that Councillor Ian Yuill be appointed as Chairperson of the Joint Committee.

There were no other nominations.

### **The Joint Committee resolved:-**

to appoint Councillor Yuill as Chairperson.

**At this juncture, Councillor Yuill assumed the chair.**

## **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRPERSON**

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3. The Chairperson sought nominations for the appointment of Vice Chairperson of the Joint Committee, whereupon:-

Councillor Christian Allard, seconded by Councillor Gillian Owen, moved:-  
that Councillor Anne Stirling be appointed as Vice Chairperson of the Joint Committee.

There were no other nominations.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

to appoint Councillor Stirling as Vice Chairperson.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS**

4. Members were requested to intimate any declarations of interest or transparency statements in respect of the items on today's agenda, thereafter the following was intimated:-

- (1) Mrs Jennifer Crow made a transparency statement indicating that she had a connection to any issues affecting Opportunity North East, in particular matters relating to the Food Hub, BioAberdeen and the new Energy Transition Zone (ETZ), which may arise during the meeting, by virtue of her being a Board Member of ONE, BioAberdeen Ltd and ETZ Ltd. However, having applied the objective test she did not consider that she had an interest to declare and would remain in the meeting. This was because, in practice, funding was allocated by agreement with government and in line with the tripartite agreement;
- (2) Mrs Jennifer Crow on behalf of Sir Ian Wood and Professor Steven Olivier made a transparency statement indicating that they both had a connection to any issues affecting Opportunity North East, in particular matters relating to the Food Hub, BioAberdeen and the new Energy Transition Zone (ETZ), which may arise during the meeting, by virtue of them being Board Members of ONE and Sir Ian Wood also being a Board Member of ETZ Ltd. However, having applied the objective test she indicated that they did not consider that they had an interest to declare and would remain in the meeting. This was because, in practice, funding was allocated by agreement with government and in line with the tripartite agreement. In addition, Professor Steven Olivier advised that the National Subsea Centre was part of Robert Gordon University, at which he was an employee;
- (3) Councillor Owen made a transparency statement, by virtue of being a Board Member of Opportunity North East. Having applied the objective test she had concluded that she did not have an interest to declare and she would remain in the meeting; and
- (4) Councillor Allard made a transparency statement, by virtue of being a Board Member of Opportunity North East. Having applied the objective test he had

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concluded that he did not have an interest to declare and he would remain in the meeting.

**MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 9 FEBRUARY 2024, FOR APPROVAL**

5. The Joint Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 9 February 2024, for approval.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

to approve the minute.

**ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE**

6. With reference to article 4 of the minute of the previous meeting of 9 February 2024, the Joint Committee had before it a report which provided an update in relation to the progress of the last quarter of the Aberdeen City Region Deal Programme under the headings Governance, Milestones, Benefits and Finance. The report also included (1) a visual Summary Dashboard; (2) each projects progress contained within Appendix A; and (3) the Memorandum of Understanding relating to 5G projects progress contained within Appendix B

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee –

- (a) note the content of the Programme and Projects Update at Appendix A; and
- (b) note the update of 5G projects funded by the additional investment from Scottish Government Memorandum of Understanding in relation to Digital Programme for the Aberdeen City Region.

The Joint Committee heard from Stuart Bews, ACRD Programme Manager who highlighted the key information from the report, specifically regarding the UK Government's local growth interventions in Scotland; the UK Parliament's Scottish Affairs Committee inquiry into City and Growth Deals; and the procurement process relating to project Gigabit which had commenced.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendations.

**NATIONAL DECOMMISSIONING CENTRE - PRESENTATION OF 5-YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

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7. The Joint Committee received a presentation from Professor Richard Neilson, in relation to the National Decommissioning Centre (NDC).

Professor Neilson made reference to the partnership between the Net Zero Technology Centre and the University of Aberdeen; the funding received from the Aberdeen City Region Deal (£12.7m) and the University of Aberdeen (£8m), explaining that the facility was launched in January 2019 and was an interdisciplinary research centre which aimed for match funding from the industry, supported with approximately £4m of infrastructure funding from the Scottish Government's Decommissioning Challenge Fund.

He advised that the ambition was to be a global leader in research and development, to transform decommissioning and mature field management, however, the energy transition and sustainability were critical factors as they moved towards energy integration and net zero emissions.

Professor Neilson explained that the NDC was a unique global hub, made reference to the partnerships which had evolved over the past five years; provided information in relation to various technology projects undertaken including underwater laser cutting, the barrier qualification test chamber and the NDC PhD Research programme; explained that their location and facilities were in Newburgh and included their Marine Simulator outlining the work around new floating wind concepts and data visualisation.

Professor Neilson responded to a question regarding the balancing of the costs of decommissioning and looking to future energy transition sustainability.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to thank Professor Neilson for his informative presentation; and
- (ii) agreed to circulate the presentation slides to the members.

**DIGITAL STAKEHOLDER LEAD POST**

8. The Joint Committee had before it a report by the Programme Manager which sought approval to allocate funding from ACRD Digital theme to extend the post of Digital Stakeholder Lead post up to September 2026.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee delegate authority to the Head of Finance, Aberdeenshire Council as Section 95 Officer of the Deal to allocate up to £130,000 from the existing Digital Theme Funding to resource the costs relating to the Digital Stakeholder Lead Officer post until end of September 2026.

Paul Macari, Head of Planning and Economy provided a summary of the report.

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**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendation.

**EXTERNAL TRANSPORTATION LINKS TO ABERDEEN SOUTH HARBOUR –  
PROGRESS REPORT**

9. With reference to article 13 of the minute of the previous meeting of 9 February 2024, the Joint Committee had before it a report by Ross Stevenson, Senior Engineer which provided an update on timescales and the project finance costs.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee note, in line with the Aberdeen City Region Deal Joint Committee meeting of 8 September 2023, the current update on the timescales and project finance costs including the Appendix 1 – ASHLR Stage 3 Exhibition Panels - April 2024.

The Joint Committee heard from Alan McKay, Team Leader Roads Project who provided a summary of the report, specifically referencing the Stage 3 Assessment and outline business case, a public exhibition held between 8 April to 6 May in Torry United Free Church and an in-person event held on 15 April with landowners, tenants and stakeholders.

In response to a question, Mr McKay indicated that the focus would be on limiting the impact of future road closures and diversion routes but making progress with project construction. He advised that a further report would be submitted in September 2024.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendation contained within the report and outlined above.

**MOU HOUSING ANNUAL UPDATE**

10. The Joint Committee had before it a report by Mel Booth, Senior Housing Strategy Officer which provided an on the progress in relation to the housing workstream of the Memorandum of Understanding, which was a Scottish Government commitment to invest a further £254M over the same 10-year period as the City Region Deal.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee –

- (a) note annual update in relation to the Memorandum of Understanding for Housing; and

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- (b) agree that no further annual updates in relation to Housing Infrastructure Fund to be provided to Joint Committee unless new projects qualifying criteria for HIF are identified and pursued.

Mel Booth provided an overview of the report making reference to recent conversations with the Scottish Government in relation to the Housing Infrastructure Fund Joint Committee. She advised that Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils had been unable to identify any sites that were eligible for funding, however both local authorities were committed to identifying projects to utilise the funding.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to approve recommendation (a) above; and  
 (ii) to continue to receive an annual update report in relation to the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

### **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT UPDATE – TRANSPORT PROJECTS**

11. With reference to article 10 of the minute of the previous meeting of 9 February 2024, the Joint Committee had before it a report by Paul Finch, Nestrans which provided an update on the progress of projects being taken forward through the additional Scottish Government investment announced alongside the Aberdeen City Region Deal.

The report covered progress on the A90/A937 Laurencekirk Junction Improvement Scheme and the investment in the rail network to improve services between Aberdeen and the Central Belt. Transport Scotland's update reports were appended to the cover report, alongside recent correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee note the update in the report.

Paul Finch outlined the key information from the report making reference to the announcement in the Scottish Parliament confirming that the implementation works for the current year had been paused due to budget constraints, however business case preparation and design works were continuing but would still have an impact on the deliverability of the scheme; and that in terms of the Laurencekirk Junction scheme, Aberdeenshire Council's formal objection had been lifted.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendation.

### **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2024**

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**12.** The Joint Committee had before it a report by the Programme Manager which outlined the recommendations of the 2024 Internal Audit report which considered the internal processes of the Local Authorities supporting delivery of the Deal, and provided an update on the matters already resolved and the wider control and governance framework embedded within each project.

The report recommended:-

That the Joint Committee –

- (a) note the update that an Internal Audit has been concluded by the Internal Audit Team and will be reported to both Councils Audit Committees at their next meeting;
- (b) note the progress already made by both Local Authorities to implement in full recommendations of the Internal Audit report in the areas of Delegated Powers, Mitigation of Variances and Project closure reports;
- (c) note the wider control environment in place for each project which sits outwith the Local Authorities and provides additional assurance over the control of public funds;
- (d) instruct the Chief Officer - City Development & Regeneration, Aberdeen City Council, to report to Joint Committee with an update on progress made in respect of any action plan agreed by Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council in relation to the internal audit report.

Stuart Bews provided a summary of the report.

Mary Beattie, Head of Finance provided background information regarding the financial governance arrangements of the City Region Deal.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to approve the recommendations contained within the report outlined above; and
  - (ii) to agree to receive a report at the next meeting on the progress of the implications of the recommendations.
- **COUNCILLOR IAN YUILL, Chairperson**