

# ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL:

Powering Tomorrow's World

ABERDEEN, 15 November 2024. Minute of Meeting of the ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL JOINT COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Ian Yuill, Chairperson; Councillor Anne Stirling, Vice-Chairperson; Councillors Christian Allard, Alex McLellan (as substitute for Councillor Miranda Radley), Gillian Owen and Gwyneth Petrie; and Professor George Boyne, Jennifer Crow, Stanley Morrice (as substitute for Jennifer Crow from article 6) and Sir Ian Wood.

Also in Attendance:- Stuart Bews, Alan McKay, Ross Stevenson, Aigul Gray, Graham Chandler and Mark Masson (Aberdeen City Council); Councillor John Cox, Paul Macari, Mary Beattie and Sarah Rochester (Aberdeenshire Council); Rab Dickson and Paul Finch (NESTRANS); George Noble (SAOS), Alastair Camelford, Rebecca Long and Sandy Jamieson (Transport Scotland) and Rebecca Allison (NZTC).

**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 Vice Chairperson, Councillor Stirling welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that due to IT issues which the Chairperson, Councillor Yuill was experiencing, she would be chairing the meeting today.

The Clerk advised that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Radley and Alan Wood.

Jennifer Crow advised that she would be required to leave the meeting shortly, therefore Stanley Morrice would be her substitute.

## DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT BUSINESS (IF ANY)

2. The Chairperson proposed that the Joint Committee consider item 13 (NZTC Phase 3 Update), with the press and public excluded from the meeting.

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

in terms of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the above item so as to avoid disclosure of information of the classes described in the following paragraph of Schedule 7(A) to the Act:- article 12 (paragraph 6).

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**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS**

3. 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) Stanley Morrice on behalf of himself, Sir Ian Wood, Jennifer Craw and Professor George Boyne made a transparency statement indicating that they had a connection to any issues affecting Opportunity North East, in particular matters relating to the Food Hub, BioAberdeen and the Energy Transition Zone (ETZ), which may arise during the meeting, by virtue of them being Board Members of ONE, Bio Aberdeen Limited, the Food Hub (NES) Limited and ETZ. However, having applied the objective test he 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;
- (2) Councillor Owen made a transparency statement, by virtue of her 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;
- (3) Councillor Allard made a transparency statement, by virtue of him being a Board Member of Opportunity North East. Having applied the objective test he had concluded that he did not have an interest to declare and he would remain in the meeting; and
- (4) Councillor Yuill made a transparency statement in relation to item 10 (Strategic Transport Appraisal), by virtue of him being a Board Member of NHS Grampian. Having applied the objective test he had concluded that he did not have an interest to declare and he would remain in the meeting.

**MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 6 SEPTEMBER 2024**

4. The Joint Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 6 September 2024, for approval.

In relation to article 8 (Digital Connectivity Memorandum of Understanding), Stuart Bews advised that a letter had been sent to MSP Kate Forbes, Deputy First Minister on behalf of the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Joint Committee seeking clarification on access to Memorandum of Understanding Funding and were awaiting a response.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to note the information provided; and
- (ii) to approve the minute.

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### ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL QUARTERLY DASHBOARD UPDATE

5. With reference to article 5 of the minute of the previous meeting of 6 September 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, Finance, Risk and Benefits. The report also included a Programme Dashboard and a detailed quarterly Financial Summary in Tables 1 to 5.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee –

- (a) note the content of the quarterly Programme Dashboard; and
- (b) approve the ACRD Joint Committee meeting dates for 2025/2026 as 9 May 2025; 12 September 2025; 7 November 2025 and 13 February 2026.

The Joint Committee heard from Stuart Bews, ACRD Programme Manager who highlighted the key information from the report, specifically regarding the risk issue identified as a result of the decision taken by the Scottish Government to pause access to the MOU Digital Infrastructure funding and the mitigations in place to address this.

Mr Bews also made reference to the Scottish Parliament's Fair Working Economy Committee which was undertaking an inquiry into city and growth deals. He indicated that he would be giving evidence to the Committee on 4 December 2024 in relation to governance processes.

Sir Ian Wood intimated that given the large volume of information contained within the report and dashboard, he requested that an executive summary be prepared in future.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to approve the recommendations; and
- (ii) to agree that a one page executive summary of the key risks and issues be circulated to members and that it also be included within future reports.

### DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY - SAOS 5G HUNTLY PHASE 1 - PRESENTATION

6. The Joint Committee received a presentation from George Noble, Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society in relation to the 5G Huntly Phase 1 project.

Mr Noble advised that Huntly 5G was a £1.5m rural digital connectivity project funded by the Aberdeen City Region Deal which (a) aimed to provide investment in 5G and other wireless technology infrastructure, systems and data transfer technologies; (b) explored innovative applications that use 5G and other wireless technologies in rural places; and (c) demonstrated a repeatable model for other rural communities to adopt.

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Mr Noble outlined the objectives of the project which included the provision of enhanced connectivity into the region (7 mile radius of Huntly); the development of mandatory use cases in Environmental Control and Agriculture; and optional use cases of benefit to the region, notably in transport, tourism and community services such as health, education and community safety.

In response to a question in relation to the possibility of extending the project to other areas, Mr Noble advised that the project was at an early stage although interest had been received from rural areas in the south of Scotland and Orkney.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

- (i) that arrangements be made for a site visit in 2025; and
- (ii) to note that the Clerk would circulate the PowerPoint presentation after the meeting; and
- (iii) to otherwise thank George Noble for his insightful presentation and for his attendance.

**INTERNAL AUDIT ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

7. With reference to article 7 of the minute of the previous meeting of 6 September 2024, the Joint Committee had before it a report by Stuart Bews, ACRD Programme Manager, which provided an update on the progress towards implementation of the agreed recommendations from the ACRD Internal Audit.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee –

- (a) note that the recommended actions within the Internal Audit report have been accepted as implemented by Internal Audit in the following areas: Delegated Powers, Mitigation of Variances, Project Closure Report and Progress Reporting; and
- (b) note the ongoing work to gain implemented status in the following areas: Funding Agreements, Expenditure Records.

Stuart Bews provided a summary of the report.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

- (i) approve the recommendations; and
- (ii) to agree that the Joint Committee now had sufficient assurance with actions in place to implement the two remaining audit recommendations.

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**ANNUAL REPORT AND BENEFITS UPDATE 2023/24**

8. The Joint Committee had before it a report by Stuart Bews, ACRD programme Manager which presented the Aberdeen City Region Deal Annual Report and Benefits Dashboard 2023-24 which sought approval for its wider publication.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee –

- (a) note the content of Appendix A - Annual Report 2023/24 which provides a comprehensive overview of the Programme and projects key achievements for the past year;
- (b) note the content of Appendix B – Benefits Dashboard 2023/24 detailing the realisation of benefits across the Programme, that align to wider regional economic development objectives achieved by utilising partner resources; and
- (c) endorse these reports for wider publication.

Stuart Bews provided a summary of the report and responded to a question relating to promotion, advising that the Invest Aberdeen website had a dedicated Aberdeen City Region Deal web space which would be used for the promotion of the Annual Report and Benefits Dashboard.

Sarah Rochester advised that the City Region Deal Communications Group would be extracting some of the information, imagery and graphics from the report to promote them across all partners and social media channels including the sharing and tagging of people as appropriate.

It was noted that the two local authority websites would also be utilised for promotional purposes.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to approve the recommendations contained within the report; and
- (ii) to note the promotional work being taken forward by the Communications Group.

**STRATEGIC TRANSPORT APPRAISAL**

9. The Joint Committee had before it a report by Paul Finch, Nestrans which sought approval for progression of a cumulative transport appraisal within the Strategic Transport Appraisal (STA) to support the Councils' Local Development Plan processes, and provided details regarding the progression of work within the STA suite of projects as reported in February 2024.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee –

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- (a) approve the proposals for the progression of a regional Cumulative Transport Appraisal, linked to both Councils' development plan process, as part of the Aberdeen Sub-Area Model (ASAM) project line; and
- (b) note that the Director of Nestrans has committed to report back on the completion of the business cases, and at other relevant milestones in their development.

Paul Finch highlighted the key information from the report making reference to the seven areas of work which were currently being undertaken in the current financial year (2024/25) as follows:-

- Completion and application of the Aberdeen Sub-Area Model;
- (ASAM) strategic transport model to inform the Council's Local Development Plan process;
- A90/A952 Ellon-Peterhead-Fraserburgh Corridor Appraisal;
- A965 Wellington Road Junction Appraisals and Design;
- Rail Freight Terminals Review;
- Regional Hydrogen Refuellers;
- Mobility Hub Development; and
- Aberdeen Rapid Transit proposals.

During discussion, it was noted that the Joint Committee previously indicated support for the reallocation of £1.150m of funding from STA, from the two Local Authority contributions, to cover the medium to high-risk provision associated with the External Links to Aberdeen South Harbour project. However, prior to any approval being sought from the respective Council's as detailed in the report, a request was made that a further report be submitted to the Joint Committee which would:-

- provide detail of the impact of the use of these funds for South Harbour Road on the projects within the original STA business case they were originally intended for;
- provide detail of the process by which approval is to be sought from both the Councils and the Scottish Government; and
- seek approval for this process to be followed.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to agree that a further report be submitted to the Joint Committee as outlined above; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

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

10. As reported at the meeting of 8 September 2023, the Joint Committee had before it a report from Ross Stevenson, Senior Engineer, Aberdeen City Council, which provided an update on timescales and the project finance costs.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee –

- (a) note the ongoing discussions with both Governments with regard to the Outline Business Case (OBC);
- (b) note the progress of the scheme with regard to the ongoing detailed design work, Planning Application, and the progression of the Compulsory Purchase Order; and
- (c) note the commencement of discussions on utilising one of the Governments' Construction Frameworks as an alternative procurement route from the two stage Restricted Procedure previously envisioned.

The Joint Committee heard from Alan McKay, Team Leader, Roads Projects, Aberdeen City Council who highlighted the key information from the report, advising that since the publishing of the agenda, discussion and feedback from Transport Scotland on the OBC had now been concluded successfully with all points now being addressed.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendations.

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

11. 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, covering 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.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee note the update in the report.

The Joint Committee heard from Paul Finch, who provided a summary of the report.

Sandy Jamieson and Alastair Camelford, Transport Scotland were in attendance and provided an update on the Laurencekirk Junction and rail improvement services between Aberdeen and the Central Belt respectively.

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During discussion, the following was noted:-

- that the removal of the remaining objection to the original Laurencekirk Junction order was a significant milestone for the project;
- that due to the closure of the Oatyhill Bridge, additional draft supplementary statutory orders for the scheme were required to make the Laurencekirk Junction deliverable and that Transport Scotland's Project Team were progressing the work as a priority;
- that in relation to rail improvements, design works were progressing and the focus was on the Aberdeen and Dundee areas with Montrose and Arbroath areas to follow; and
- that in September 2024, the Transport Minister had announced the start of the procurement competition to replace the HST fleet of trains on the route between Aberdeen and the Central Belt.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendation.

**In accordance with Article 2 of this minute, the following item was considered with the press and public excluded.**

**NZTC PHASE 3 UPDATE**

12. The Joint Committee had before it a report by Nicola McIntosh, Net Zero Technology Centre (NZTC), which provided an update on the progress of the Net Zero Technology plans over the remaining term of the ACRD.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Joint Committee –

- (a) note the NZTC delivery to date;
- (b) note and agree that NZTC is progressing to deliver Phase 3 in line with the Approved Business Case

The Joint Committee heard from Rebecca Allison, NZTC who provided a summary of the report.

**The Joint Committee resolved:-**

- (i) that a progress report be submitted approximately every six months, with the next being submitted to the meeting of the Joint Committee on 9 May 2025; and
  - (ii) to otherwise approve the recommendations contained within the report.
- **COUNCILLOR ANNE STIRLING, Chairperson**