

# ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL:

Powering Tomorrow's World

## ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL JOINT COMMITTEE

7 FEBRUARY, 2020

**Present:** Councillors J Gifford, (Chair), J Cox (as substitute for Councillor P J Argyle), and R Thomson (Aberdeenshire Council);

Councillors M Boulton, J Laing, and D Lumsden (Aberdeen City Council); and

Mrs J Craw (as substitute for Professor S Logan), Mr P Machray, and Sir Ian Wood (ONE).

**Officers:** Mr J Savage, Chief Executive, Aberdeenshire Council; Ms B Millar, Head of Economic Development and Protective Services, Aberdeenshire Council; Mr R Sweetnam, Chief Officer, City Growth, Aberdeen City Council; Mr A Wood, Head of Finance, Aberdeenshire Council; Mrs A Overton, Senior Solicitor, Aberdeenshire Council; Ms J Richards Wood, Programme Manager, Aberdeen City Council; Ms W Robertson, Digital Programme Manager, Aberdeen City Council; Ms S Rochester, Service Manager, Customer Communications and Improvement, Aberdeenshire Council; Mr P Finch, Strategic Transport Manager, Aberdeenshire Council; Mr R Dickson, Director, NESTRANS; Ms A Ferguson, Project Officer, Aberdeen City Council; and Ms J McRobbie, Committee Officer, Aberdeenshire Council.

**In attendance:** Mr C Oswald, Policy Manager – Equality & Investment, Scottish Government (Via Skype).

### 1. SEDERUNT AND DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2. RESOLUTIONS

(A) Public Sector Equality Duty

In making decisions on the following items of business, the Joint Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of The Equality Act, 2010;-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
  - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
  - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (2) where an Equality Impact Assessment was provided, to consider its content and take this into account when reaching a decision.

(B) Exempt Information

The Joint Committee **agreed**, in terms of Sections 50A (4) and (5) of The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of item 8 as tabled, so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

### **3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF CITY REGION DEAL JOINT COMMITTEE OF 8 NOVEMBER, 2019**

The Joint Committee had before them and **approved** as a correct record, the Minute of Meeting of the Joint Committee of 8 November, 2019.

#### **4. ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL QUARTERLY PROGRESS UPDATE**

There had been circulated a report by the Programme Manager, providing an update on the City Region Deal (CRD) and its constituent workstreams.

Having heard further from Officers, there was discussion of the most appropriate scheduling of the planned updates on the Harbour works and the Oil and Gas Technology Centre.

Mr Machray provided an oral update on the launch of the Food hub, which had been very well received, but expressed disappointment that the challenge funding application for manufacturing had been unsuccessful. There was discussion on the work which had been involved to develop the funding bid, and the ratio of successful applications, with 11 out of the 24 bids developed to Stage 2 unsuccessful.

Clarification was sought on the heading objectives of the rail improvement works, and the Strategic Transport Manager, Aberdeenshire Council, cited the Ministerial response of November, 2019 which used the 2 hour 30 minute journey, Aberdeen to Edinburgh, as a measure. There was discussion of requirement for fundamental investment to infrastructure which would be the basis for other improvements, and also of the undertaking, given at the previous meeting of the Joint Committee, that updates would be provided, including the agreed programme of work and indicative timescales.

The Joint Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) that further correspondence be held with the Scottish Minister and Transport Scotland regarding the promised availability of the approved rail improvement work programmes and timescales, to be sought in early course;
- (2) that further information be reported on feedback on the unsuccessful challenge fund bid in due course;
- (3) that officers, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, reconsider the scheduling of presentations on the Harbour Improvement works and the Oil and Gas Technology Centre; and
- (4) in all other respects, to note the updates provided.

#### **5. FINANCIAL UPDATE – QUARTER 3, 2019/2020**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 8 November, (Item 9), there had been circulated a report dated 7 January, 2020 by the Head of Finance, Aberdeenshire Council, updating the Joint Committee on the finances of the Aberdeen City Region Deal for (a) actual expenditure in financial year 2019/20 and (b) the 2019/20 forecast.

Having heard from the Head of Finance that, as confidential details had been omitted, the report could be presented in the public domain, and that the only change to the forecast was an alteration to the Harbour work timings, there was discussion of the ability to access funding timeously from the Scottish Government within the context of annual funding for long term, committed capital projects.

The Joint Committee **agreed** to note the updates provided.

## **6. AUDIT SCOTLAND: SCOTLAND'S CITY REGION DEALS AND GROWTH DEALS**

There had been circulated a report dated 7 February, 2020 by the Project Manager, advising on the publication, on 16 January, 2020, of an Audit Scotland report, "Scotland's City Region Deals and Growth Deals" which contained, inter alia, a scrutiny check list for members, designed to provide councillors with examples of questions which may assist understanding of their council's deal and scrutinise its performance.

Having heard from Officers the intention that the Audit Scotland report be considered by the Audit committees of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council in respect of the recommendations made for Councils, there was discussion of the scrutiny role for non-Council members of the Joint Committee.

The Joint Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the key messages from the Audit Scotland report;
- (2) to note that the recommended actions would be considered by Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Council in due course;
- (3) that Audit Scotland be requested to give consideration, in terms of assurance of robust scrutiny, to the role of private sector input to City Region Deals and Growth Deals; and
- (4) to note the Scrutiny Toolkit for Councillors as detailed in Appendix A to the report.

## **7. EQUALITY AND INVESTMENT**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 8 November, 2019, (Item 3), there had been circulated a report dated 7 February, 2020 by the Project Manager, briefing the Joint Committee on Equalities and Investment in advance of the proposed training for Members.

The Chair, on behalf of the Joint Committee, welcomed Chris Oswald to the meeting by Skype.

The Joint Committee thereafter heard from Mr Oswald of his role to support the 12 Region Deals to best achieve equality actions, including those intended to close or minimise income gaps and address gender or age inequalities as well as other actions which might be to the detriment of protected characteristics. He spoke of opportunities within procurement which could have a positive impact and of monitoring the delivery of these within contracts, citing ongoing work with the City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh University to develop a tool kit which could then be shared nationally.

The Joint Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to defer the scheduled training session for Joint Committee members until such time as Mr Oswald was able to attend in person; and
- (2) to note, in all other respects, the terms of the report.

## **8. FINANCE REPORT – FINANCIAL UPDATE Q3, 2019/2020**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 8 November, 2019, (Item 9), there had been circulated a report dated 7 February, 2020 by the Head of Finance, Aberdeenshire Council,

updating the Joint Committee on the finances of the Aberdeen City Region Deal for actual expenditure in financial year 2019/20 and updating the 2019/20 forecast.

The Joint Committee heard further from officers of the ongoing situation regarding the drawing down of funds, and of continued conversations with government officials to factor legally binding contracts, accurately expressed forecasts, and construction timetables for large capital projects within an annual approved funding allocation. This may apply to other Deals which were at an early stage of evolution.

The Joint Committee **agreed** :-

- (1) that the Chief Executives, after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair and ONE, write to Scottish Ministers to request their further consideration of the release mechanisms for funding, which may have unintended consequences for the physical delivery of City Region Deals; and
- (2) to note, in all other respects, the update provided.

Councillor Jim Gifford, Chair