

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Housing and Environment
DATE: 12th January 2011
DIRECTOR: Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT: Housing and Environment Achievements 2010
REPORT NUMBER: H&E/10/200

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present committee with the achievements and awards for the Directorate and our employees over the past year.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Note the information in the report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct implications arising out of this report, although a number of comments are made on the use of resources.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

Continual improvement highlighted through such awards and achievements are in keeping with the Council's ambition of being a top performing Council which delivers on the Community Plan and the Administration's Policy Statement.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other direct implications arising out of this report regarding legal, resource, personnel, property, equipment, sustainability and environmental, health and safety; although a number of comments are made on the use of resources.

6. REPORT

Indicated below are a number of the awards and achievements made by Housing and Environment Service employees over the year.

These include national recognition awarded by external bodies and also Aberdeen City Council's own corporate recognising achievement awards. All submissions for the corporate awards are vetted by an assessment panel. Only the most significant achievements go through to the final awards. There are a number of categories including; National Recognition, Service Improvements, Major Projects and Excellence in Customer Service. There is also the Chief Executive's award which shortlists the best 3 examples before choosing an overall winner. Housing and Environment had all 3 shortlisted nominations for the Chief Executives Award including the overall winning submission.

Environment

Loo of the Year Awards

All public conveniences operated by the City Council performed well in the annual Loo of the Year Awards competition, with the Upperkirkgate loos scoring the maximum five stars. The loos at Footdee, Chapel Street and Spa Street also performed well, with each earning an impressive four stars.

Since its introduction in 1987, the annual Loo of the Year Awards competition, run by the British Toilet Association, has helped focus the spotlight on 'away from home' toilets throughout the UK.

The Awards have a simple objective – to encourage the highest possible standards in all types of 'away from home' or public toilets. All competition entries receive a star grading, ranging from one to five stars, following an unannounced visit by an authorised Loo of the Year Awards inspector.

Each entry is fully assessed against a range of judging criteria, covering both male and female facilities as well as any changing and accessible facilities provided, including:

- signage and communication;
- décor, maintenance and state of repair;
- fixtures and fittings;
- cleanliness;
- hygiene equipment;
- toilet tissue;
- air quality

Earning four and five stars for all of our public toilets is a really impressive achievement and this is down to the hard work and dedication of the staff who look after these toilets and keep them in such superb condition year round.

A Tree for Every Citizen

Aberdeen City Council's 'Tree for Every Citizen' project was joint winner of the Environmental Initiative of the Year award at the Herald Society Awards and was also a finalist at the 2010 APSE awards.

The Tree for Every Citizen project will see 210,000 trees of native species planted in the city. The first phase was completed in the summer with nearly 100,000 trees planted at eight sites in the city.

Work has been entirely funded from external sources and the second phase of tree planting to deliver another 80,000 trees is now being planned. There will be a process of community consultation for all the proposed sites.

A dedicated group of officers obtained £318,500 of external funding to cover the costs of the trees and materials required for the first phase of the project and is now working to raise money for the next stage.

The trees planted will contribute to creating new woodlands or extend existing ones, benefiting citizens' health and well-being, as well as providing specialised habitats for nationally important species including the red squirrel, Daubenton's bat and wych elm trees.

The project, which has been supported and partially funded by the Forestry Commission Scotland, the European Union and Aberdeen Greenspace amongst others, will also benefit the environment by lowering carbon emissions. In all, 45 hectares of new woodland will be created which will take up and store 15,000 tonnes of CO₂ over the next 50 years.

Cremators at Hazlehead Crematorium

This project was undertaken to replace outdated, worn and unreliable cremators which were costing increasingly high amounts to maintain, year on year. The level of maintenance and repair was causing delays in cremation services and consequent distress to bereaved relatives and friends. The unreliability of the cremators and their operating /monitoring equipment also caused undue stress to the dedicated staff at the Crematorium, as well as putting the Council at risk of contravening Environmental protection legislation on a regular basis.

The first two cremators were commissioned and cremations commenced using these two machines during May 2010. The remaining work was completed in stages throughout the year. Thanks to the invaluable contribution made by staff at the crematorium, all members of the design team, Mansell Construction Services Ltd, their suppliers and sub-contractors, this major project was delivered on programme, within budget and with minimal disruption to the ongoing operations at the crematorium.

Excellence in Customer Service (Aberdeen City Council corporate award)

Pat Wilson has worked tirelessly in managing the administration arrangements for the city's allotments. She has done excellent work improving links with allotment holders and helping the Council promote community spirit and partnership and demonstrates her commitment to the role by attending conferences in her own time to further her understanding and also regularly attends Allotment user meetings.

It is not always an easy task dealing with the allotment holders due to the amount of administration presently required but in all areas of work Pat consistently exceeds people's expectations with her friendly professional manner and is an exemplary member of the Council Team.

The Horticulture Apprentice of the Year (Aberdeen City Council corporate award)

Mike Middleton (GMB) and Graham McKay (Operations Officer, Environmental Services) had a meeting to discuss the progress and successes of the Horticulture Apprentice Scheme during the previous 2 years and how it could be further improved.

One of the suggestions made by Mike was to introduce an Apprentice of the Year Award, which was to be sponsored by GMB.

The criteria for this prestigious award include quality of college work, respect and attitude to work, attendance and subject knowledge.

The finalists for this award were;

Adrian Szabo who has made good progress over the last 12 months and has just completed SVQ level 2 in Amenity Horticulture. He has now started on SVQ level 3 Amenity Horticulture.

Alexander Falconer who has been studying for SVQ level 3 in Amenity Horticulture and has almost completed year 2 which would see him become a Qualified Gardener.

Cheryl Cox who has recently completed SVQ level 3 in Amenity Horticulture and is due to start work as a Qualified Gardener in the coming weeks.

Thomas Arden who has made excellent progress in the last 12 months and has recently completed year 1 in SVQ level 2 Amenity Horticulture and has now started year 2.

The winner of the award was Daniel Shand.

Daniel has consistently shown good aptitude for the work and has applied himself well in all aspects of Amenity Horticulture. He has received excellent reports from College, his workplace mentor and all of his Work Colleagues at each of the work based placements over the last 12 months and recently won the Apprentice Award at this year's Royal Horticultural Society of Aberdeen Annual Flower Show.

His Assessor and Mentor is expecting him to push on and continue to gain the knowledge and experience that would make him an asset to his profession and to the City of Aberdeen in General.

Food Hygiene Training (Aberdeen City Council corporate award)

From May to September 2009, Mark Nicholl and Pamela Catto organised a series of 34 Elementary Food Hygiene Training courses for businesses within the City. They sourced suppliers, managed administration arrangements and ensured that the courses ran fully booked, maximizing our return on investment. All in all 475 individuals were trained free of charge with the aim of increasing hygiene awareness and improving compliance with Food Safety Legislation. This project not only benefited local businesses but will ultimately save the Council money by reducing the amount of enforcement activity required by Environmental Health.

Housing and Community Safety

Accreditation

The Aberdeen Sheltered Housing Network was awarded a TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Accreditation award for best practice in tenant participation. This is the first group in Scotland to be given such an award and it is all down to the hard work of the Tenant Participation Team engaging with the tenants in Sheltered Housing to improve communication and consultation in the sheltered housing complexes.

Tenants Open Day 2010

This years Tenants Open Day took place on Saturday 28 August 2010 at the Music Hall. The Open Day was again very well attended by Tenants with initial analysis showing there were in excess of 400 patrons through the door.

51 information stands including Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE), Save Cash And Reduce Fuel (SCARF), Grampian Police, Grampian Fire and Rescue Service, Aberdeen Foyer and Grampian Racial Equality Council to name a few were available for our Tenants to peruse, all with staff members and volunteers on hand to answer any questions and to promote their organisations/ services.

City Wardens received a bronze award as 'One to Watch' at the 2010 COSLA Awards

Aberdeen City Council's City Wardens are new officer roles that combine the services of Environmental Wardens, Parking Enforcement Officers and Community Wardens. The Wardens help to deter antisocial behaviour, littering and illegal parking and are there to reassure the public that Aberdeen City Council is doing all it can to keep our communities safe and secure. It is a more efficient and effective way of using resources, with a fast response time and built-in ability to target problems in specific areas of the city. Since the launch of the service nine months ago incidents of antisocial behaviour, littering and illegal parking have been significantly reduced.

The following examples all received recognition at the corporate awards ceremony and demonstrate the diverse service the wardens are providing;

Street Football (Aberdeen City Council corporate award)

The City Warden service has been instrumental in establishing a multi agency initiative aimed at young people in the Northfield area of the City. The youths meet on a weekly basis at the Northfield Community Centre to enjoy an informal game of football with members of Grampian Police, Grampian Fire and Rescue Service, the Youth Development Team and Aberdeen City Wardens. The target youth group are those involved in antisocial behaviour. Those who attend weekly have been identified as being engaged in wilful fire raising, motorcycle theft and annoyance and other general youth disturbance issues. The activity, a competitive 5 a side football match, coincides with those times at which wilful fire raising is at its highest locally. Since the football initiative began there have been 2 incidents of Wilful Fire Raising incidents in the Northfield Area. Data intelligence gathered shows this to be a reduction of 78% compared to the average for the same period over the previous 3 years.

Dealing with Conflict (Aberdeen City Council corporate award and the Chief Executives Award)

On 24 November 2009 Alison Murison and Rosslyn MacLeod were on foot patrol approaching Union Square when they came upon a heated dispute between a drunk male and a woman with a 1 year old child.

The incident was attracting attention from members of the public. The wardens approached the couple but were met with a volley of abuse and threats from the male. The woman claimed that the man (her partner) had assaulted her and was trying to abduct the child take him to Glasgow.

At this point the man grabbed the child and ran off to get a taxi. The wardens immediately warned the taxi drivers at the rank that the police were en route to deal with a suspected abduction and advised them not to offer to take the male away from the scene. The wardens also alerted the city CCTV room who monitored the event.

Alison then persuaded the drunk male to hand over the child and the two wardens kept him speaking for a considerable period of time, despite his threats to harm them, until the police arrived and arrested him.

Their actions have won them praise from Grampian Police for remaining calm and assured while dealing with this potentially dangerous situation.

Bad Weather Assistance (Aberdeen City Council corporate award and the Chief Executives Award)

During the worst of the weather in February of this year Annie Wood, Angela Ferrie and David McDougall ensured that elderly and frail residents in Torry were safe in their homes.

There are several examples of them going above and beyond the call of duty, here are just two of them:

Firstly, they took the initiative to help keep the roads open and assisted numerous motorists trying to get home in the worst of the snowdrifts

They also visited elderly and frail people in their homes to ensure that they were comfortable and had access to food and heating. This was especially important as many could not get out of their homes during the worst of the weather.

There were many compliments and thanks for their sterling efforts. Annie and Angela were featured in the Press and Journal as a good news story praising the service and the Council. The wardens went beyond the normal remit of their role, showing initiative and determination to provide a service to the public in the most difficult circumstances

Regeneration and Housing Investment

New Build Housing

Aberdeen City Council's New Build Programme launched its first phase of development in Spring 2010. The programme will see the development of 85 units at three sites across the city; Hayton Road site, Tillydrone, the old nursery site at Byron Park, Northfield, and the Rorie Hall site, Cults.

A mix of home types and sizes, including two and three bedroom family properties will be developed in Northfield and Tillydrone and 1 & 2 bedroom homes for varying needs in Cults.

This is a significant and very important step in moving towards the provision of much-needed new, high-quality council homes in Aberdeen.

Four Building Services apprentices have been nominated for 2010/11 APSE Apprentice Awards and also recognised at corporate awards ceremony

The APSE apprentice and trainee awards scheme has been running successfully for 12 years throughout the UK. The aim of the awards, which are open to every authority in the UK, is not only to give recognition to our future tradespersons, but also to the councils themselves who continue to invest in and provide first class training / employment initiatives in bona-fide Modern Apprenticeship schemes.

This year we have had several representatives within the apprentice and trainee section of these awards.

Joanna Robertson was nominated for the APSE 'Female building skills' award and Scottish Apprentice of the year.

Robert Burr was awarded for Best 2nd year Painting and Decorating Apprentice as well as being nominated for both APSE 'Male Building Skills' award and for Scottish Apprentice of the Year.

Stephanie Wright has not only jointly achieved Best 2nd year Painting and Decorating Apprentice but was also nominated for the APSE 'Female Building Skills' award as well as the Scottish Apprentice of the Year. On top of this she has also been shortlisted to take part in the 41st World-skills Competition. Over its 60 year history, WorldSkills International (formerly known as the "Skill Olympics") has come to symbolise the pinnacle of excellence in vocational training.

Every two years hundreds of young skilled people, accompanied by their teachers and trainers, gather together from around the world to compete before the public in their various trades – testing themselves against demanding international standards.

They represent the best of their peers drawn from regional and national skill competitions held globally.

Doug Gibb – corporate recognising achievement award and winner of the Chief Executives award

Doug Gibb, Building Services, has developed and run a successful support programme for apprentices which has provided them with training, development and personal coaching.

Doug Gibb excelled in the new role of “Apprentice Mentor” and has been responsible for the support scheme for all 61 apprentices being trained through Building Services. The outcomes of this have been that each individual has the support and opportunity to succeed in their chosen trade.

Doug’s work involves liaising with the different training bodies, trades professionals, supervisory staff and management on behalf of the apprentices. Doug has shown real commitment in the post and has made a significant improvement in the day to day working lives of all the apprentices he mentors.

The post of Apprentice Mentor was new to the Building Services and as such Doug had to develop the process in a short period of time. He has approached any problems with an open mind and a drive to succeed.

As the abilities of the trainees improve so does the standard of the performance, which in turn raises the service delivery to our end users and improves the standing of the Council.

7. AUTHORISED SIGNATURE

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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A