

Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee

ABERDEEN, 12 November 2024. Minute of Meeting of the NET ZERO, ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Yuill, Convener; Councillor Radley, Vice-Convener; and Councillors Ali, Blake, Henrickson, Hutchison, Massey, McLellan and van Sweeden.

The agenda and reports 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.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

1. The following transparency statements were intimated:-
 - The Convener made a transparency statement in respect of items 10.2 (Revocation of Anderson Drive corridor and Wellington Road Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) and Amendment of City Centre AQMA) and 11.1 (Wellington Road Junction Improvements (WRJI) – Progress Report) due to his membership of Cycling UK and the AA, but advised that he did not consider this amounted to a declaration which would require him to withdraw from the meeting for those items; and
 - Councillor Blake made a transparency statement in respect of item 11.2 (Future Operation of Controlled Parking Zones Y and YY (Garthdee and Kaimhill) as she was a former employee of Robert Gordon University but did not consider that this amounted to a declaration which would require her to withdraw from the meeting for that item.

DEPUTATIONS

2. (A) DEPUTATION IN RESPECT OF ITEM 10.2 – REVOCATION OF ANDERSON DRIVE CORRIDOR AND WELLINGTON ROAD AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS (AQMA) AND AMENDMENT OF CITY CENTRE AQMA – ELIZABETH LESLIE

The Committee received a deputation from Ms Elizabeth Leslie in respect of the above item. Ms Leslie was accompanied by Joan Thomas and Graeme Craib. Ms Leslie advised that they were in attendance to put forward observations and ask some questions as to what was driving the changes in Aberdeen that she stated no one was voting for. She began by stating that it was not possible to separate bus gates from the Low Emission Zone (LEZ), as their outcomes were similar. A count taken on 15 October 2024 from Great Western Road to the east end of Union Street had indicated 39 empty stores, with 2 in liquidation and the construction at Union Terrace Gardens still for lease. She added that only two cyclists were observed during this time, noting that with the Council's push for active travel, there were unregulated e-bikes, too numerous to count, which were entirely utilised commercially for food deliveries.

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Ms Leslie stated that Aberdeen's small businesses felt unheard in terms of their imposed trade predicament, adding that they had their proposed deputation to the 11 June 2024 Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee deemed to be incompetent. She added that there was a disproportionate emphasis against private vehicles, noting that the recommendations in a report to Council on 11 October 2024 spoke of the safe and efficient movement of active travel and public transport users throughout the city. She asked why cars were not mentioned.

Ms Leslie noted that the United Nations Environmental Programme said that stakeholders might need to kickstart a walking and cycling policy in a city, to help local authorities to prioritise walking and cycling, and find out what steps needed to be taken to ensure that cities prioritised people over cars. She added that neither the Council nor the Scottish Government had coined the phrase 'active travel', and that it had been given to them. She stated that the UN Environmental Programme quote helped to understand why Councils around the world were utilising the exact same words and phraseology, such as 'active travel', 'wheeling', 'stakeholders', '15 minute cities', 'diversity', 'equity' and 'inclusion, and why Aberdeen City Council felt justified in prioritising pedestrians, bikes and wheeling over cars. Ms Leslie added that the World Health Organisation's (WHO) global action plan on physical activity was implementing unasked for national policies to ensure safer roads for cycling and walking. She stated that while Aberdeen citizens voted for Councillors to represent them, what they were getting instead was a one size fits all approach from the United Nations and its WHO agency, using local Councils as proxies to impose their agenda, regardless of actual need. Ms Leslie felt that such external influencers should take a walk down Union Street to witness the damage caused by their no private car ownership and active travel policies. She added that others around the world were beginning to push back against arbitrary global policies being implemented by various Councils, and that Aberdeen City Council's initiatives aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, namely prioritisation of active travel over privately owned cars. She noted that the words 'privately owned' were of growing significance because of the European Union and UN's vision of ending private ownership of cars.

Ms Leslie asked Members, that although the harbour ships accounted for 10 percent of emissions, did the Council acknowledge that Aberdeen was in an enviable position, having one of the finest, if not the finest air cleansing mechanisms only metres from its city centre, namely the pristine North Sea air and wind. She highlighted that the LEZ had a detrimental effect due to forcing people to drive further, use more fuel and generally add hours to their working day, and that the public was now aware of that detrimental impact to the city centre, and that it was not proportional to the perceived or active benefit. She added that there had been an article in last week's Evening Express which referred to the city as a ghost town. Ms Leslie drew attention to what she considered was a relevant point from a research article by a group of academic and public bodies, which said that reducing pollution in city centres would likely have a minimal effect on public health. She asked that the Council reconcile this with its own website, which said that everyone was at risk of the effects from long term exposure to pollution.

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She explained that the Transport Scotland Act 2019 said that including people living or working close to busy, congested streets as part of the consultation process, would help inform the LEZ policy making process, helping to shape the guiding principles that the Scottish Government would adopt to design, establish and operate Scotland's Low Emission Zones. Ms Leslie said that this implied the decision to implement LEZs had already been made and the objective of the consultation was really just to shape policy. She added that it should be noted that the consultation was only answered by 500 people, and suggested that this did not reflect a broad spectrum of residents, businesses and visitors to Aberdeen, which put its validity into question, as the majority of people were unaware of any consultation.

In respect of the legality of LEZs, Ms Leslie noted that the Transport Scotland Act 2019 stated that authorities could create, amend or revoke LEZs – therefore this did not mean 'must', 'required' or 'mandatory', which she noted were the words used by Council officers at the September 2024 Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee in relation to the LEZ. She quoted statements from officers at the meeting and suggested that the only actual requirement around air quality monitoring came from the Environment Act 1995, and that the Transport Scotland Act was only an instrument to provide a 'how to' and not a 'must do' in relation to LEZs. She noted that enforcement of the LEZ had started as of 1 June 2024, and the majority of people had been against it. She added that many people were now bypassing Aberdeen, and going instead to towns such as Inverurie or Stonehaven. Ms Leslie noted that a poll reported by Aberdeen Live in 2023 had shown that 90% of respondents had opposed the LEZ. Similarly, a survey published in the Press and Journal in 2024 had revealed that the majority of respondents were against the LEZ implementation in the city centre.

Ms Leslie stated that during her deputation to the Committee in September 2024, an officer had said that since the introduction of the LEZ in May 2022, there had been an improvement in air quality in 2022 and 2023, however she stated that the consensus of many people asked was that no one had paid any attention to the LEZ regulations until it was enforced in June 2024. She added that Glasgow and Edinburgh, which had significantly larger city centres than Aberdeen and had the same air quality standards, continued to be vibrant areas, suffering far fewer consequences from LEZ due to their size and scope. Ms Leslie said that in comparison, the bus gates had been introduced in Aberdeen to improve timeliness, reliability of buses and to displace car travel in favour of buses. She then highlighted some examples of where LEZ and bus gates intersected to make day-to-day life more challenging. Ms Leslie explained that her niece lived in Newtonhill and prior to LEZ had driven her diesel car to her city centre place of work. As her vehicle was not compliant with the LEZ, she had sold it with the intention of taking the bus instead, which would help to meet the Council's objective of displacing cars. However Stagecoach had then withdrawn their service from her area. Ms Leslie explained that her own experience was that the Stagecoach app, prior to the introduction of bus gates had consistently given a 39 minute travel time from Portlethen to Union Square, however this was now 40 to 42 minutes, and the Sunday service had been reduced from one bus an hour to one bus every two hours. She asked why Stagecoach

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had degraded its service within months of the LEZ being introduced, and that going to church in Aberdeen now involved a potential six hour round trip. Ms Leslie stated that when Stagecoach had been asked for the reasons for the service degradation, their answer was that the city had approved it.

Ms Leslie highlighted a deputation which had been made on 5 November 2024 to the Finance and Resources Committee to request funds for services for Aberdeen's vulnerable not to be cut. She added that the hardships faced by small businesses due to increased National Insurance contributions and the minimum wage had also been discussed at that meeting, and noted that at a recent meeting of the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee, there had been what she considered to be a meagre fund allocation for clothes for Aberdeen children living in poverty. She said this should be contrasted with the £1.5 million plus cost of the LEZ up to 1 June 2024, and suggested that all Council meetings were scrambling for funds, while she felt an inordinate amount of manpower, resources and funds were allocated to agendas such as the LEZ and what she felt were similar misguided offshoots.

She concluded by stating that Council had a duty to assess and balance both the reasonability and proportionality of LEZ against the damage being done to its city centre, and to that end the Council should initiate a cost benefit analysis. She added that what she felt were the differences between the vibrant Glasgow and Edinburgh city centres and Aberdeen's decaying city centre, should highlight that a policy should not be applied equally. She proposed that the LEZ should be revoked and that all fines levied should be returned, stating that unelected trans-nationals should not be allowed to influence local policy making. Finally, she stated that global warming had been rebranded as climate change as 'warming' did not affirm the required narrative, and asked that Members bear in mind that it was climate change that underpinned schemes like the LEZ, and that 100 percent of climate catastrophe predictions over the last 60 years had been 100 percent wrong.

(B) DEPUTATION IN RESPECT OF ITEM 11.2 – FUTURE OPERATION OF CONTROLLED PARKING ZONES Y AND YY (GARTHDEE AND KAIMHILL) – ANDREW MURRAY

The Committee then received a deputation from Mr Andrew Murray on behalf of Garthdee Community Council in respect of the above report.

Mr Murray explained that he was the chairperson of Garthdee Community Council, and stated that as a principle, the people of Garthdee strongly believed that it was the responsibility of Robert Gordon University (RGU) to permanently mitigate the impact of their presence and that of their customers on the people of the Garthdee community, both socially and financially. He explained that Garthdee Community Council and other community representatives had taken a pragmatic approach to this problem and suggested, in order to protect the interest of residents, the reputation of Aberdeen City Council and RGU's standing in the community, that there should be a compromise

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offered by RGU. This compromise would entail RGU putting on the table an offer to the tune of three to five years of administration costs of the controlled parking zone (CPZ). However Mr Murray said that the community considered what had been offered by RGU was unacceptable and a grossly offensive solution which placed the community in the middle of a disagreement between RGU and Aberdeen City Council. He noted that this meant that yet again the local residents of Garthdee were the losers, with the people of Garthdee having to face significant financial penalties or horrendous social penalties, through no fault of their own. Mr Murray added that the people of Garthdee were angry beyond anything he had witnessed in his twenty years of living in and serving the community. He stated that the people of Garthdee called upon Aberdeen City Council to make it clear to RGU that their offer simply was not good enough and to ask them to get back around the table with officers to come forward with something that the residents could accept. He said the residents should never have to pay to park in their own community, and irrespective of RGU's financial position, it did not and never would relieve them of their obligations to the people of Garthdee. He noted that as it stood, residents would never forgive RGU for their broken promises made in writing, and he suspected they would be an outcast in the eyes of the community groups and of those who lived in Garthdee. He noted that while they might exist within Garthdee, they would not be partners or part of the community.

Mr Murray added that he suspected that local Councillors and Aberdeen City Council as a whole would feel the wrath of Garthdee residents if a solution could not be found. He noted that he appreciated the predicament the Council was in as it would be difficult to be seen to be giving the Garthdee community preferential treatment, but nevertheless, he felt that sometimes exceptions must be made. He advised that plans were ongoing within the community to create a sustained, significant and hard-hitting campaign that rallied the people of Garthdee to fight what he felt was an injustice, but suggested that it would be more prudent if a compromise could be achieved which matched the promises made by RGU over a decade ago.

Mr Murray stated that the solution was simple, and that RGU needed to come back with an offer which, while it might not be ideal, would satisfy the vast majority of people in the community, namely for RGU to offer a minimum of three years' administration costs to allow a transition period, following which residents could decide whether to retain the CPZ and pay for it, or for it to be removed in its entirety. Mr Murray concluded by asking that the Council did not impose its will on local people, and that it let them decide, through consultation with the entire community and not only specific streets within the community, noting that it impacted everyone in Garthdee.

Members then asked questions of the deputation.

The Committee resolved:-

to thank the deputations for their contributions.

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MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 3 SEPTEMBER 2024

3. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 3 September 2024 for approval.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

4. The Committee had before it the business planner as prepared by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance.

During Members' questions to officers on the planner, there was mention of Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and therefore, the Convener made a transparency statement that he was a member of NHS Grampian Board.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in relation to item 4 (Den Burn Restoration Project), to note that officers anticipated that it might be possible to report to Committee in March 2025;
- (ii) in relation to item 10 (Active Travel Routes around Schools), to note that officers intended to present the report on this item to Committee in January 2025;
- (iii) in relation to item 15 (North East Scotland Active Travel Network Review), to note that officers would circulate a service update to Members in the next few weeks;
- (iv) to request that officers circulate a service update to Members outwith the meeting in respect of (a) the latest position in respect of the planning application for parking at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary; (b) discussions regarding possible installation of charging points at home locations, for staff who took vehicles home overnight; and (c) on the procurement for the wider rollout of charging points;
- (v) to note the reasons set out in the planner for the various delayed reports;
- (vi) to agree to remove items 13 (Nature Data: Outcomes of a Citywide Collaboration); 18 (Macaulay Drive Aberdeen); 35 (A93 Peterculter to Aberdeen Multi-Modal Corridor Study) and 65 (Bus Partnership Fund Grants Service Update); and
- (vii) to otherwise note the planner.

**NET ZERO, ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT PERFORMANCE REPORT -
CORS/24/297**

5. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Corporate Services which presented the status of appropriate key performance measures relating to the services falling within its remit.

The report recommended:-

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that the Committee note the report and provide comments and observations on the performance information contained in the report Appendix A.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Environmental Manager and Roads Operation Manager would provide information to Members outwith the meeting in respect of the nature of complaints which had led to the rise in figures set out on pages 41 and 45 of the reports, as well as any common themes;
- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer – Operations would circulate a recent article to Members outwith the meeting in respect of Energy from Waste; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the report.

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6. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Corporate Services which presented the annual report of the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee to enable Members to provide comment on the data contained within.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) provide comments and observations on the data contained within the annual report; and
- (b) note the annual report of the Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that there would be consideration of any Terms of Reference which had not been utilised as part of the annual Scheme of Governance Review and through the Governance Reference Group; and
- (ii) to otherwise note the report.

CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT 2023-24 - CR&E/24/282

7. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director City Regeneration and Environment which sought approval of the statutory Climate Change Report (CCR) covering the period 2023/24, which was required to be submitted to the Scottish Government, to ensure compliance with the requirements of Part 4 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) approve the Climate Change Report 2023/24, as detailed in Appendix 1 and instruct the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to submit the report to the Scottish Government prior to the reporting deadline of 30 November 2024;

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- (b) instruct the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to publish the Climate Change Report on the Council's website; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to align the reporting periods and reporting date for both the annual Climate Change and Natural Environment Reports and to explore the potential to combine these into a single report.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would investigate the data to ascertain the percentage of short-haul flights which had been within the UK and advise Members of this information outwith the meeting;
- (ii) in relation to page 95 of the report, to note that officers would provide information to Members outwith the meeting in respect of the location of the photovoltaic installation which had been installed to generate solar power, as well as any plans for solar panels in other buildings; and
- (iii) to approve the recommendations.

REVOCATION OF ANDERSON DRIVE CORRIDOR AND WELLINGTON ROAD AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS (AQMAS) AND AMENDMENT OF CITY CENTRE AQMA - CORS/24/278

8. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Corporate Services which sought approval to revoke the Anderson Drive and Wellington Road Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAS) and amend the City Centre AQMA to omit particulates (PM10).

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the compliance with national PM10 and NO2 national air quality objectives in the Anderson Drive and Wellington Road Air AQMAS and compliance with the PM10 objective in the City Centre AQMA;
- (b) approve the revocation of the Anderson Drive and Wellington Road AQMAS and amendment of the City Centre AQMA to omit PM10; and
- (c) instruct the Interim Chief Officer - Governance to commence statutory procedures to formally revoke and amend the AQMAS.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

WELLINGTON ROAD JUNCTION IMPROVEMENTS (WRJI) – PROGRESS REPORT - CR&E/24/299

9. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director City Regeneration and Environment which (a) provided an update on progress to date; (b) outlined the outcome of the Wellington Road Junction Improvements (WRJI) Design Manual for

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Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 2 Route Option Assessment Report; and (c) advised on the next steps in development.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 2 Route Option Assessment report at Appendix 1;
- (b) note the relationships between the Wellington Road Junction Improvement Scheme and the ongoing development of the Aberdeen South Harbour Link Road project, which was currently progressing through the detailed planning and design process;
- (c) note the linkages between the Wellington Road Junction Improvement project and the routing of Aberdeen Rapid Transit as agreed by Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee on 11 June 2024;
- (d) agree the preferred option (K) outlined in the DMRB Stage 2 report and instruct the Chief Officer - Capital to progress further development of the preferred option including undertaking a tailored Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Stage 3 Scheme Assessment; and
- (e) instruct the Chief Officer - Capital and the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to investigate funding opportunities for the future development and implementation of the project and report an Outline Business Case and conclusion of Stage 3 Scheme Assessment to the Finance and Resources Committee in Autumn 2025.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

FUTURE OPERATION OF CONTROLLED PARKING ZONES Y AND YY (GARTHDEE AND KAIMHILL) - CR&E/24/313

10. With reference to article 12 of the minute of its meeting of 27 March 2024, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director City Regeneration and Environment which presented the outcome of engagement with Robert Gordon University (RGU) and the community “to seek to agree on a framework for the period after the ten years that will be acceptable to all and will meet the needs of the Community” following the end of RGU commitments to fund the management of the Garthdee/Kaimhill controlled parking zones (CPZ) Y and YY.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note that discussions were undertaken by officers with Robert Gordon University (RGU), community representatives and local Members;
- (b) note that RGU provided options for a 3 or 5 year transition period, part-funded by the Council, reliant on the Council not charging residents for permits during this period;

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- (c) note the community representatives response to the suggested transition period in section 3.4 of the report;
- (d) note the implications of not charging for resident permits for the 3 or 5 year period, as set out in the report;
- (e) agree that implementation of a transition period was not a feasible option and should not form part of the informal consultation which was to be carried out on the future of CPZ Y and YY;
- (f) note that the Chief Officer - Operations would now undertake the informal consultation previously instructed by this Committee in March 2024, as set out at section 3.8 of the report, and report back the results and recommendations in March 2025; and
- (g) instruct the Chief Officer – Finance to include expected changes in operating costs and income levels for Zones Y and YY in the budget process for 2025/26.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve recommendations (a), (b) and (c); and
 - (ii) to instruct the Chief Officer - Operations to invite RGU, local Members, and community representatives, including Garthdee Community Council, to a discussion to consider further options and to report back on this as part of the budget process to the Council Budget meeting on 5 March 2025.
- **COUNCILLOR IAN YUILL, Convener**