

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

21 April 2015

ABERDEEN, 21 April 2015. Minute of Meeting of the PETITIONS COMMITTEE.
Present:- Councillor Donnelly, Convener; Councillor Carle, Vice-Convener;
 Councillor George Adam, the Lord Provost; and Councillors Cormie, Delaney,
 Dickson, Graham, Jaffrey, MacGregor, Malik, Nathan Morrison and Stuart.

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be located at the following link:-

<http://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=484&MId=3475&Ver=4>

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.

A TREE FOR EVERY CITIZEN / DEER CULL DISCLOSURE REQUEST

1. The Committee had before it the following petition which had been submitted by Ms Suzanne Kelly:-
 "A Tree For Every Citizen / Deer Cull Disclosure Request

We the undersigned petition Aberdeen City Council as follows:-

1. To immediately halt all planned deer culling in the city, at the very least until new population measurements can be taken. The SNH recent count shows a very low number of animals. We do not believe that having the small population which SNH guidelines recommend is viable for a healthy herd, we cite the previous larger number of animals on Tullos Hill (for instance) which existed for decades;
2. To explain how the SNH guidelines that are being used on Tullos, allowing for only 4-6 animals to be allowed to live on the hill, will result in a healthy herd and healthy gene pool. We remind the city that the SNH guidelines regarding deer are just that - guidelines, and there is no legal reason to follow them to the letter. The number of animals city wide, where possible by location, should be shared with the public;
3. To actively work with Police Scotland to detect and deter further illegal poaching, as happened on Tullos Hill in January of this year;
4. To erect deer crossing warning signs to motorists in strategic spots. The city seems to claim deer were indicated in 30 vehicle accidents recently, but no signs give motorists any warning of potential hot spots. Such signs are used to good effect elsewhere in the UK and throughout Europe. The city has indicated 'people ignore signs' - we feel that is not an acceptable way to try and prevent accidents. We note the city uses numerous signs directing motorists which are heeded; and

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5. To fully disclose all expenses the city has incurred in the last 8 years with regard to deer culling, tree planting, related consultants, fencing, herbicides, monies paid to the SNH, the Forestry Commission - any and all costs which planting during all phases of A Tree For Every Citizen scheme. The city is also to disclose any and all risk matrices created for the herbicides used (and indicate what chemicals were used) and the deer culling - or indicate whether such risk assessments were carried out.

The city was made aware of thousands of objections to the deer cull on Tullos Hill, which was carried out several years ago to aid the 'Tree For Every Citizen' scheme and to implement non-binding SNH guidelines. The city not only proceeded, but it insisted that the methodology it pursued was good value for money. Disclosing the requested information and carrying out the requested actions will determine the facts."

The Convener explained the process and invited the lead petitioner to present her case to the Committee.

Ms Kelly, the lead petitioner, spoke to the petition, by way of presentation, and advised that over 250 residents called for the following action: (a) the immediate cessation of the arbitrary deer culling in Aberdeen city – at a minimum until a count was undertaken; (b) the complete disclosure of all costs associated with the 'Tree for Every Citizen scheme' across the city; and (c) a comfort letter should be sought from Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forestry Commission to avoid any further taxpayer liability for this scheme. Ms Kelly spoke to each of the aforementioned requests wherein she advised of the background to and rationale for each.

Officers advised on the current position with deer culling and the Tree for Every Citizen scheme, explaining in particular that it was a statutory duty for all local authorities to produce a deer management plan and that Aberdeen City Council's plan was currently being drafted and would be reported to a future meeting of the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee. Officers confirmed that the plan would address the queries raised in the petition.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in respect of point (1) of the petition, to note that a deer management plan, which would address these queries, would be submitted to the Council's Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee later this year;
- (ii) in respect of point (2) of the petition, to note that the deer management plan would estimate the population as a snapshot and assess the impact of deer on habitats, deer welfare (from weights, deformities etc), damage to crops, public safety etc and that this would also explain how officers implemented SNH guidelines;

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- (iii) in respect of point (3) of the petition, to note that officers continued to work with Police Scotland to detect and deter further illegal poaching and that this was an operational matter;
- (iv) in respect of point (4) of the petition, to request officers to report on deer crossing warning signs to a future meeting of the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee;
- (v) in respect of point (5) of the petition, to request officers to provide the information requested to the petitioner; and
- (vi) to thank the petitioner for her attendance and presentation.

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PELICAN CROSSING ON GREENBRAE DRIVE, ABERDEEN

2. The Committee had before it the following petition which had been submitted by Ms Louise Ellis on behalf of Greenbrae Parent Council:-

“We the undersigned appeal Aberdeen City Council to install a pelican crossing on Greenbrae Drive, Aberdeen to ensure the safety of our children”.

The Convener explained the process and invited the lead petitioner to present their case to the Committee.

Mrs Gill Bruce, spoke to the petition on behalf of Greenbrae Parent Council and advised that it had been brought to their attention that the current road traffic system at the top of Greenbrae Drive (at the junction with Dubford Road) was dangerous for children.

She explained that the road layout was changed in 2014 and this meant that traffic travelling down Greenbrae Drive now had to give way to traffic from the opposite direction. Despite this change to the road layout, cars still travelled on the road at some speed and it was also causing confusion for children crossing the road. The present system led children into a false sense of security as when they came to cross the road they saw that the traffic in one direction was stopping and they often presumed that the other side was going to do the same and this was not always the case.

She advised that Greenbrae Parent Council felt strongly that a pelican crossing should be installed at that location on Greenbrae Drive to make it safer for children crossing from the Greenbrae estate (where Greenbrae Primary was situated). She also highlighted that the new housing developments at Dubford and Shielhill were creating additional traffic in the area and therefore it was expected that the amount of vehicles on the road was only going to continue to increase.

Officers provided a detailed background to the design of the current traffic management system on Greenbrae Drive and the rationale for this.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to request officers to report on the terms of the petition, as well as on all traffic management options at the location on Greenbrae Drive, Aberdeen to a future meeting of the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee; and
- (ii) to thank the petitioner for her attendance and presentation.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 24 APRIL 2014

3. The Committee had before the minute of its previous meeting of 24 April 2014.

The Committee resolved:-

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to approve the minute as an accurate record.

INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN PETITIONS

4. With reference to article 3 of the minute of its meeting of 24 April 2014, the Committee had before it a report by the Acting Director of Corporate Governance which proposed ways of involving young people (those under 18) in the Council's petitions process.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) agree that petitions submitted by young people be accepted under the petitions process where they have a minimum of five signatories which have been verified either by the school to which the pupils belong or the Youth Council;
- (b) agree that Education and Children's Services, pupil councils and the Youth Council be asked to support and promote the petitions process; and
- (c) recommend to Council that it establish a small sub committee of five members which could visit schools to hear petitions to avoid the need for schools to arrange visits during the school day to present petitions to this Committee at the Town House .

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

- **COUNCILLOR ALAN DONNELLY**, Convener.