

## STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY

Town House, Aberdeen  
FRIDAY, 18<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2009

**Present:-** Councillor Argyle, Chairperson; and Councillors Cassie (as substitute for Councillor Hunter), G. Clark (as substitute for Councillor Pratt), Cormie, Dean, Jaffrey, Merson, Milne, Stewart, Sullivan and Webster.

**Apologies:-** - Councillors Hunter and Pratt.

**Officers:-** **Strategic Development Planning Team:** Strategic Development Plan Manager; Senior Planner and Planner.  
**Aberdeen City Council:** Head of Planning and Infrastructure, Committee Manager, Senior Research Officer and Research Officer.  
**Aberdeenshire Council:** Corporate Director of Planning and Environmental Services, Corporate Finance Manager, Policy Performance and Research Officer, Policy and Environment Manager; and Team Leader, Sustainability, Information and Research.

### STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY (SDPA) MEMBERSHIP, CONFIRMATION OF CHAIR AND APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

1. The Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) had before it a report by the Clerk to the Authority which advised members of the decision of Aberdeen City Council's Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee of 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2009, to replace Councillor Scott Cassie on the SDPA with Councillor John Stewart. The report also provided advice in terms of the SDPA's Standing Orders regarding the office of Chair of the SDPA and the appointment of a Vice-Chair.

The report explained that Aberdeen City Council's Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2009, had before it a request from the Liberal Democratic Group on the Council, that Councillor John Stewart replace Councillor Cassie on the SDPA. The report advised that this was agreed by the Committee and adheres to Standing Order 2.2.2 of the SDPA (Appointment of Members and Officers by the Member Councils).

The report advised that in terms of the SDPA Standing Orders (Standing Orders 2.3 and 2.4.2) (a) the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority should not be from the same Council and they should hold office for a period of two years from the date of the first meeting; and at the end of the Chair's term of office, the Vice-Chair will automatically assume the role of Chair and a new Vice-Chair will be elected; and (b) that when a vacancy occurs in the case of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall assume the office of Chair in succession to the previous Chair, shall continue in office until the previously anticipated expiry of the out-going Chair's term of office and thereafter shall continue as the new Chair for a period of two years in accordance with Standing Order 2.3.

The report advised that therefore Councillor Peter Argyle has assumed the office of Chair in succession to the previous Chair (Councillor Cassie) as of 2<sup>nd</sup> September,

2009, and, under the Standing Orders shall continue in that position until September, 2012.

The report advised that in terms of the SDPA Standing Orders (Standing Order 2.4.3) where a vacancy occurs in the case of the Vice-Chair (as is now the case), the SDPA shall appoint a new Vice-Chair at the next or subsequent meeting of the SDPA who shall continue in office until the previous anticipated expiry of the outgoing Vice-Chair's term of office.

The report advised that therefore in terms of that Standing Order, the next or subsequent meeting of the SDPA is today's meeting, therefore, the SDPA should nominate a member (from Aberdeen City Council) to be the Vice-Chair of the Authority. The report advised that under the Standing Orders, the new Vice-Chair would fill that position until September, 2012 and then assume the position of Chair.

**The report recommended:-**

that the SDPA –

- (a) notes the decision of Aberdeen City Council to replace Councillor Scott Cassie with Councillor John Stewart on the SDPA;
- (b) notes that Councillor Peter Argyle has assumed the office of Chair of the SDPA as of 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2009; and
- (c) nominates a member (from Aberdeen City Council) to the office of Vice-Chair of the Authority.

The SDPA then heard the Clerk request nominations for the office of Vice-Chair.

Councillor John Stewart nominated Councillor Dean to be the Vice-Chair of the SDPA which was seconded by Councillor Cormie.

**The Authority resolved:-**

- (i) to appoint Councillor Dean as the Vice-Chair of the Authority; and
- (ii) to welcome Councillor John Stewart to his first meeting of the Authority.

The Authority then heard the Chair explain that today was the first anniversary of the SDPA and explained that he was happy to become the Authority's Chairperson but regretted the circumstances surrounding his appointment.

The Chair then paid tribute, on behalf of the Authority, to Councillor Cassie for the work he did as Chair and paid tribute to his leadership in the progression of the Structure Plan which was approved by Ministers without modification. The Chair also thanked Councillor Cassie not only for his role as Chair of the SDPA but also as Chair of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee.

The Authority then heard Councillor Cassie who congratulated Councillor Argyle on his appointment of Chair of the Authority and thanked him for his kind words and expressed gratitude to the members of the SDPA, and officers for their support and help in producing the Structure Plan. He paid tribute to Councillor Argyle for the role and support he gave him as his Vice-Chair.

## MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

2. The Authority had before it the minute of meeting of the Authority of 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2009.

### **The Authority resolved:-**

to approve the minute.

## STRUCTURE PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

3. With reference to Article 3 of the minute of meeting of the Authority of 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2009, the Authority had before it a report by the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Manager, which advised members of progress on the Structure Plan since the last meeting of the Authority.

The report outlined the progress made in relation to the Structure Plan and outlined that Scottish Ministers approved the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009 on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2009 with no modifications. The report explained that the Structure Plan came into force on 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2009. The report advised that the Plain English Campaign had confirmed that the Structure Plan is the only structure plan in the UK to have been given a crystal mark.

The report explained that the printing of the approved Structure Plan is likely to cost less than £5,000 and this had been budgeted for in the current financial year and it is estimated that the development of the website will cost around £2,000 which will be covered by the Scottish Government Start-Up Grant.

### **The report recommended:-**

that the Authority –

- (a) welcome the approval of the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan by Scottish Ministers;
- (b) agree the costs detailed in the report; and
- (c) otherwise note the content of the report.

### **The Authority resolved:-**

- (i) to approve the recommendations contained in the report; and
- (ii) to thank the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Manager; his team; and planning teams in both local authorities for the work in submitting the Structure Plan to Ministers and to congratulate officers on the quality of the Plan and the clarity of it as demonstrated by the crystal mark.

The Authority then heard Dr. Gore on behalf of all the officers involved in the preparation of the Structure Plan express her thanks to the Elected Members of the Authority for their help in the development of the Plan.

## PLANNING UPDATES

4. With reference to Article 2 of the minute of meeting of the Authority of 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2009, the Authority had before it a report by the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Manager, which advised Members of development plan progress within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils and other planning issues of interest to the SPDA.

The report provided information on the SDPA Annual Report 2008/09; a proposed Communication Strategy Workshop; new Development Management regulations; Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route; Climate Change Act 2009 and Planning Act; the Town Centre Regeneration Fund; Aberdeenshire Council's Core Paths Plan – Response to Consultation; Scotland's Zero Waste Plan – Consultation Programme; and Scottish Planning Policy (Part 3) document.

In relation to the consultation document "Scotland's Zero Waste Plan" and the Scottish Planning Policy (Part 3) consultation, the report explained that responses were required to these documents prior to the next meeting of the SDPA and therefore responses would be developed by officers in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair and sent on behalf of the Authority accordingly.

**The Authority resolved:-**

- (i) to note the content of the report; and
- (ii) to agree to delegate authority to officers in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority to agree a response to the Scottish Government's Zero Waste Plan and the Scottish Planning Policy (Part 3) consultations.

**NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 2**

5. The Authority had before it a report by the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Manager, which advised Members of the publication of the National Planning Framework 2 (NPF2) and associated proposed action programme, indicating how it relates to the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan before outlining the SDPA's role in implementation.

The report advised that NPF2 identifies Aberdeen City and Shire as an area that enjoys a good quality of life with full employment, high incomes and a growing economy and the Framework sets out the challenges and opportunities facing the city region and states that the primary aim is to grow and diversify the economy, maintain and improve the quality of life in the region and make sure that there are enough people, jobs and facilities.

The report explained that NPF2 designates fourteen projects as national developments which Ministers consider essential to the delivery of the spatial strategy in NPF2. Three of the national developments detailed in the Framework are located in Aberdeen City and Shire, these being:-

- enhanced facilities at Aberdeen Airport and supporting improvements in surface transport and other infrastructure;
- new non-nuclear baseload capacity at Boddam power plant; and
- upgrade of the East Coast electricity transmission line to 400kV. These are all identified in the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan.

The report had appended to it an edited extract from the NPF Action Programme which identifies those actions relevant to the area where the SDPA and Nestrans are identified and the two organisations are already progressing many of the actions identified in the programme or are preparing to in the near future. The report explained that the Strategic Development Plan Team and Nestrans will work with the Scottish Government and the other partners to take forward the identified actions, and it is proposed to report on progress on a six monthly basis to the SDPA to monitor its input to the delivery of NPF2.

The report explained that the Scottish Government requested any initial comments on the proposed Action Programme and it is suggested that the following six observations be made in response to this request:-

- it would be helpful if the Action Programme on the Scottish Government website were available in a different format as the current document is difficult to use and impossible to print;
- referencing actions would be easier if they were numbered;
- as of 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2009, the North East Assembly in England ceased to exist. It is understood that a similar but different role is now been formed by the Association of North East Councils and One North East;
- references to Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future (ACSEF) need to consistently reflect the partnership's change in name from Forum to Future;
- it is suggested that Nestrans and/or Regional Transport Partnerships should be identified as delivery bodies under a number of additional actions, particularly "promoting active travel" and "improving air quality"; and
- the milestones for the delivery of the upgrade to the East Coast Transmission line to 400kV are extremely vague and yet the delivery of this project is critical to the generation of renewable energy in Scotland.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Authority –

- (a) welcome the publication of the NPF2 and action programme;
- (b) pass on the observations outlined in paragraph 5.7 to the Scottish Government;
- (c) engage with partners to further define and deliver the actions; and
- (d) receive reports on a six monthly basis which indicate the status of the five actions attributed to the SDPA by name.

**The Authority resolved:-**

to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

**HOUSING MARKET ACTIVITY**

6. With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of the Authority of 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2009, the Authority had before it a report by the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Manager, which updated Members on activity within the Aberdeen City and Shire Housing market.

The report outlined various different types of information regarding the housing market and advised that a number of key messages can be drawn from the information presented in the report, this being:-

- Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire appear to be following the Scottish market in terms of house prices and transactions, although the drop experienced hasn't been as significant to date;
- housing transactions are at their lowest level this decade;
- housing prices are still significantly higher than those for Scotland or the UK as a whole; and
- new house starts and completions have not declined to the same extent as elsewhere in Scotland.

The report explained that the implementation of the new Structure Plan is the most appropriate means of enabling the area to continue to out-perform much of the rest

of Scotland in the medium term, helping to retain jobs in the construction industry and the associated economic activity.

**The Authority resolved:-**

to note the report.

**HOUSING LAND AUDIT 2009**

7. With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of the Authority of 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2009, the Authority had before it a report by the Director of Planning and Environmental Services (Aberdeenshire Council) and Head of Planning and Infrastructure (Aberdeen City Council), which advised Members of the results of the 2009 Housing Land Audit (as appended to the report).

The report advised that the purpose of the Annual Housing Land Audit (HLA) is to measure the quantity of land available for new housing in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. The report explained that at the base date for the Audit (1<sup>st</sup> January, 2009), the Structure Plan in force was the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Structure Plan 2001 (NEST). The report advised that both Scottish Government SPP3 and NEST Policy 7 required that a minimum effective supply of five years worth of land should be maintained at all times. The report advised that although a new Structure Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, this was after the audit date and will be taken into account in the 2010 Audit.

The Authority then heard Councillor Merson explain that he was aware that one of his constituents had raised a series of questions through officers at Aberdeenshire Council around the new structure plan, strategic forecasts and housing land audit.

**The Authority resolved:-**

- (i) to note the contents of 2009 Housing Land Audit; and
- (ii) to note that all Members of the Authority would receive answers to the questions mentioned by Councillor Merson as detailed above.

**SDPA BUDGET MONITORING 2009/10 AND BUDGET PROPOSALS 2010/11 TO 2012/13**

8. With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of the Authority of 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2008, the Authority had before it a report by the Treasurer to the Authority, which provided details to Members on the budget monitoring for the Authority for the period to June, 2009 and asked that the Authority agree a budget for 2010/11 and to future note the budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

The report explained that the budget monitoring details for the Authority were appended at Appendix 1 to the report whilst the proposed budget for 2010/11 was attached as Appendix 2 to the report. Appendix 1 to the report showed a forecast outturn in line with the budget and the costs incurred to date have not indicated any adverse pressures in the period to June, 2009.

The report explained that budgets for two further years, 2011/12 and 2012/13 were also detailed in Appendix 2.

The report explained that there was a balance of funding which remained unspent at the end of 2008/09 and in the draft accounts for 2008/09 submitted to the Board in

June, 2009, this stood at £194,000. The report explained that this had not been reflected in this budget in full but a contribution from this sum has been identified in line 19 of the draft budget to allow the overall level of service to be maintained while ensuring the contribution from partner Councils is maintained within their expected budget levels. The report explained that the Authority will note that this practice is not sustainable in the long run and unless a cut in service levels is made, Council funding may be inadequate to meet costs. The report advised that further proposals for the use of the remainder of balances may be brought back to the Authority at a later date.

The report explained that the budget changes proposed are minimal and the major element of the Authority's budget is concerned with staff costs with no movement expected in establishment numbers in the period under review.

The Authority then heard Alan Wood, representing the Treasurer to the Authority, explain that the Authority should note that the budget for 2010/11 would be provisional at that stage and the Authority would have to refer the decision to the two local authorities requesting that they consider it when deliberating their own budgets and he further explained that the Authority should note that the budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13 would also be provisional at this stage.

**The Authority resolved:-**

- (i) to agree a provisional budget for 2010/11 (as detailed in the report) and refer this decision to the two local authorities requesting that they consider it when deliberating their own budgets;
- (ii) to note the provisional budgets for 2011/12 and 2012/13; and
- (iii) to note the overall budget monitoring situation and agree that further reports will be brought forward to future meetings on the use of balances as the position is clarified.

**SDPA FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

9. With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of the Authority of 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2009, the Authority had before it a report by the Treasurer to the Authority, which sought the adoption of Financial Regulations by the SDPA.

The report explained that the Financial Regulations of the SDPA provide a framework and guidance to assist staff to properly manage the financial affairs of the SDPA and they apply to each member, employee and anyone acting on its behalf. The report advised that the purpose of the Financial Regulations is to provide security of assets and to ensure that the use of resources is legal, properly authorised and that value for money is ensured.

The report explained that the practice for the SDPA so far has been to apply the Financial Regulations of Aberdeenshire Council as this was sensible and pragmatic since the role of Treasurer currently rests with Aberdeenshire Council and staff supporting the SDPA are familiar with these Regulations.

The report explained, however, that the SDPA requires to adopt its own regulations and the draft regulations detailed in the appendix to the report had been developed from the Aberdeenshire Regulations had been tailored to suit the SDPA's particular situation. The report explained that the general principles of the document will be largely consistent with a similar document that Aberdeen City Council relies upon.

**The Authority resolved:-**

- (i) to note the practice of applying the Financial Regulations of Aberdeenshire Council; and
- (ii) to approve the use of the new Financial Regulations (as detailed in the appendix to the report) from this day.

- **PETER ARGYLE, Chairperson.**