

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Waste Strategy Working Group** held in Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday 23 April 2018 at 3.05 pm.

Present:-

Mr I Cockburn
Mr A Henderson

Mrs T Robertson

In attendance:-

Mr W Gilfillan, Director of Community Services
Mr M MacLeod, Head of Planning and Environment, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mr A Summers, Head of Environmental and Amenity Services, Community Services
Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager, Finance Service
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Service

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Mr J Gray, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr H Morrison, Mr G Ross and Ms M Smith.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Meeting – 29 March 2018

The Working Group **NOTED** draft Minutes of Meeting of the Waste Strategy Working Group held on 29 March 2018 which was to be submitted, for approval, to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 17 May 2018.

Arising from the Minute, Item 7 (Officer Working Group – Update on Progress), in advance of the City of Inverness Area Briefing, the Provost and Depute Provost had been updated on progress and the specifications required of any site chosen in terms of carbon foot print and accessibility.

4. Draft Report to Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee

There had been circulated Draft Report by the Director of Community Services which was to be submitted for consideration by the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 17 May 2018.

The report outlined the content of the study undertaken by SLR, highlighted the costs and the 3 options open to the Council to manage it's waste over the next 25 years, namely:-

Option 1 – Do minimum

Option 2 – A centralised Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) recovering recyclates and exporting RDF

Option 3 - Constructing an Energy from Waste (EfW) facility collocated on the same site as an MRF, using the Refuse Derived Fuel generated there.

In addition, information was included as to how the Council would deliver whichever option was selected. Although recommendations had not been detailed, it was proposed to suggest that the Committee agree that Community Services continues to make arrangements to address the landfill ban which was to come into force on 1 January 2021, that Options 1 or 2 be pursued as interim arrangements following the introduction of the ban and with the third recommendation looking at long term arrangements for the Council for the next 25 years.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, as to the locations of EfW sites. At present none were operational in Scotland although some were under construction in the Central Belt, the majority of the rest being located in the North of England. The lack of EfW plants meant that there were no outlets for Highland's waste at present and the cost involved in the short term would be high;
- the application for an EfW plant at Invergordon was still being considered by the Reporter and the decision could still be sometime ahead;
- regulations were changing quickly and there did not seem any other option in the long term but to consider building an EfW plant and for work to take place in this regard as a matter of urgency;
- suitable waste material was already available in Highland and the very least the Council could do was to transform it to a suitable state whereby it could be used as a fuel;
- "as is" costs had been provided and, over a 25 year period, taking into account what the Council was already spending, there was very little difference;
- the location had to be near to the centre where most of the material was produced i.e. Inverness;
- a commercial waste recycling facility were already based in Longman where baling was already taking place and a similar facility could be provided in the vicinity for the Council's waste;
- the positive approach adopted by Scandinavian countries to EfW plants was highlighted and a similar approach needed to be communicated to the general public together with the consequences of not doing so locally;
- clarification was sought, and provided, in relation to the timetable circulated, that a scoping exercise had been carried out by the Development and Infrastructure Service identifying suitable locations. Although no formal decision had been made, a planning application had been drawn up for a generic facility which could be located anywhere; and
- there was merit in this Cross Party Working Group continuing.

The Working Group **NOTED** the Draft Report and **AGREED** to recommend to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee that:-

- Community Services continues to make arrangements to address the landfill ban which comes into force on 1 January 2021;
- Option 2 be pursued as an interim arrangement following the introduction of the ban;
- Officers continue to look at long term arrangements for the Council for the next 25 years; and
- the Waste Strategy Working Group continue.

5. Officer Working Group - Update on Progress

The Director of Community Services provided an update on progress of the Officer Working Group including:-

a. Finance

There had been circulated a Briefing Note providing a comparison of “as is” Waste Disposal costs against baseline data in Full Business Case, based at today’s prices.

In particular, attention was drawn to the relatively modest increase in costs over a 25 year period of Options 2 and 3. It was cautioned, however, as the Council did not have access to the financial models, the costs had not undertaken analysis for optimism bias or delays in implementation. The new proposals would however avoid the need to pay landfill tax but the potential alternative future tax arrangements were also unknown.

b. Planning

- i. Site criteria
- ii. Development Control process

The site search had indicated that a central location was more appropriate and an update was provided as to the viability of particular locations, the East Longman proving the optimum site. This land was in the ownership of the Common Good and, if final determination identified this site and development took place, there would be a financial gain to the Fund. A generic building was being designed which would have the same characteristics regardless of location and preparatory work was underway with the Development Management process. The intention was to obtain Pre-Application advice in May and there was likely to be a requirement for a Pre-Application Notice which, once the site was concluded, would involve public consultation over 3 months, prior to a formal application being submitted.

c. Land acquisition / Economic Development (Development and Regeneration)

- i. Confirm availability of suitable sites based on parameters identified

This had been superseded by the site identification and sites had been narrowed down to the Longman, at present. If this proceeded, a valuation would be sought to set a rental/lease.

d. Risk

e. Design

Architects had been involved to look at the external appearance of the building in terms of scale and design.

f. Communications Strategy

It was cautioned that concern might be raised by the Press about an EfW plant. It was important therefore, as soon as the City of Inverness Area Members’ Briefing took place, to proactively manage communication and highlight the positive aspects associated with EfW.

6. Briefing for Inverness Members

The Working Group **NOTED** that a Briefing for the City of Inverness Area Members is scheduled to take place on 24 April 2018.

The meeting ended at 3.50 p.m.