

**NORTHERN ROADS COLLABORATION JOINT COMMITTEE**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The National Roads Maintenance review in 2012 made 30 recommendations. 1 – 29 were generally operational management matters relating to good procurement, working practice etc. Argyll and Bute, like many local authorities were already applying or at the very least working towards 1 – 29 in the delivery of the roads service. The 30<sup>th</sup> recommendation (option 30 as it has become known) considered a single roads authority for the whole of Scotland. Option 30 was put to Council Leaders through COSLA who expressed concern regarding a dilution of local accountability should Option 30 be progressed. It was agreed that rather than progress with a single roads authority the existing 32 local authorities should deliver efficiencies through greater collaboration.
- 1.2 There were a number of good examples of collaboration in place in a number of areas prior to the review, through SCOTS and local arrangements. However, a number of work streams from SCOTS have been enhanced through the Roads Collaboration Programme, facilitated by the Improvement Service. Argyll and Bute have been involved with both the former south west and northern collaborative groups. The south west group has been superseded by the City Deal group.
- 1.3 A Formal Joint Committee has been formed by the northern group. Seven Councils have taken reports through Council (or appropriate governance committee). In May 2018 the first formal meeting of the Joint Committee took place in Aberdeen and Argyll and Bute's Councillor Ellen Morton took the Chair of the group. The Joint Committee has subsequently met in Lochgilphead and Elgin. The next format meeting with Elected Members and officers is scheduled for late June in Angus, venue to be confirmed. Officers regularly meet via Skype and video conference to progress business and share good practice. The member councils of the Northern Roads Collaboration are: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus Argyll and Bute, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highland and Moray. Orkney and Shetland councils have been part of the discussions around the Joint Committee but for the time being have not formally joined.
- 1.4 The main body of this report highlights some of the work that has been progressed through the Joint Committee of the Northern Roads Collaboration.

1.5 It is recommended that Members note this report.

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This report outlines work currently being taken within the Scottish public roads sector to explore and develop opportunities for greater collaboration between roads authorities and highlights how this is being taken forward in the north of Scotland.
- 2.2 This report also confirms that a Joint Committee of the Northern Roads Collaboration has been formally established.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that Members note this report.

**4.0 DETAILS**

- 4.1 Over time many roads authorities have introduced a range of local and national collaborative and shared service/capacity initiatives, recognising the value of working with others to improve resilience and to reduce costs. Much of this work has been informal, but it does illustrate a positive culture of co-operation, and good starting point for more formal arrangements.
- 4.2 As the briefing indicates, there is an increasing expectation of sharing and collaboration to deliver efficiencies within the Scottish roads sector. However, shared services arrangements need to comply with EU procurement rules.
- 4.3 An ageing workforce is a recognised concern within road services. This, coupled with a reduced workforce 'pool' of specialised skills, and difficulties in succession planning, means that it is necessary to address workforce planning strategies now to provide a resilient workforce in the future. There is a need to look at opportunities to pool resources, up-skill staff, encourage new people to work in this service area, and increase local employment opportunities at all levels as part of future collaborative work.

- 4.4 The ability of local authorities to work together is considered essential, to deliver long term efficiencies whilst providing resilience in this key frontline service for Scotland's communities.
- 4.5 A Formal Joint Committee has been formed. Seven Councils have taken reports through Council (or appropriate governance committee). In May 2018 the first formal meeting of the Joint Committee took place in Aberdeen and Argyll and Bute's Councillor Ellen Morton took the Chair of the group. The Joint Committee has subsequently met in Lochgilphead and Elgin. The next format meeting with Elected Members and officers is scheduled for late June in Angus, venue to be confirmed. Officers regularly meet via Skype and video conference to progress business and share good practice. The member councils of the Northern Roads Collaboration are: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus Argyll and Bute, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highland and Moray. Orkney and Shetland councils have been part of the discussions around the Joint Committee but for the time being have not formally joined.
- 4.6 The Joint Committee have been working on a range of initiatives including:
- Joint Designated Person (DP) functions for marine activity.
  - Procurement and use of a dredging unit owned by Moray Council.
  - Sharing good practice for the Port Marine Safety Code.
  - Alternative surfacing materials, including plastics in asphalt.
  - Joint working with Transport Scotland and their operating companies.
  - Shared use of technical design staff.
  - Joint training, establishing a training academy, mainly through third party suppliers.
  - Joint procurement of road surface friction testing (SCRIM).
- 4.7 Local authorities within the Joint Committee have flexibility in terms of which initiatives they wish to participate in.

#### GOVERNANCE MODEL

- 4.8 Officers had carried out an initial options appraisal of available governance models, supported by the Roads Collaboration Programme team, including external legal guidance. The process followed has been endorsed by the Society of Local Authority Lawyers & Administrators in Scotland (SOLAR). A number of models had been considered. The model adopted is co-operation through joint committee.
- 4.9 This model is based on the strand of European law which permits public authorities to enter into arrangements for collaboration and co-operation without those arrangements having to be the subject of a procurement process.
- 4.10 Out with the status quo ('do nothing') option, there were five possible options considered within the two models outlined:
- Joint committee
  - Joint board
  - Company limited by guarantee

- Company limited by shares
- Limited liability partnership

4.11 Having formally adopted the Joint Committee this does not preclude any other joint working with say Transport Scotland, or other local authorities. Argyll and Bute Council currently are part of a consortium of south west Scottish roads authorities for the procurement of winter weather services. There are 12 other authorities sharing the same winter forecast contract. As part of the arrangement each authority receives bespoke forecasting through a single contract. Council officers regularly discuss collaborative opportunities with a range of partners.

4.12 The Joint Committee will produce an update report over the summer of this year which will be presented to the first available Environment Development & Infrastructure Committee as a further update on the work and successes of the Joint Committee.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

5.1 Appropriate sharing and collaboration brings benefits to the parties involved, through efficiencies and by sharing resources. Argyll and Bute Council along with 6 other councils has formally 'signed up' to a Joint Committee. .

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

6.1	Policy	<p>Partner authorities are not obliged to enter into any sharing/collaboration. Each collaborative activity will be subject to a high level business case assessment prior to seeking approval from Elected Members.</p> <p>Policy decisions will remain with individual participating authorities.</p>
6.2	Financial	<p>The Joint Committee requires some limited financial contribution from partners to cover governance and financial support. This support is currently being provided by Aberdeenshire and Highland.</p> <p>Each collaborative activity will be subject to a high level business case assessment prior to seeking approval from Elected Members</p>
6.3	Legal	None
6.4	HR	<p>There are no immediate staffing implications arising. Future sharing implies staff working for/in partner authorities.</p>

6.5	Equalities/Fairer Scotland Duty	There are no equality implications arising from these proposals.
6.6	Risk	These proposals are designed to eliminate risk of sharing/collaborating which does not conform to EU procurement rules.
6.7	Customer Services	None

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June 2019

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