

A man with a shaved head and a friendly smile is wearing a bright yellow high-visibility jacket with reflective silver stripes. He is sitting inside a vehicle, with his arms crossed. The background shows the interior of the vehicle and a window looking out onto a dark, rainy day.

Connect

monthly

**February
2016**

True Grit

**Welcome
Aboard!**

New arrivals at Moray Council

**Tea Break
Selfies
Service Planning &
Strategy**



the **moray** council

Inside story



Dear colleagues

Our motto within Education and Social Care is “Ambitious to achieve excellence together” and as I visit schools, offices, libraries and other Education and Social Care facilities I not only see this plastered over the walls and on noticeboards, but I also see it being lived and breathed by teams right across Moray, working tirelessly with great ambition to provide excellent services. Often, this is against a very challenging backdrop.

Being ambitious for the people and communities we serve is essential in 21st Century Moray and we can only be truly ambitious and indeed, we can only truly succeed if we work in partnership with others. Since the start of 2016, I have had the pleasure of being involved in three major events which demonstrate effective, ambitious partnership working and how this can make a real difference to people's lives. Our Corporate Parenting conference outlined how all departments in the Council and other public sector corporate parents can successfully work together, break down barriers and make life better for those young people and young care leavers who most need our support. Hearing first-hand the experiences – positive and negative – of young care leavers provided a thought-provoking challenge to all of us to continue striving to work better in partnership so we can improve outcomes for these young people.

Our recent Locality Management conference was an opportunity for us to begin an important journey towards greater local responsibility and accountability for services and for improving outcomes for young people and their families, using local data to ensure a preventative approach, again working together as community partners with the ambition to make things better at the very heart of our endeavours.

Our third annual Early Years conference laid out our ambition to ensure Moray is the best place to grow up, again through effective and challenging partnership working, hopefully leading to improved outcomes in the future for our youngest citizens.

Finally, February 19th was Care Day and I was delighted to be shadowed for the day by one of our young care leavers. This individual really brought home to me why those of us in public service do what we do, what drives us, gets us out of bed in the morning, motivates us and inspires us. My young ‘shadowee’ taught me a great deal about why, even in the darkest of times, when budgets are reducing and resources are diminishing, we must never lose sight of our ambition, nor should we ever cease being ambitious for ourselves, our services and for others.

And by the way, I’m now an avid Twitter user so thanks for all the tweets and re-tweets! You can follow me [@laurencefindlay](#).

Laurence Findlay
Corporate Director (E&SC)

Feedback

If you’ve any news, views or pictures your 4500 colleagues might like to see the *Connect* team would love to hear from you.

Just email us at connectnews@moray.gov.uk

Editorial

February found the days growing longer, the nights getting shorter, and a few additions making their way to the look and feel of *Connect*. To welcome new team members and bid farewell to departing colleagues, we’re starting a ‘Welcome Aboard!’ feature, and as February had an extra day this year, if there were any Leap Year proposals we’d love to hear about them too!

As things start looking a bit greener outside, *Connect* is going greener inside – join the fun in our selfie competition doing something ‘green’ to save energy, save money and save the planet. Looking ahead, don’t forget to ‘spring’ forward to daylight savings time on Sunday 27th March (Easter Sunday) – now there’s a good way to save energy too – and we’ll see you again next month.

Carbon Connect



Earth Hour is an annual global celebration where people switch off their lights for one hour to show they care about the future of our planet. Earth Hour is not about how much energy is saved during the hour. It's a chance to put the highlight on the issues facing the planet and to think seriously about living more sustainability.

This year's celebrations will be on Saturday 19th March from 8.30pm – 9.30pm. To take part all you need to do is switch off your lights for that one hour.

We will be having our own Moray Council Earth Hour at work on **Wednesday 16th March**, look out for more information which will follow by e-mail.

Also, have a look at the World Wildlife Fund website for more information about Earth Hour <http://earthhour.wwf.org.uk/earth-hour/>

The Energy Team

A little  makes a big difference

Energy Saving Ideas?

We know you're an imaginative lot, so we're hoping you have some ideas on how the council can save more money on its energy bills. Our energy team have done a great job in getting this bill down to what it is today, but there may be other ways you know about. This could be in schools, workshops, offices or vehicles and plant.

Send your suggestions to *Connect* at connectnews@moray.gov.uk and the best one will featured in next months issue.

True Grit



Alex Smith

Richard Cameron

Ian Metcalfe

What is it like to be behind the wheel of one of Moray Council's heavy-duty gritters, ploughing through the deep snow on one of the UK's highest roads? Connect took a trip up the A939 to the snow-capped Lecht ski centre to find out.

The team responsible for maintaining the roads in the Lecht area is led by foreman Richard Cameron, who has worked for the Council for 33 years. Originally from Knockando, Richard started his career in Dufftown but has been working in the Lecht area for 15 years. His team include Alex Smith from Tomnavoulin and Ian Metcalfe from Tomintoul, who are all on 24-hour standby to provide emergency road clearance.

At 2,090 feet (645 metres) above sea level, Lecht is the busiest area for the Council's gritting teams. Deep in the Cairngorms National Park it can get covered with several feet of snow overnight, and the road through it needs to be kept open. Keeping this clear is important not only for local residents but also for the economy, as skiing and snow sports are worth £30 million a year to Scotland.

A typical day for the 80 roads maintenance crews in Moray starts at 5:45 am with a vehicle safety inspection of the 31-strong fleet. The Tomintoul teams leave the depot at 6:00 am and begin ploughing, salting and gritting the roads along two set routes, including side roads. It normally takes about two hours to treat each route, depending on the weather, but if conditions are bad they can be ploughing and re-ploughing all day to keep the roads clear.

"Several feet of snow can fall overnight," says Richard, "and it's more if it blows into drifts. It'll blow in behind you once you've opened the road, which can be very frustrating."

An evening grit is scheduled for 6:45 pm, and on Saturday the teams can be out all day keeping the roads clear for the weekend ski traffic. On Sundays, the teams plough in the morning and then are not called out again unless conditions deteriorate.

"It'll blow in behind you once you've opened the road..."

The Lecht pass between Tomintoul and Strathdon is notorious as one of the worst winter roads in Scotland. *"It's the hardest route," Ian says. "It gets the most snow. You're trying to push snow and cars are behind you trying to overtake."*



The crew ready to depart the Lecht Ski Centre

Our Moray Council drivers plough up one side of the pass and turn around, and a similar crew from Aberdeenshire Council ploughs up the opposite side of the pass and turns around again. Sometimes the crews meet at the top at the ski centre, but they don't stop to chat – *"We're too busy!"* the crew says.

"We have to keep the road clear for the skiers..."

Each lorry can carry about 10 tonnes of salt and grit, and in bad weather they can go through two loads in a day. The £109,000, 6WD gritters pictured are additions to the fleet, and are available for year-round use. During the summer, the gritting equipment is removed and the teams use the lorries for road surfacing and maintenance work.



*Lecht Road Snow Fall
Photo by Alex Smith*

With so many years of winter driving experience, Richard has one piece of advice for motorists driving in such conditions: *"Tyres! Get good tyres, and preferably winter ones."*

All of the Tomintoul gritting team agree that meeting the public's expectations is the hardest part of the job. *"The public expect to see black tarmac all of the time, but it takes over two hours to clear each*

Another frustration for the crew is inconsiderate drivers. *"We have to keep the road clear for the traffic, but they're always in a hurry and just park anywhere, sometimes abandoning their cars along the road and then we can't get past!"*

"...on a clear day you get a nice view."

Despite the odd frustration, when asked what the best part of their job is, several points came to mind. *"The cab heater!"* says Richard, laughing. *"And on a clear day you get a nice view,"* says Alex.

Winter weather needn't trouble the rest of Moray either. With six additional depots – located in Buckie, Dufftown, Elgin, Forres, Keith and Skateneuk – holding 16,000 tonnes of road salt in readiness across the area, Moray Council's gritting teams are ready for whatever wintry conditions head our way. At the Elgin depot, a new dome for protecting the road salt stock opened in January of last year, and it has already saved the Council thousands of pounds. The dome, which can hold 6,000 tonnes of road salt, shelters the salt from the elements. Because the salt is dry less needs to be spread on the roads saving an estimated £30,000 this year. It doesn't get washed away in the rain and salt purchased in bulk during the summer months is cheaper too. Now there are savings you don't need to take with a pinch of salt!

Quick tea break out of the cold



With their 46 years of combined experience on the roads, the Tomintoul gritting crew has seen it all. *"Only last week 20 cars went off of the road,"* says Richard, gesturing at the top of the pass where the ski centre is located. *"There were bobbies on our side and bobbies on the other side and the cars off in either direction. If their brakes go, the cars are like a train going down the brae."*

route in difficult conditions," say Alex and Ian. Drivers might be surprised to discover that salt doesn't work once the temperature falls below minus 5 degrees C or so; it's just too cold for the ice to melt.

"People complain but often they don't seem to give us the chance to work. It would be nice if people realised the scale of the task."



Our budget

(and what happens next)

Many of us have read reports of the Council's budget meeting when the Leader of Moray Council, Cllr Stewart Cree proposed a raft of measures designed to protect jobs and services.

A 5% increases in charges for services was agreed across the board, with the exception of music tuition which is increased by 20%.

Included in the other measures was a strict monitoring of vacancies. For the next 12 months each post will have to be approved by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) before it is advertised. The term vacancy freeze has deliberately not been used to describe this, as the council's commitment to maintain services means that there will be a significant number of exceptions if we are to meet that pledge. There will still be adverts for jobs, but the council will be aiming to reduce staffing costs as far as possible towards the £400,000 staff savings target during the year.

“...will use £6.3 million from reserves to balance the books...”

Fourteen vacancies that have been vacant for some time will be deleted as part of the budget saving measures. The roles of these posts have been largely absorbed by teams or undertaken by other agencies.

The council has identified £2.535 million in savings, and will use £6.3

million from reserves to balance the books for this year.

As Councillor Cree stated in his budget speech, this is not a sustainable position for the council. These measures will only maintain our levels of spending, staffing and services for 12 months. At that point the council will need to deliver far greater reductions in its annual spend – up to £14million - and during this year senior managers will be looking at how this can be achieved.

A big part of this operation will be a dialogue with our service users, residents, colleagues and partners and staff on what services they want/can maintain and what they could tolerate seeing reduced or delivered differently. This is not going to be easy, as we have all worked hard over the last few years to reduce our annual spend. Thanks to these efforts we now spend £24.5 million less each year, whilst maintaining a very good level of service. It's difficult to know where or how next year's level of budget cuts can be achieved without significant impact on us all.

These are complex processes to go through, and we need to have an honest and open discussion with all parties find our way through this

challenge. Agreeing what services can provide the biggest contribution to the community while meeting our national and local requirements, our priorities and balance the books is quite an undertaking. Please remember, if you or your service is identified as an area for reduction it is not a reflection on your service or your performance.

“the council will need to deliver far greater reductions in its annual spend...”

As important players in this process you will have opportunities to get involved with the debate, and help widen our engagement with the community through your own social networks, clubs and societies. We are all part of that community of service users after all, and should have our say. How we plan to carry out this engagement should be clearer by next month, and will be explained in *Connect*.

Corporate Management Team (CMT): Laurence, Rhona, Roddy & Mark

Could you care?



The Moray Council's Care at Home team are looking to recruit relief home care workers from teams within the council.

We are looking for people who feel they could help provide a home care service to adults those living in Moray, ideally someone who has spare time and would be able to work a morning or an evening rota at weekends.

Until now existing work commitments has meant it's been quite difficult for anyone in the council to be able to undertake the Monday to Friday, three-week training course to become a Home Carer. We are now able to offer a bespoke training package which will be delivered in the evenings

and weekends, to allow those working to attend. The training involves being trained how to use a hoist or how to care for your back safely on the Safer People Moving and Handling training, Adult & Child Support and Protection, Dementia, Personal Care and Medication training.

Caring is not for everyone, but for those who would consider this option we would encourage people in particular who are able to communicate well, who are honest, reliable, patient, understanding and flexible. You would need to be quite fit as the job does demand a certain level of physical activity, and have access to a vehicle for work purposes. We don't require formal qualifications for the job.

It is a very rewarding job as the difference carers make to people's lives helps them to remain at home for as long as possible.

The rate of pay is £8.36 per hour for weekday working with an enhanced rate of £10.89 for working weekends and evenings. Mileage is 45p per mile for travel between clients. We supply a uniform which consists of tunics, trousers, soft shell jacket and supplies such as gloves, aprons, torch.

If you are interested please contact Sheila McInnes, Acting Assistant Manager, Care at Home **01343 563751** or sheila.mcinnnes@moray.gov.uk

HR Noticeboard

Policy Updates

Revisions have been made to the following policies – these still have to be agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee and we will let you know when they are 'live' and ready to use.

Note to self:

Tea break with the team 10am

Time Off for Trade Union Duties

The Council's policy continues to be in line with ACAS guidelines, there are no significant changes made.

Guidance has been clarified regarding TU reps being given time for duties where short notice meetings have been arranged and/or their support/advice is required by means of ad hoc phone calls.



Travel and Subsistence

The policy has been reviewed to make it clearer on the procedures for booking travel and accommodation, i.e. there is no need to book your own travel / accommodation.

Subsistence rates have been considered and a recommendation has been made to increase these, and make it clearer what can be claimed for what meal.

Bullying and Harassment

Following the 2013 and 2015 opinion surveys and work by the Workforce Culture Group there has been an increased profile of Bullying and Harassment & it was considered appropriate to enhance the policy.

The principles underpinning the current policy remain sound and are incorporated into the revision. The policy still has to go through LNCT and is currently in draft format.

Maternity / Paternity Leave

Removal of Additional Paternity Rights for employees whose baby was due before 05/04/2015 – this has now been replaced by Shared Parental Leave.

(This has been in place for employees whose baby was due on or after 05/04/2015 since the end of 2014).

Service Planning & Strategy

All of us contribute to the delivery and development of council services. How this is done should be set out each year in a service plan which should include what the section is aiming for over the course of the year. The plan should make clear reference to the current corporate priorities (contained within Moray 2023 and the Corporate Plan) as well as any related strategies.

Service plans should also set measurable targets and outcomes that should be reviewed on a regular basis, then realigned or adjusted as necessary to ensure they continue to help us achieve the best for our service.

Team plans should flow from the service plan while retaining a clear link with community and council priorities and these should cascade to an individual level through employee appraisals i.e. the Employee Development and Review Programme (ERDP) or equivalent process.

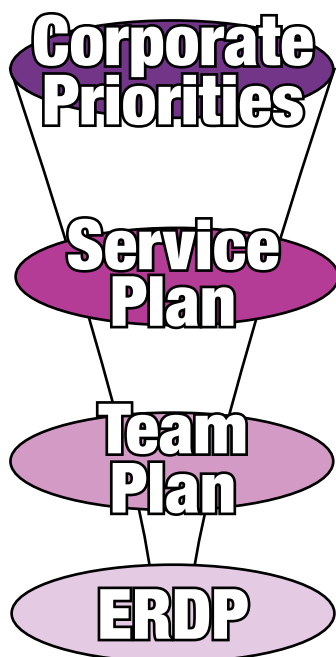
At the very least, service plans should:

- Clearly state the links to community and council priorities
- Ensure work flowing from the service plan is designed, developed and implemented in accordance with service and council priorities
- Provide advice and proposals on emerging developments or trends so the council is prepared for future challenges.

Whilst this responsibility primarily lies with the service manager, other managers, team leaders and supervisors all have a responsibility to make sure they are familiar with the most up to date service plan for their area of work, and the specific outcomes for which they are responsible.

In order to be as accountable as possible the service and team plans should state what outcomes they are aiming for, including any targets. Specific areas of responsibility for strategies, plans and projects or pieces of work should be clearly stated and monitored to ensure they are delivered in line with overall service objectives. Underperforming areas, exceptions or where objectives have changed should be regularly reported to senior management with remedial actions identified.

Service planning is undertaken within services and departments across the council on an annual basis and agreed at Committee level at the beginning of each financial year.



Welcome Aboard!

An organisation as large as the Moray Council is constantly changing and steaming ahead, and at this month's Corporate Induction session we were pleased to welcome 17 colleagues, some of whom are new to local government and some of whom are new to their department after working elsewhere within the council.

"We're delighted, we always need new blood coming in to help us up our game," says Carol Sheridan, Senior Employee Development Manager in the Training team, who hosted the induction. *"It's nice to get a large group from a diverse background because they bring that experience to the Council. It's a great way for them to meet people from other departments – we are all part of the same organisation so I like to get people thinking about 'my colleagues in Roads' or 'my colleagues in Environmental Services,'"* she says.

Each month we will be featuring our new starts, our colleagues who are leaving us, and special life events – new additions to the family, weddings, big birthdays or special anniversaries – so keep your photos coming in. A few of our inductees sneaked away before *Connect* could snap them this time, but this month you'll be able to put faces to names for our new colleagues pictured:

Katie Watt is sharing her experience with the team at Elgin High School, joining them from Keith Leisure Centre.



Craig Myleham has joined the team at the Annexe in Housing and Support.



Tina Mainland has joined us as an Apprentice Copy Shop Assistant from a stint at university.



Alan Nairn is bringing us his expertise from Aberdeenshire County Council as a Library Assistant.



Hayley McIntosh is also joining us as an Apprentice Copy Shop Assistant from a customer-facing role at Asda.



Helen Innes brings us her call centre experience as a Clerical Assistant at the Elgin Community Centre.



Jane Martin is joining us as Community Council Liaison Officer after a decade serving on her own local community council.



Anna Cleminson has been temping in Home Care and is now adding another string to her bow in Education and Support training.



The induction session included input from the Health and Safety team and covered environmental matters, as well as providing an overview of the Council and how it works. If you're new to the Council, or missed out on the induction when you arrived, log into the CLIVE LearnPro system to sign up for the next one, currently scheduled for Thursday 24 March.

First Mates

Recently got engaged, got married, or welcomed a new addition to the family? Celebrated a big birthday or special anniversary? Send in a photo to share the joy in our next edition:

connectnews@moray.gov.uk

Bon Voyage!

To all of our valued colleagues that are leaving us for retirement or pastures new this month, thank you for your hard work and dedication. We wish you all the best!

If you or someone you know is leaving, let us know so we can include their name in our next issue:

connectnews@moray.gov.uk

Marion Paterson has worked in the Council as a Community Support Worker before taking up her new post as a Housing Support worker.



Vicky Penman has kept her experience in the Council as she moves to the library from Community Care.



Chris Whelan has said farewell to Police Scotland to join the team at West End Primary as Janitor.



Susan Conti is bringing her previous five years of Council experience back to us in libraries after a family-oriented career break.



Richard Fletcher is transferring his expertise between libraries as Senior Library Information Assistant.



On yer bike!

Cycle2Work Scheme

The Cycle2Work scheme will be reopened after the Easter Break for 8 weeks, giving you another chance to participate in the Scheme and select a bicycle of your choice, taking advantage of the savings available from tax benefits. Look out for further information on noticeboards and the intranet soon...



Burns Night

Ashgrove style

A traditional Burns Supper has been organised by Donnie McLean and Anne Taylor from Environmental Services at Ashgrove for the last few years, and this year they were joined by colleagues from Fleet Services.

After the haggis was piped in, Anne gave the address. Following speeches and grace, a Robbie Burns poem was recited before the three-course meal of broth, haggis, neeps & tatties and trifle was served, with just enough room left for coffee and tablet.



A selection of your Tea Break Selfies



We have a winner in the form of the tea drinking moustached madams... your prize is on its way! →

next month Customer Service Selfies

We're getting well into your selfies, and this month we want to see pictures of any of you with your customers. Who are your customers? They can be another department, callers to the access points, trade or domestic waste customers, those on the phones – there's loads of them! All we want to see is you in action and – if they agree – a selfie of you with your customer.

Prize on offer this month is a Thornton's chocolate Easter Egg for all those in the picture, so get snapping!

the

Grow your own

challenge

Yes, it's that time of year again – the days are getting longer, it's getting warmer (honestly!) – time to think about planting those seeds.

Get together with a team and grow something edible [and legal – Ed.] on your office windowsill, or anywhere suitable. You could try baby tomatoes, herbs, strawberries, chillies, or even some edible flowers such as nasturtium.

We're offering a prize to the best and most productive plant, and these will be judged at the end of the summer. You'll need to register by the end of March for planting first week in April. Produce needs to be grown in a pot or window box on your office windowsill (remember to put a mat or something underneath). Keep a record of how much your plant produces – a photo or two would be good.

Results will be published in September's edition of *Connect Monthly*, along with pictures of successes and failures.

Contact Lois in HR on lois.dunlop@moray.gov.uk or phone 01343 563075 for a registration form.



Welcome to Moray

Some of our colleagues have been busy for the past few months preparing for the arrival of Syrian refugees to the area.

Working with our community Planning Partners and with assistance from the Home Office, Dept of Work and Pensions (DWP), and the voluntary group Moray Supports Refugees, five young families have now been settled into accommodation in Forres.

Following assessment by the Home Office the families flew into Aberdeen airport mid-February, and were collected by council staff and volunteers. The families have already been finding their feet and getting to know the area, but will require ongoing support from the various agencies.

Lead strategic officer of Moray's contribution to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme is corporate director Laurence Findlay. He praised the work of everyone that has led to a smooth arrival and settlement of the Syrian families.

"It has been heartening to us all witnessing the welcome that people in Moray have given the families," he said.

"We cannot imagine the trauma they have endured, but at least they know they are safe now.

"This has been a great example of all Community Planning Partners working together to a common outcome. Long may it continue.

"Our colleagues from housing, education & social care, revenues & benefits and chief executives have done a great job"