

Connect

monthly

**October
2018**

**We've got
Mail** 

moray
council

Contents

Heads Up	3
We've got mail	4
Strategy Talk	7
HR noticeboard	8
Cedarwood Fundraiser	10
You Planker	11
Congratulations	11
Fit Life?	12
Marathon Effort	12
Braving the shave for charity	14
Beachbrae Bamby	14
Two of a kind	15
Fringe-tastic	16

Editorial

3 Welcome to your October *Connect*!

4 It's good to see a 'Heads Up' piece from our chief executive this month. Roddy's overview at this time of service reduction and constraint is very welcome, and his advice worth taking.

8 This month we're celebrating the work of our colleagues in the Mail Room, who operate what looks like a mini sorting office and despatch service for the whole council.

11 A great team who never seem to stop! Don't forget, we're keen to hear from you and the work you do so we can showcase your team – just give us a call.

12 We enjoyed hearing about the council's 'number one planker' this month, and of the two teachers arriving at school in the same striking outfits – the stuff of sartorial nightmares! Keep these stories coming!

14 Wish your *Connect* team luck with our entry for Publication of the Year award to be announced on October 4. We're up against some stiff competition from the private and public sector, but here's hoping the great design work by Angus and our writing has caught the judges' eyes.

■ Cover Image: Ruth Cantlie loads up the mail van ahead of her special delivery service.

Team *Connect*



Peter Jones
COMMUNICATIONS
OFFICER



Sharon Dunbar
MEDIA &
COMMUNICATIONS
OFFICER



Angus McNicholl
DESIGNER



HeadsUp

Roddy Burns, Chief Executive

Dear Colleagues

This has been a tough period for the council as we look for ways to balance our budget, and for a number of you it has meant that your job is at risk or there's a change in your working hours.

This is no easy time for those affected, and I ask that we all show understanding for their situation.

If you are affected by the reduction in workforce, please don't feel it is a reflection on you or your work; it is the service that's being reduced, not you. In the recent staff conferences and through my years I've met many of you, and I know we have great people working for us, all doing an excellent job.

Letting good people go is never good for an organisation, which is why we have the Transform system in place to help us retain staff where we can match skills. Do please take advantage of this and scour the vacancies for a potential opening – who knows, it could be a life-changing new start for you and a bonus for the council to keep people on. Remember, change is difficult but it's not always bad.

While it is extremely sad to lose colleagues, we still employ well over 4,000 people across Moray

to provide what the public needs every day. That's no mean feat in these austere times, and is vitally important to the local economy, the vibrancy of Moray and our communities. It's this element that makes public service so special, so don't lose heart.

I've seen some comments on social media asking how come we've got into this situation – we must have managed our finances badly. We haven't. The council has been tasked by governments to deliver more and more, yet our grant from government reduces in real terms year on year. This is confirmed by Audit Scotland.

The way the council grant system currently works, we will not know how much we are getting from the Scottish Government until mid-December. Unfortunately we may need a similar level of savings next year and beyond, which means that many of the services we provide and the jobs that are needed to deliver them will continue to diminish. Senior managers are working on a long-term plan that will see Moray Council as a sustainable authority, albeit a reduced one.

I realise this appears to be a doom-laden 'Heads Up' piece, but there

are some promising lights at the end of the tunnel. We are on track to attract a multi-million pound Growth Deal; we have funding in place to build a new school at Lossiemouth, and the area is seeing huge investment in our military. This and other developments can only mean a brighter future awaits, with all the opportunities that come with it.

Best wishes
Roddy



Our mailroom is a bustling hive of activity. Each month they post out circa 25,000 items of mail, scan 17,000 incoming documents (totalling some 85,000 pages) and process 850 transactions, generating £425,000. For a team of just 11, that's impressive.

The 10 mailroom assistants are led by Team Leader, Sheila Strong. With 23 years' experience in the mailroom, she keeps it ticking over like a well-oiled machine. A skilled team, they have combined experience of some 66 years' of mailroom work.

"Pre-2010 we were the revenues mailroom," explains Sheila, "we did things like starting up accounts, or ending them when death notices were received. In 2010 we began to take on planning mail; then in 2011 we took on housing, including housing applications, tenancies, garages, etc.

"By this point we'd become the corporate mailroom and we've now taken on other service like licensing, health and safety, trading standards, environmental health and more."

Despite seeing a reduction in hard copy mail when services 'go online', for example when the Scottish Government launched eplanning and building standards, Sheila said there's little respite.

"We're about to take on more for roads, environmental protection and the DLO though, which will see us deal with an extra 20,000 items per year – so there's never a dull moment!"

The shift from dealing with just revenue-related correspondence to multiple services was challenging, Sheila said, but now the team embrace the variety.



“Taking on work for so many different and diverse services has meant staff learning to use many different software systems and get to grips with the background knowledge to create applications.”

“But we have a great team and that’s the single best thing about working in the mailroom; there’s a good range of backgrounds and everyone is willing to help each other out.”

“Some of the not-so-great things include the occasional IT problem, and trying to get mail to the correct person can be challenging – especially if staff are moving between offices and don’t update the phone book with their new details!”

“Another bug bear is mail arriving in the wrong size envelope. We could save a lot of money if staff didn’t use

large envelopes when they’re not required.”

Despite this, the team has formed great relationships with their colleagues across the council, and it shows.

“We get presents at Christmas from colleagues,” Sheila says, “Tins of biscuits and sweets, to say thanks for our help throughout the year. It’s a lovely thing to do, it makes us feel valued.”

Alongside the opening, scanning and filing is the actual job of delivering, and when it comes to delivering internal mail there’s a busy schedule with more than 70 drop-offs. Although we praised them earlier for being a well-oiled machine, we soon learn that there can be bumps along the road...

“I should probably start this story by explaining that



the delivery van doesn't have any windows in the back – at all," says Sheila, "and about three years ago, one of our team members – who shall remain nameless – had climbed into the back to retrieve some internal envelopes. It was a windy day and the back door blew shut. Of course it was pitch dark as there were no windows, so she couldn't see the catch to open the back door.

"We were all inside at this point, so didn't have a clue what was going on. Luckily, she was rescued by some very helpful members of staff, who just happened to be passing through the car park at the right time and heard her banging on the side of the van to be let out!"

We joined Mailroom Assistant, Ruth Cantlie, as she was loading up the mail van before her afternoon round.

"I worked for Moray Council when I left school at 17," she says, "I worked in the computer room, inputting the wages, rents and invoices, but after six years I left to work in the personnel department in Asda.

"I've spent the last 26 years there, then came back to the council, to work in the mailroom, 15 months ago."

She enjoys the variety, particularly getting out regularly to deliver the internal mail.

"My favourite route is down through Speyside," she said, "You forget just how beautiful the scenery is in our own area. Plus I like having a quick catch up with the staff in the schools and the Access Points when I do the drop-offs and pick-ups."

Ruth echoes Sheila's words about having a great team around her, and is certain she made the right move back to working for the council.

"My advice to anyone thinking about moving jobs is just to go for it. I thought I was too old for a career change but I really enjoy it here – it was definitely the right choice for me!"



Planning is well under way for the 2019/20 budget and it's proving the most difficult that the council has ever faced. For many years we've found savings for each budget round, which have led to cumulative savings of around £40m. We now face finding a further £12m for 2019/20 and £9m for 2020/21 based on mid-point estimates from a range of financial forecasting options.

What this means

There are some areas of the council's services where it's particularly difficult to identify savings, especially ones that can be delivered quickly. For example, we can't change our loan charges, teacher numbers are set by the government and any process to reconfigure our school estate is governed by legislation and would take at least two years. Taking these constraints into account, the salary bill is effectively set at around £38m.

There are other services where significant service reviews are needed to find efficiencies and ensure the safety and protection of service users, for example in children's services. So in those areas we'll be considering reviews aimed at medium and longer term service savings, as part of the development of medium and longer term financial plans aimed at the long term financial sustainability of the council.

This is a picture that's common across Scotland and means that savings tend to focus on service areas other than education and social care, with the result that the impact in these areas is intensified.

Future savings

Our financial predictions show that while some savings will come from our modernisation and improvement programme - aimed at reducing the future operating costs of council services – it's likely we will still need to make significant additional savings. We will keep you updated on the plans for how to address this as they develop.

What's the latest?

At the end of last month, councillors agreed a range of measures to reduce spending and go some way towards balancing the budget ahead of February's budget-setting meeting.

The measures discussed were split into categories, based on how quickly they can be implemented. Some will be implemented immediately so that we can begin to make savings as quickly as possible, some proposals need more development, and others will require consultation and engagement with the workforce and wider public, before the Council makes a final decision on them.

You can read more about how we're funded, our financial challenges and the savings councillors agreed to progress with, in our budget information booklet: www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file121702.pdf

26 September	Council considered options and agreed to progress budget savings
27 September	Consultation began with affected colleagues on relevant proposals Proposals communicated to the public
October	Implementation begins for any proposals that do not require further consultation or preparation Community information, consultation and engagement (depending on the proposals) for relevant proposals
November / December	Report to council on outcome of consultations and consideration of whether further savings are required
December	Implementation of proposals approved

HR Noticeboard

Privacy Notices

We all have a responsibility to ensure that we are compliant and handle information in the correct manner, especially since the introduction of GDPR. With the tighter rules now in force, we've carried out an audit of the information we hold and want to share our Recruitment & Selection privacy notice with you. This details how we use the information, our legal basis and who we share the information with and is available under the Moray Council section of myjobscotland www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/

Macmillan Coffee Morning: Annexe

The World's Biggest Coffee Morning is Macmillan's biggest fundraising event for people facing cancer. Colleagues in the Annexe held an event earlier than normal on Friday 21 September, providing the perfect chance to catch up over a cuppa and a slice of something delicious, and support a great cause.

Many sponsors donated to the raffle including Starbucks and Johnston's of Elgin – but none of this could have been done without Gillian Thomson from Housing who organised the event, her colleagues who rallied round to help, and of course everyone who took part. Whether you donated some home baking, or came along to support the event – thank you.

The total raised on the day was £763.67 – who knew a bit of cake could do so much good?

Holiday Buy Back 2019 Reminder...

Remember applications for holiday buy back need to be submitted by 30 November 2018.

Holiday buy back allows eligible members of staff to buy up to two extra weeks of annual leave. It's a salary sacrifice agreement, so equal instalments are deducted from your pay packet each month over the year. For every extra week you take, you'll sacrifice a week's pay.

Just so you know, holiday buy back won't have any impact on your pension contributions or entitlements.

You can look at the guidance and application form (interchange.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file109572.doc), to see if it's right for you.

Macmillan Coffee Morning: Ashgrove

A big shout out to our colleagues at Ashgrove who told us as we were going to press that they'd managed to raise £522 during their Macmillan Coffee Morning.

That means we've raised more than £1,200 so far for this fantastic charity, which does such worthwhile work.

Back to the Floor

We're starting to plan our employee engagement activities for 2019 and if you'd like to take part in the 'Back to the Floor' initiative, which sees senior managers visit front line staff to get some hands on experience of their job, this is your chance.

So far Corporate Director (Economic Development, Planning & Infrastructure), Rhona Gunn, has spent the day with colleagues in catering at St Gerardine's Primary School in Lossiemouth, and with the waste recycling team based at Brumley Brae where she was also accompanied by Head of Direct Services, Stephen Cooper. We've also seen Corporate Director (Corporate Services), Denise Whitworth, spend the day at Pilmuir Nursery in Forres. They all felt that it provided them with a greater appreciation of what staff do on a daily basis.

If you'd like a senior manager to spend a day in your service please let us know by calling HR on **01343 563261** or emailing hr@moray.gov.uk

Colleague's Choice Award

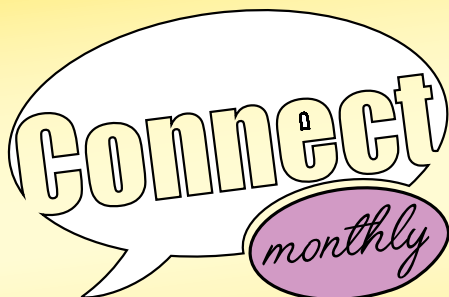
We're very excited to be launching the Colleague's Choice Award and we need YOUR vote!

This is your opportunity to celebrate the efforts of your colleagues and vote for who you would like to see win the award at this year's STAR awards.

A link to vote will be available from Monday 22 October on the interchange under the Improving Workforce Culture section.

For further help or information or if you/a colleague would like to vote but don't have the facility to do so, please contact HR on hr@moray.gov.uk or telephone **01343 563261** and we'll lodge a vote on your behalf.

Voting will close on Friday 9 November. The winner of the Colleagues Choice Award (along with the Chief Executive's Award for Excellence) will be announced and presented at the ceremony in November.



email connectnews@moray.gov.uk
to get Connect emailed to your
personal email address, every
month.



CEDARWOOD FUNDRAISER



Cedarwood day centre users, staff and visitors have raised more than £500 for local charity Abbie's Sparkle Foundation, by completing 140 hours of exercise in five days.

Participants exceeded their target of 100 hours of exercise which included rebound therapy, swimming, walking, treadmill work and rowing workouts.

Organised by Day Centre Officer, Shirley Ramage, and Care Assistant, Mark Powell, everyone in the Elgin-based Cedarwood Day Centre building played a part in raising the money for Abbie's Sparkle

Foundation. The Foundation was set up after 15 year-old Abbie Main passed away on Christmas Day, having being diagnosed with cancer aged 11. Abbie's mum, Tammy, kicked off the fundraising event with the first hour of exercise.

Shirley said: "We fundraise every year but it was important to us this year to raise money for a local charity."

Picking up the cheque for the £510 raised were Abbie's grandparents, Jennie and Donald Cameron.

Jennie expressed her gratitude to all those who took part in the week of exercise to raise funds.

"Thank you to the people who took part in the event, enabling Abbie's sparkle to be spread. She was a very special little girl and she is greatly missed."



Congratulations

Congrats to our colleagues in the Moray Autism Service, who've been awarded accreditation from a national body, recognising the excellent support they offer to local autistic young people and their families.

The service has been accredited by The National Autistic Society, following a two-day assessment. The team were praised for interacting with autistic pupils 'in ways that

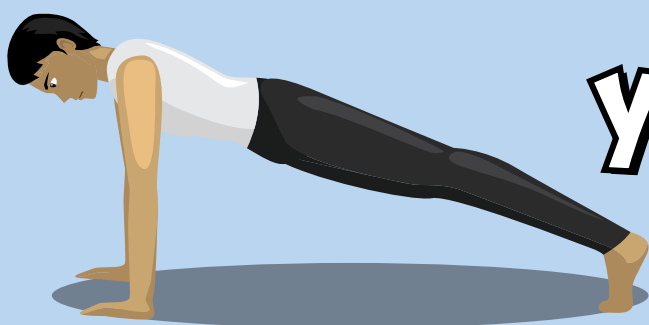
reinforce a sense of self-worth, dignity and self-esteem'. The quality and personalisation of the service's ready-to-use visual communication support materials was singled out for being of a 'very high standard', and 'excellent relationships' with partner schools was highlighted as a strength.

The report also noted: "*Moray Autism Service have excellent knowledge of autism and*

appropriate autism friendly support methodologies. Staff within the service are dedicated and demonstrate a clear desire to do the best for each child referred to the service."

Great job, team!

Has your team got something to celebrate? Let us know by emailing connectnews@moray.gov.uk



YOU PLANKER!

A big well done to Assistant Lands and Parks Officer, Grant Speed, who came out top in Ashgrove's 'planking' challenge. He'll have abs of steel after planking for an impressive five minutes and seven seconds!

Speaking after his victory, which he puts down to "*months of hard work at the gym*" – and a box of Turkish Delight, he said:

"I would like to thank my family, friends and supporters for all their encouragement. I'm looking forward to defending and retaining my title as Number One Planker!"

Also worthy of a mention is first-time planker, Ian Douglas, who held out for a very respectable four minutes and 17 seconds. Money raised from the challenge will be added to Ashgrove's charity pot, with the recipients of this year's fundraising efforts being the Scottish Huntington's Association.

Join **Moray's** premier sports & leisure scheme

ACCESS THE MORAY LEISURE CENTRE IN ELGIN

AND ALL MORAY COUNCIL FACILITIES

Membership for Individuals
only £21 per month

Membership for Families (single adult)
only £27 per month

Membership for Families (two adults)
only £29 per month

for memberships: 01343 550033
info@mlc-elgin.co.uk
www.mlc-elgin.co.uk

FIT LIFE?



FIT LIFE?

The successful Fit Life scheme is being extended to include the Moray Leisure Centre later this month.

Existing members will be able to use their cards at the centre – as well as all other council facilities across Moray – and new members can sign up there too.

Memberships go on sale at Moray Leisure Centre on 20 October and existing Fit Life members can use the facility from 22 October.

The change is part of a range of moves to improve the fortunes of the Moray Leisure Centre. Other actions are the refurbishment next March of the fitness suite and gym, along with improvements to the building and café areas.

Pay-as-you-go sessions are likely to increase to bring the centre into line with charges at Moray Council's facilities, making the Fit Life card even better value. The ice rink is not part of the scheme.

With such a complete range of facilities available all over Moray, there's never been a better time for you and your family to get into the regular exercise habit.

Visit Moray Leisure Centre's website for more info... www.mlc-elgin.co.uk

MARATHON EFFORT

Colleagues from Forres swimming pool, Aileen Rennie (middle) and Robert Paterson (left) completed the massive challenge of a marathon to raise funds for the local charity 'Defibs for Moray'.

The pair, with their sidekick, David, competed in the Loch Ness Marathon on 23 September and raised over £500 for their heroic efforts. This was their second marathon this year and one for which they both trained very hard.

Most of the money was raised from the Forres Pool users and staff.

'Defibs for Moray' is a local charity aiming to install public accessible defibrillators all around Moray and conduct basic training to make the public aware of what they can do.

So far they have installed 12 of these these life-saving devices in Moray and trained more than 200 local people. Their aim is to install a defibrillator in every High School in

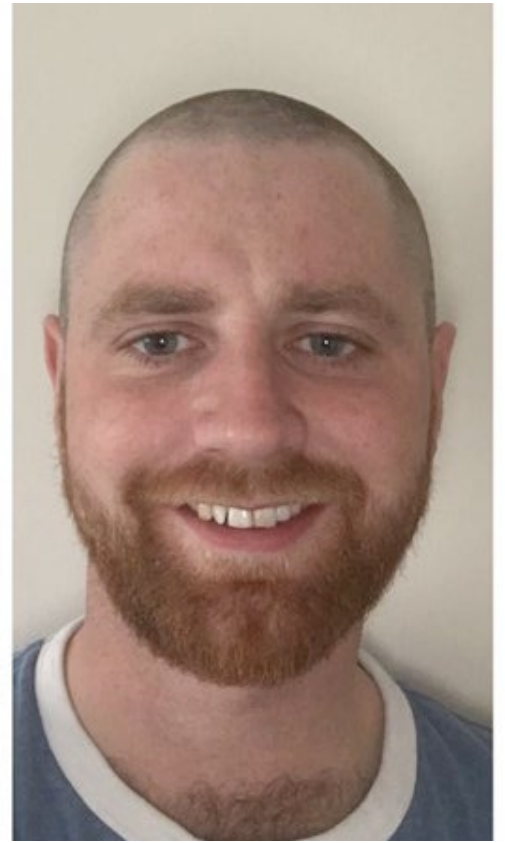
Moray by the end of year, and begin training with S5 / S6 pupils.

Visit the charity at www.defibsformoray.com to find out how you can support Defibs for Moray.

Great effort guys!

'BRAVING THE SHAVE

*for
charity*



Caroline Jamieson, a Classroom and Communication Assistant, managed to capture a couple of pics of these early morning visitors at Beechbrae Education Centre in Elgin.

Building Standards Inspector, Neil Dow, braved the shave last month to raise money and awareness for a UK mental health charity.

Neil, who has been affected by mental health conditions for many years, said he's received all sorts of help and therapies to try and live a better, more enjoyable standard of life.

"It's a terrible thing to suffer with and the stigma around it has to go. Unlike physical injuries, people are unable to see it and therefore it's not always taken seriously."

"Sometimes the hardest part is people not understanding which is why awareness is such a big part, but there's always someone out there to help, no matter how tough things get; just ask. I'm always here for anyone, too."

Speaking with *Connect*, after the head shave, he said it's always a nervous situation when admitting you deal with, or have dealt with, mental health issues.

"Especially after being one of those who hid this for many years," he said, *"but the support for the third year running has been brilliant and*

thank you to everyone who has kindly donated to a brilliant cause.

"We all know someone out there who suffers with mental health but there are also the thousands who still can't or won't say for all varying reasons, so hopefully doing my little bit each year makes a difference and gives them the confidence to seek help."

Neil opted for a close 0 all over, and raised £350 – well above his target of £200. If you want to make a donation, you can through his JustGiving page: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/neil-dow2

Primary 7 teachers at Greenwards Primary, Helen Rendell and Rebecca Donaldson were seeing double when they both turned up to work on the same day in matching outfits! Great minds!





From Elgin to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival – it’s the journey that any of us could have made as a spectator, but one of our colleagues performed in this year’s world famous spectacle.

Rachel Atkinson, a Business Support Assistant for Essential Skills, performed in two shows produced by local performing arts college, Lossie Entertainment Academy. Robert Burns the Musical and Horny Coo in a Tutu enjoyed a well-received week long run at the ‘Space on the Mile’ at the Radisson Hotel on the Royal Mile.

Rachel has a HND in Acting and Performance, grew up in Moray and now raises her daughter, Maya, here with partner, Mike.

Intense rehearsals, fitted in between work and family life were a juggle for Rachel, who has Multiple Sclerosis, but worthwhile as she fulfilled her ambition of performing during one of the biggest celebrations of arts and culture there is. Last year alone there were 53,232 performances of 3,398 shows in 300 venues, and Rachel – who has worked for Moray Council for six years – is delighted to have been a part of this year’s festivities.

“I’ve been performing for almost 30 years and this was one of the most amazing experiences I’ve had.

“It was very intense and a little intimidating performing at such a massive festival, but it was very exciting. There is such a great atmosphere in Edinburgh during August.

“Performing during the Fringe is definitely something I’ll never forget, an item ticked off the ‘bucket list.’”