

Connect

December / January
2023



STAR
AWARDS
2022





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Meet the team



■ Kirsty Craig MCIPR
■ Acting Senior Communications Officer



■ Angus McNicholl
■ Designer

December / January 2023

Editorial

We love awards season! The Oscars, the Tony's, the Nobel Prize, Shed of the Year Award (it's a thing) – we could go on. But our favourite of all time is the Moray Council Star Awards and Long Service Awards.

Our opportunity to recognise colleagues who've made an impact in their service, or have simply just done a fantastic job, has returned. With a record number of nominations this year we've seen just how well respected our workforce is amongst our peers. Thank you for taking the time to acknowledge so many colleagues' efforts – we look forward to seeing this level of nominations continue in future years of the awards. Well done to everyone who was nominated and who received their long service awards, your dedication to local government is admirable and appreciated.

It's impossible not to mention Christmas in this edition but not everyone will be looking forward to the impending festive season. The holidays can be a difficult time, particularly for those who may be spending it alone, possibly for the first time. Make sure to do things you enjoy, you don't need to celebrate if you don't feel like it. You might be interested in volunteering locally so you'll be spending time with others or you may just want to get through the holidays and get back to work. Make sure to treat yourself as well though, you do you and we'll see you all back here in the new year!

If you're struggling over the festive period have look at our Time for Talking employee assistance programme. They're available 24 hours, 365 days a year service for psychological, emotional and practical support.



Time for Talking:

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_108013.html

As always, we love to hear from our readers :)



eMail Connect:

connectnews@moray.gov.uk



HeadsUp

Norma Matheson
Benefits Manager

Dear Colleagues,

My start in the council was a baptism of fire – 1989 and the start of the poll tax in Scotland.

Having spent a relatively quiet few weeks in the rates team, I volunteered to help out in the community charge benefits receptions in the old Elbar building (later demolished and rebuilt as a supermarket before becoming the council's annexe) as they were stowed out the door. That was an eye opener! Back then dealing with members of the public shouting and swearing, anger and tears was an everyday occurrence which we all just took in our stride.

Fast forward to now and I have been manager of the benefit service for 21 years and added the money advice service to my remit in 2019. There are two key aspects of my work that have kept me motivated in my job over these years.

I'm passionate about helping people; giving them the support they need to reach a better outcome. Over the years we've gone from being a benefit admin team to a multi-functioning dynamic service, which is now a key component of the agenda to mitigate poverty in Moray.

The second aspect may be a cliché but the people I work with are what motivates me. I'm so lucky to have worked with some great people over the years; some of them we

have gone through births, deaths, marriages, etc (and a few work nights out!). They are a great team of caring people that are motivated to help others and who work hard to improve the service. I honestly couldn't have done any of it for this long without them.

It has been a difficult time for us all over the past couple of years. In terms of my service we haven't been able to catch our breath following the pandemic as we now move into a cost of living crisis. Many of the additional crisis supports we have been operating over and above the day-job are still in play and the demands on the service will continue and no doubt escalate.

Mitigating poverty isn't just about people on benefits with debts, it's about affordable housing, the real living wage, the cost of living, health equalities, educational attainment, employment support and training, building the local economy via investment and business, support in the community, the list goes on and on. But we all need to work together to provide support and opportunities for the people who live and work in Moray. It's all our responsibility but partnership is key.



Civic Leader Festive Message

As we approach the end of 2022, I am honoured and privileged to have this opportunity to send you a festive message and a few words of reflection of the year just passed.

There is no doubt we have endured another challenging year and an uncertain time still lies ahead. But, we have come a long way since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, with thanks to the NHS, the vaccination programme and all the volunteers throughout that period.

We also pause to think of those who have supported us throughout the year and those who continue to work through the festive season, particularly those in the emergency services and care sector. To all our staff though, I would like to express sincere thanks for your dedication and commitment in providing vital services to the people of Moray in often challenging times.

There are many reasons to find hope and take inspiration for the future. As communities, we have been brought closer together, so let us move towards 2023 in the spirit of hope and optimism and in the words of Captain Tom; "Tomorrow WILL be a better day".

I wish you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Cllr John Cowe
Civic Leader, Moray Council



MacMillan Coffee Mornings Success

There were two coffee mornings across council campuses in aid of MacMillan Cancer Support this year. Taking place at the end of September, Building Services DLO held one at their Mosstodloch offices, while HQ hosted another.

Many staff brought in cakes, tray-bakes and other scrumptious goodies. While the main purpose was to raise money for MacMillan Cancer Support, a healthy dose of competition was thrown into the mix(er) at Mosstodloch.

Sadly, Paul Hollywood wasn't available for judging so Building Services Manager, Mike Rollo, bravely stepped up to the plate. He awarded Faye Coull her very own Rollo handshake for her amazing Biscoff Caramel Cheesecake. In the interest of fairness, and to maintain good office relations, all other bakers were praised for the high standard of their home baking.

Between HQ and Building Services council staff raised £403.50 for MacMillan Cancer Support. Contributing to MacMillan's current total of £12,115,333 for coffee mornings held in 2022. This alone could fund 193 MacMillan nurses for a year. Well done to all involved!

Christmas opening arrangements

All council offices closed: Friday 23 December at 3pm until Wednesday 4 January 2022 at 8.45am.

Emergency council services: Over the holiday period the emergency out-of-hours service will operate as normal on 03457 565656 for all council services, including matters of child protection.



You can make payments, report non-emergency faults and submit certain requests: www.moray.gov.uk

Schools and education

All schools and council nurseries closed: Thursday 22 December and reopen on Monday 9 January.



Any queries during this time can be sent to: education@moray.gov.uk

Sports and Leisure Facilities

Buckie Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre; Forres Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre; Keith Sports and Community Centre; Lossiemouth Sports and Community Centre; Speyside Sports and Community Centre:

- **Normal timetable:** Friday 23 December 2022.
- **Holiday timetable:** Saturday 24 December 2022.
- **Closed:** Sunday 25 and Monday 26 December 2022.
- **Holiday timetable:** Tuesday 27 – Friday 30 December 2022.
- **Closed:** Saturday 31 December 2022 – Monday 2 January 2023 inclusive.
- **Holiday timetable:** Tuesday 3 January 2023.
- **Normal timetable resumes:** Wednesday 4 January 2023 with swimming lessons starting from Monday 9 January 2023.

Elgin Sports and Community Centre:

- **Closed:** Thursday 22 December 2022 - Sunday 8 January 2023 inclusive.
- **Normal timetable resumes:** Monday 9 January 2023.

Milne's Fitness Suite, Fochabers:

- **Closed:** Saturday 24 December 2022 – Tuesday 3 January 2023 inclusive.

- **Normal timetable resumes:** Wednesday 4 January 2023.

Football pitches and pavilions; Elgin High Sports Centre; Forres House Community Centre:

- **Closed:** Sunday 25 December 2022 - Tuesday 3 January 2023 inclusive.
- **Normal timetable resumes:** Wednesday 4 January 2023.

Libraries

- **Normal opening:** Saturday 24 December – except Elgin, which will close at 2pm.
- **Closed:** Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 December; normal opening Wednesday 28 and Thursday 29 December; closed Friday 30 December until Tuesday 3 January 2023.
- **Normal opening resumes:** opening times on Wednesday 4 January 2023.

Mobile library

The mobile library is on the road up to and including Friday 23 December. Full service resumes as normal on Monday 9 January 2023.



A schedule of Mobile Library visits: http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_1483.html



or phone Elgin Library: 01343 562600.

Car parks

St Giles and Batchen Lane multi-storey car park:

- **Closed:** Saturday 24 December at 7pm until Monday 26 December at 9am; Saturday 31 December at 7pm until Monday 2 January at 9am.

Alternative street level parking is available.

On Tuesday 27 December, Saturday 31 December, and Tuesday 3 January the multi storey car parks will open 9am-7pm.

Registrars

- **Elgin Office closed:** Friday 23 December at 3pm until Wednesday 4 January.
- **Open:** Strictly by appointment, Wednesday 28 and Thursday 29 December for death registration only.

Should a registrar be required urgently:
07891 721414

or:
07742 716 586.

Refuse and recycling

Green and recycling bin collections:

will continue three-weekly, however there won't be any collections on Monday 26 December 2022 or Monday 2 January 2023. Revised dates are set out below. Collections may be carried out earlier than normal; please have all bins at their usual collection point by 7.30am. If there's any disruption to these collections, we'll post this on our service portal and set out when we'll return.

There will be no brown bin collections: Monday 26 December for two weeks. Collections resume on Monday 9 January 2023. Real Christmas trees can be presented alongside your brown bin from Monday 9 January and will be uplifted regardless of whether you have a garden waste permit.

Clochan (56)

- Scheduled collection: Monday 26 December
- Revised collection: Tuesday 27 December

Fife Keith (83/91) [Recycling only]

- Scheduled collection: Monday 26 December
- Revised collection: Tuesday 27 December

Lossiemouth (16)

- Scheduled collection: Monday 26 December
- Revised collection: Wednesday 28 December

Forres (71)

- Scheduled collection: Monday 26 December
- Revised collection: Friday 30 December

Portknockie/Buckie (51)

- Scheduled collection: Monday 2 January
- Revised collection: Tuesday 3 January

Tomintoul (86)

- Scheduled collection: Monday 2 January
- Revised collection: Wednesday 4 January

Alves/Roseisle (21)

- Scheduled collection: Monday 2 January
- Revised collection: Thursday 5 January

Elgin (6)

- Scheduled collection: Monday 2 January
- Revised collection: Friday 6 January

The special collection and waste hotline will be closed from 3pm on Friday 23 December until 9am Wednesday 4 January.

Recycling centres:

Saturday 24 and Saturday 31 December 2022 – all recycling centres will close at 12 noon.

Closed: 25 and 26 December 2022 and 1 and 2 January 2023.

Bookings are still required for Chanonry Recycling Centre, Elgin.

Public conveniences

Closed: Sunday 25 and Monday 26 December 2022 and Sunday 1 & Monday 2 January 2023.

Scottish Welfare Fund

Closed: Friday 23 December at 3pm until Wednesday 28 December.

A skeleton Crisis Grant service will be provided on 28-30 December.



Online applications:

[www.moray.gov.uk/
scottishwelfarefund](http://www.moray.gov.uk/scottishwelfarefund)



or phone:

03457 565 656

Closed: from 4pm on Friday 30 December until Wednesday 4 January at 8:45am.

Care at home service

Care at Home will operate with a skeleton staff during the council closure period 24 December until 3 January.

Existing care at home users will receive their usual level of care throughout the festive period.

Children's and Families and Justice services

Children and Families and Justice Services will be working on a 'business as usual' basis from 23 December through to 28 December 2022.

On 28 and 29 December 2022 Social Work teams will provide a scaled-down service covering planned and statutory work and respond to incoming referrals and public protection concerns.



Children's and Families Justice services:

01343 554370



Placement Services:

01343 563325

Out of Hours Social Work Services will cover all other dates up to 4 January 2023.

Justice Services will provide a service to Courts and 'need to be seen' clients on 28 and 29 December 2022.

While you're off over the festive period...

While a lot of us are off over the festive period, eating more than we need to and complaining about repeats on TV, we still have colleagues working hard.

From the waste team to care at home staff, DLO on standby for emergencies and the Cameron Park Brae contact team monitoring the emergency out of hours number – there will be staff turning up to keep our services running. Like our sport, leisure and libraries staff who work between Christmas and New Year to help residents maintain their fitness, reading, digital connections and learning through the festive period.

Not to forget the winter maintenance crew who will be keeping us travelling safely all winter.

To all our staff working over the festive period, who may miss Christmas and New Year with loved ones (including those who aren't too upset about that!) we say a huge thank you. Our staff are dedicated and we know these may not be your easiest shifts, but we're grateful for your efforts. We also thank your friends and families for letting us have you over the festivities – we do appreciate it.



This year we gained accreditation as a Living Wage employer. This means we've gained formal recognition for a range of commitments, including a pledge from suppliers – or agreed milestones – to pay the Living Wage.

The real Living Wage is an independently calculated rate based on the cost of living and is paid voluntarily by employers. The rate is currently £10.90 and is calculated annually by considering the wage needed in order to afford a decent standard of living. The elements that make up that standard of living includes housing, childcare, transport and heating costs.

We've been paying above the national Living Wage rate, which is currently £9.50 for over 23s, since 2012.

Since 2011 the Living Wage movement has delivered a pay rise to over 55,000 people in Scotland and put over £310 million extra into the pockets of low paid Scottish workers.

Our Chief Executive, Roddy Burns, said of becoming accredited: "As one of the largest employers in the area, it's right that we lead by example and recognise the hard work our thousands of colleagues do, day in and day out, to provide the best possible standard of service to our communities.

"I'm pleased to see this accreditation awarded which demonstrates our commitment to paying the Living Wage to our much-valued staff."

In Scotland, more than 14% of all jobs pay less than the real Living Wage – around 330,000 jobs. Despite this, we've committed to pay the real Living Wage and deliver a fair day's pay for a hard day's work.

Council leader, Cllr Kathleen Robertson, added: "Achieving accreditation is a significant milestone and we proudly join the other Scottish councils with this mark of recognition.

"We know times are particularly challenging for many residents, and as a Living Wage employer we are playing our part in supporting our employees and valuing the work they do."

Peter Kelly, Director of The Poverty Alliance congratulated us at the time we became accredited, saying: "We all need an income that is enough to cover our needs and protect us from poverty, and it's only right that employers pay a wage that reflects the cost of living. Too many workers in Scotland are paid less than the real Living Wage and, at a time of rising costs, are struggling to stay afloat. The real Living Wage can offer protection from those rising costs."

"Congratulations to Moray Council on their Living Wage commitment, and I hope more organisations follow their lead by becoming Living Wage accredited."

George Stewart – This is Your [council] Life!

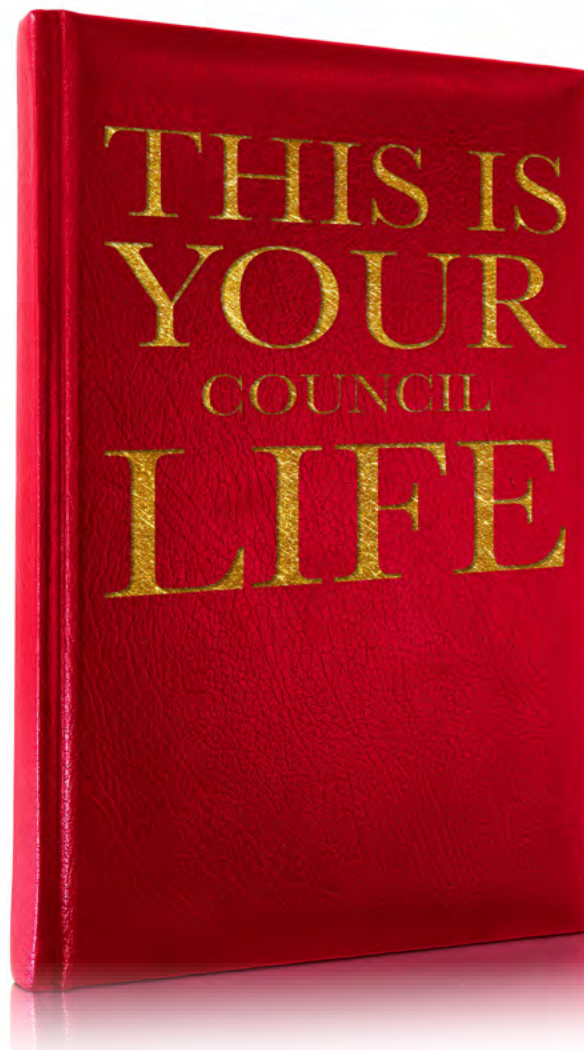
Retiring this month, after 52 years with the council, George started working with the 'City and Royal Burgh of Elgin' on 28 September 1970.

Originally based in Highfield House, at the junction of Northfield Terrace and South Street, George's first day was spent at Inverness Technical College on day release for his HNC in Civil Engineering.

With the creation of 'Grampian Regional Council' and 'Moray District Council' in 1975 all staff in Elgin Town Council migrated to Moray District Council, except George. George said: "I had a brief interview with the Divisional Road Surveyor who told me the Water Board had no vacancies so I was to join the Roads team. I had my reservations about this at the time."

In 1996 Local Government was re-organised again and all staff in the Grampian Roads Department were transferred to 'The Moray Council': "I was once again based at Highfield House. For a brief spell, while Highfield was totally rebuilt internally, we took up residence in a former shopping mall at the junction with Northfield Terrace and High Street, which is now the Registrar office. Shortly after returning to our newly refurbished offices we were moved to the old Education buildings in Academy Street, just off the Moray Street Car Park."

In 2000 George transferred from the Roads Design section to the Street Lighting and Signs team, before moving to his current position in Roads Maintenance in 2004, ending his career with us based in the portacabins at the Ashgrove Depot.



Between 1975 and 1996 George was involved with numerous road improvement schemes that totally changed traffic in Elgin especially. The Elgin Relief Road (Alexandra Road) took all trunk road traffic off the High Street. While Bishopmill Brae eased the traffic flow north out of Elgin and Hay Street, likewise to the south of the High Street. Roundabouts at Edgar Road, the Laichmoray Hotel and Maisondieu Road all made a big difference to traffic flows at that time.

George recalls: "Of course we were responsible for Trunk Road spending at that time and Grampian, being a much bigger entity than Moray, had a larger budget so we could get more done."

George finished by say: "The work with Moray Council is more maintenance based now due to limited funds, so it's very challenging

having to make the money go further."

George now overtakes the previous record-holder as the longest ever serving member of staff – with 52 years under his belt, it's going to take some shift to surpass him now!

He may be a tad camera-shy and has insisted on no fuss, but we couldn't let this momentous milestone pass by without thanking George for his outstanding service to Moray. Whether it was fresh out of school or heading for retirement, George has worked tirelessly for every version of the Council and we're extremely grateful for that dedication to public service.

Enjoy your well-earned retirement, George – from all who worked with you over the years, we wish you well.

STAR AWARDS 2022

Back with a bang! Our Special Thanks and Recognition (Star) Awards give us the chance to formally recognise the outstanding contribution our colleagues make to Moray Council.

It's a cliché to say an organisation's best asset is our staff, but it's a fitting commendation of the hard work we know our colleagues put in to their roles.

Obviously, during the Covid-19 pandemic we weren't able to hold events in the same way as before. Instead we had an employee recognition scheme substitute – but, like bringing Ronaldo off the bench, it wasn't quite the same old magic as we were used to.

This year, however, we got back to being able to say 'thank you' in person on 9 December at Elgin Academy.

The overall winner of the employee recognition scheme, the Chief Executive's Award for Excellence, as well as the winner of the Chief Executive Special Commendation Award and the Colleague's Choice Award were announced as part of the ceremony presentation.

Awards were also presented for Outstanding Contribution and Letters of Merit were sent to a number of teams in advance of the ceremony.

Presented alongside STAR Awards were Long Service Certificates, which allows us to recognise long-term commitment to the Council.

Speaking following the ceremony, our Chief Executive, Roddy Burns, said: "The Star Awards and Long Service recognition is one of my most valued roles in my capacity as head of staff. I don't take for granted the opportunity to say a simple 'thank you' and I hope all



recipients and nominees this year understand how truly grateful I am for their efforts, not just throughout the covid pandemic, but during more normal times too.

"Given the sheer number of nominees this year I know colleagues feel as grateful as I do, so I thank everyone who nominated a team or staff member. As difficult as it makes our job to judge, I hope to see as many, if not more, nominations next year. Let's build on this fantastic momentum of recognition and celebrate our wonderful staff even more."

The winners of each category and recipients of all awards in 2022 were:

Chief Executive Award in Excellence



Sarah Campbell / Laura Cameron
Environment / Education Resources and Communities

In recognition of the commitment, effective partnership working and collaborative approach which were pivotal in the successful delivery of Rothes Play Area Project.

Chief Executive Special Appreciation Award



Stewart McLauchlan
Education Services

In recognition of your exceptional contribution and commitment to the service during exceptionally challenging times. You have demonstrated exceptional leadership and resilience whilst making a significant positive impact to the Education service.

Chief Executive Special Appreciation Award



Duncan Simpson
Senior Janitor Forres Academy

In recognition of the effective delivery of your role during challenging periods. You have demonstrated commitment, resilience and are a positive role model. Your flexible approach and cheerful disposition has ensured that the schools you support are a welcoming and safe place for all.

Chief Executive Special Commendation



Active Schools Team
Education, Resources and Communities

In recognition of your commitment, creativity and positive approach to service delivery during challenging times. A positive team who is working to an exceptionally high standard and recognised for their innovative approach and resilience.

Chief Executive Special Commendation

Colleagues Choice



Economic Growth and Regeneration Team
Economic Growth and Development

In recognition of your commitment and dedication in managing the business support funding through the pandemic which ensured that business needs were met.



Stewart McLauchlan
Education Services

Congratulations on being recognised by your fellow colleagues for your significant contribution to your service.

Awards for Outstanding Contribution



Sarah Campbell / Laura Cameron
Environment / Education Resources
and Communities

In recognition of your contribution to the successful delivery of the Rothes Play Area Project. Your positive approach, commitment and effective collaborative working ensured the successful execution of the project.



Margaret Smith (Mags)
Early Years

In recognition of your positive impact and commitment to the role of Childminding Development Officer. You are a positive role model who demonstrates excellence in the day job and creates a supportive working environment.



Active Schools Team
Education, Resources and
Communities

In recognition of your commitment, creative approach and positivity in ensuring an effective delivery of the Active Schools service during challenging times.



Beverly Smith
Economic Growth and Development

In recognition of your contribution, exemplary attitude and the positive impact you make to service improvement within Development Management and Building Services.



Economic Growth and Regeneration Team
Economic Growth and Development

In recognition of your dedication and commitment to the delivery of service during very challenging times. A high performing team who demonstrated excellence in the delivery of the business support funding.



Committee Services
Democratic Services

In recognition of your dedication and commitment to ensuring service continuity within Committee Services during the pandemic and our ongoing recovery.



Duncan Simpson
Senior Janitor Forres Academy,
Education

In recognition of your positive attitude, commitment and flexibility to the needs of the schools you support. You are a positive role model to others.



Stewart McLauchlan
Education

In recognition of your commitment and contribution to Education. You have demonstrated exceptional leadership and resilience making a significant positive impact to the service.



Environmental Health and Trading Standards
Economic Growth and Development

In recognition of your contribution and dedication to service delivery whilst working under significant pressure. The team demonstrated excellence in the day job and in providing an effective public health response during the pandemic and ongoing recovery period.



Environmental Protection, Catering, Facilities, Open Space and Waste Teams.
Environmental and Commercial Services

In recognition of your contribution, exemplary attitude and the positive impact on the service and customers. Environmental Protection has been pivotal in ensuring the delivery of essential public services during the pandemic. This was achieved through effective teamwork, a sense of humour and pride in getting a difficult job done.



Kevin Belton
Economic Growth and Development

In recognition of your contribution, exemplary attitude and the positive impact you played in supporting the response to Storm Arwen. Your expertise and willingness to help assisted with keeping the people of Moray safe.



Sarah Thornhill
Educational Services

In recognition of the role you play within Speyside High School as a positive role model and mentor to pupils. You have demonstrated dedication to the development of a strong school community and positively influenced the young people you support.



Ross Ferguson / Kirsty Craig
Environmental and Commercial Services / Education, Communities and Organisational Development

In recognition of your dedication, commitment and being a positive role model to others. Your flexibility and adaptable approach ensured that Moray's response to the Queen's passing was in place to ensure the public could pay their respects appropriately.



Will Burnish
Environmental and Commercial Services

In recognition of your dedication, knowledge and drive which contribute to excellence in the delivery of your job. A role model to others, you have successfully introduced service efficiencies and led the successful contract management process for Lossiemouth Footbridge.

Chief Executive letter of merit

BCHS Cleaning team
Buckie Community High School

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role, excellent customer service and standards of work.

Milne's Primary Staff Team
Milne's Primary School

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role and being a positive role model through challenging times.

Alves Primary Support Staff
Alves Primary

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role, working collaboratively and being a positive role model.

Lhanbryde ELC Staff Team
Lhanbryde Nursery

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role showing excellent resilience and collaborative working during challenging times.

The Payroll Team (Pay Awards)
The Payroll Team

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role, team working and excellent customer service during the processing of the 2021 pay awards.

Consultancy Team
Consultancy Team

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role and the support provided to ensure the opening of the Lossiemouth Footbridge was safe and well managed.

Alison Davidson
Democratic Services

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role and excellent collaborative working to ensure the effective delivery of a major election.

Angela Shaw
Moray SEBN – Education, Resources and Communities

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role and being a positive role model.

Dawn French
Business Support Admin (Education and Social Work)

For commitment demonstrated to the effective delivery of your role and being a positive role model.

Michaela Waters
Housing

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role and being a positive role model.

Debbie MacKenzie
Roads Maintenance / Fleet Services / Stores

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role, your innovative approach and being a positive role model.

Gary Leslie
Roads Maintenance / Fleet Services / Vehicle Workshops

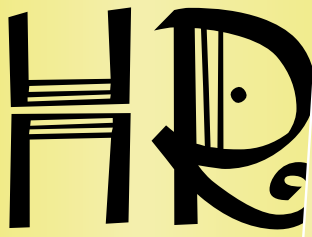
For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role, excellent customer service and being a positive role model.

Heather Laing
Social Work

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role, excellent customer service and being a positive role model.

Kirsty Shand
Economic Growth and Development

For commitment demonstrated to the delivery of your role and excellent team management skills



NOTICEBOARD

Seasonal dates

We have five public holidays over the Christmas period:

- Monday 26 December
- Tuesday 27 December
- Friday 30 December
- Monday 2 January
- Tuesday 3 January

Some dates may vary dependant on services – check with your manager particularly if you work in a seven day service.

Christmas pay day!

- Christmas Pay Day is Thursday 29 December for SJC employees, and
- Friday 23 December for Teachers.

Employee conference 2022 feedback

A huge **thank you** to all employees who attended the 2022 Employee Conference last month :)

We'd love to hear your views of the day. Feedback forms are on their way!

If you could please complete and return to:
organisational.development@moray.gov.uk

We need to hear of what you thought, so we can do even better next year!



Cost of living hub

We've all seen the cost of our bills, food, fuel and other essential items increase over the last few months. If you're concerned about getting through the Christmas period and beyond please visit our Cost of Living Hub:

moray.gov.uk/col

The hub can help you find the right support for you and your family.

We have information on energy saving, waste reduction, housing issues, and employability concerns.

The council's community buildings also offer a warm welcome. You can find a quiet space to read or have a chat with an advisor.

Staff at our information hubs in our Libraries will be able to offer advice to anyone looking for help with council services.

Additional information can also be found at Support Services Guide:

http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_132138.html

Help at Christmas with Time for Talking

The holiday period can be a happy time of the year for some, celebrating with family and friends, while for others it can be a difficult and poignant time. It's important to know that you are not alone and there are a number of areas of support that can be helpful, even if it is just to have a natter with someone.

Time for Talking (TfT) the Councils Employee Assistance Provider, can assist with those over whelming moments, just by listening or offering advice without judgement.

They offer a number of resources, from blogs and podcasts to videos, planners and online information on their website.

You can contact them 365 days a year, including Christmas Day.

TfT website:

www.timefortalking.co.uk

by phone:

0800 970 3980

Or via the app (downloaded from the app store or google play) or chat online to a counsellor through their Live Chat using the password TfTnow.

All chats are totally confidential, people don't need to give their name or email address unless they want to.

For alternative help or advice you can contact:

Samaritans Scotland:

www.samaritans.org

by phone:

116 123

Additional information can also be found at Support Services Guide:

http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_132138.html



Christmas recycling

Christmas recycling

'Tis the season to be jolly into your recycling!

The festive season results in an estimated three million tonnes of waste across the UK. Here are some top tips from our recycling team to help you turn Christmas into a recycling opportunity, and reduce the amount of waste your household produces during this period.

You can also see our handy one minute guide to what goes where on our YouTube channel.



Christmas recycling video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=smNWTzEt_OA&feature=youtu.be

Recycle your real Christmas tree alongside your brown bin once Christmas is over, or take to your nearest manned recycling centre. Pop it out next to your brown bin when collections restart in the new year.

Cut down on your food waste by planning your meals and buying only what you need. If you have any leftovers, and don't have someone like my brother around to Hoover them up, check out the Love Food Hate Waste website. You don't have to have turkey sandwiches for days on end if you check out the different recipes for inspiration. There are also lots of hints and tips on planning your meal or Christmas party. Please remember to put all food waste (cooked or raw) into your brown bin to be recycled.



Love Food Hate Waste:

www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/love-food-hate-waste-scotland

In the UK, a typical Christmas sees Brits throw away:

- **2** million turkeys
- **5** million Christmas puddings
- **17** million Brussels sprouts
- **74** million mince pies – of the total **175** million bought
- **2** million kilos of cheese

Recycle well. Remember to recycle those empty glass jars, beer and wine bottles in your plastic tubs or glass collection sack; beer cans, food tins, plastic bottles and trays in your purple bin; and all paper and cardboard packaging in your blue bin. Remember to flatten and squash them first to make more room. For more information, check out our What Goes Where Guide.



What Goes Where:

www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_77339.html

Fun, but horrifying, fact:
UK residents send around **114,000** tonnes of plastic packaging (equivalent to the weight of **650,000** reindeer) to landfill instead of being recycled!

Save and re-use your wrapping paper or try not to use as much - each year the UK uses 227,000 miles of wrapping paper at Christmas. Please remember to recycle all wrapping paper in your blue bin or take to your nearest recycling centre. Remember to do the scrunch test – not all types of wrapping paper can be recycled. The easiest way to work this out is to scrunch the wrapping paper in your hand - if the paper stays scrunched, it's recyclable. If it springs back, it probably has a covering of plastic film you can't recycle.

Go crackers! Christmas crackers, gift bags and Christmas cards are also paper or cardboard and should also be recycled in your blue recycling bin. Just make sure to remove any bows and ribbons first – you can reuse them yourself next year. Or stick them on Grandad when he falls asleep after Christmas dinner, equally as entertaining.

Donate those unwanted gifts to a local charity shop or collection. It could be just the thing that someone else is looking for – seriously, someone will want that. Remember all textiles and clothes that don't make it to charity, regardless of condition, should be put in the textile banks at your nearest recycling centre or collection point – your green bin isn't the place for them.

When the lights go out – don't throw them out. Around 500 tonnes of Christmas lights are thrown away in the UK at Christmas time. Christmas lights and other electricals that no longer work should be recycled in the waste electrical skip at your nearest recycling centre – please don't put them in your household bin. All electrical goods collected at recycling centres in Moray are taken to a central processing point, where they're broken up and separated into their constituent parts – plastic, metals and glass – to be sent away for recycling.

Metal matters. An estimated 4,500 tonnes of foil is used in the UK each Christmas – the equivalent weight to 2,000 rhinos. Please remember that clean tin foil and foil trays can be recycled in your purple bins. Once all the sweeties have been eaten, and if you're not keeping metal tins in case they come in handy (no, you don't need another one for buttons, nails and keys for old bike locks), pop that in your purple bin too.

Buy rechargeable batteries, and recycle any used ones at your local recycling centre or battery collection point – you'll see these in lots of shops and supermarkets. People use around 179 million batteries at Christmas and an estimated 97% of batteries used in Scotland end up in landfill, leaking harmful chemicals and acids into the soil. Please make sure you recycle all used batteries.

Now you're a Christmas recycling expert, let's thank our waste team for all they do throughout the year and especially when they collect our heavier than usual recycling bins around Christmas!

P.S. the opening schedule for recycling centres and waste collections on page 5.





APSE performance network award success for our teams

Continuing with our awards theme this issue, we turn to the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) annual performance network awards. This is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking service across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Over 200 local authorities use it to compare services to other local authorities of a similar size and scale. Ultimately, helping us to improve our services.

Bearing in mind finalists are made up of local authorities across the whole of UK, we pass on huge congratulations to Housing DLO for being nominated as Best Performer and Most Improved Performer in Building Maintenance.

We also congratulate Street Lighting and Building Cleaning for being nominated as Best Performer in their respective categories. While Catering, Cemeteries and Roads gained nominations as Most Improved in their own networks.

Winner was announced in Blackpool on 1 December 2022. Sadly our teams couldn't be there...

Mike Rollo, our Building Services Manager, wanted to share his congratulations to the teams. "Well done all, as this is a true reflection on the quality of services we provide in comparison to other national DLOs, with our excellent performance and recovery after Covid-19 (during 2021/22) being recognised. I thank all the teams who became finalists and know they'll keep up the good work."



Keith Grammar and Buckie High to host Ethics Cup

We're sending lots of good wishes to the S4-6 pupils from Keith Grammar and Buckie High School who are hosting the North-East Scotland regional tie of the 2023 Ethics Cup on 15 December.

The competition sees teams of pupils from Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, discuss ethical issues of public concern. While it is a tournament, the focus is very much on how each team explores and responds to the assigned case sets, rather than whether they 'win' the argument.

Organised by the Centre for Ethics, Philosophy and Public Affairs, a research centre within the Department of Philosophy at the University of St Andrews, the Cup is now in its fifth year. It's been steadily growing in popularity over the years with regionals having been held ahead of the final at the University.

This is the second time Keith Grammar and Buckie High have co-hosted the regional, which covers Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire and into parts of Tayside. Given the sheer geographical distances involved, the North-East regional is a hybrid event, allowing teams to take part either in-person or online.

This year, in addition to welcoming returning teams from Keith, Buckie and St Paul's RC Academy in Dundee, we'll see Fraserburgh Academy join the tournament for the first time. The organisers at Keith Grammar are extremely grateful to all judges who have committed to the day, representing a breadth of occupations and experiences. No matter which team ultimately emerges as the regional finalist, the tournament will undoubtedly showcase all our young people at their very best.

We look forward to sharing the results with you in the next edition of Connect – all the best to everyone taking part.



New lifeguard training assessors

Congratulations to our six lifeguards who have undertaken training to become assessors for the National Pool Lifeguard Qualifications (NPLQ). The qualification is necessary for any lifeguard on pool duty and the main route to employment as a lifeguard.

Our staff are nearly finished their training, which will enable them to train new lifeguards themselves. The last piece of the jigsaw is to train six new lifeguards each for their own NPLQ.

The qualification usually costs £250-300 but we're able to offer budding lifeguards the chance to gain their NPLQ for just £60. This covers the cost of the course manual and final assessment.

Courses will be available in all pools across Moray as either a week long course of 40 hours or a split course over set days (e.g. over two or three weekends). The timetable can be arranged to suit participants.

Moray Council's Principal Sport and Leisure Officer, Ken Brown, says the opportunity is too good to miss.

"I'm extremely proud of all our staff who have stepped up to get their training and assessor qualification and can see this opportunity appealing to a range of budding lifeguards. Perhaps senior school pupils, college students, young leaders or someone looking for a career change.

"If anyone has an interest in relief or part-time work opportunities at any of our pools, or Moray Leisure Centre, this is a great way to gain your vital qualification. It can fit in with existing work patterns and is a real life skill to get you on your lifeguard career ladder."



The minimum age to undertake the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification is 16 years old. A pre-course swim and fitness ability test is required prior to undertaking the course. Training can take place between now and September 2023.

Anyone interested in taking up the offer to get their National Pool Lifeguard Qualification with minimal fees should contact Ken Brown.

@ email:
ken.brown@moray.gov.uk

☎ or phone:
01542 888 055.

Walking and cycling in the winter months – stay safe!



It may be cold outside, but that shouldn't stop us getting out and about. Many of us still walk or cycle during the winter months. As it's often dark when we go to work and when we head home, staying safe is a vital priority if you're walking or cycling.

The health benefits of keeping active are well known. Did you know that a brisk walk of 30 minutes, five days a week is the best way to meet recommended levels of physical activity?

To help you stay safe have a look at our walking and cycling tips before you go, to make sure you get the most out of your outside adventures or your commute to work.

- **Plan your route:** know where you're going and plan for any diversions due to roadworks or closures.
- **Be prepared!** Scottish weather can change quickly and winter days are short, so you can sometimes find yourself inadvertently walking or cycling home in the dark. Make sure you're wearing high visibility clothing so motorists can see you.
- **If you're new to walking or cycling, go with someone else** to build up confidence. Take it slow if the pavements and roads are slippery.
- **On windy days, look for more sheltered routes** and try to avoid areas with trees if a gale is blowing – branches might snap off and land on you!
- Try to plan to walk or cycle with the wind behind you.

- **Wear the appropriate clothing:** warm clothes and waterproofs. Depending on your route, you might want to take a head torch too.
- For an easy stroll, plan a walk which has a café or pub en-route to get warmed up in, or find a sheltered bench for a rest halfway around.
- **The ground in the winter can pose several safety**

risks. Wet leaves can be slippery as can patches of ice or even snow on the road. It's wise to be extra cautious and look out for potential weather-related hazards that could do you some harm.

Stop press! For those cycling to work please note Rose Cottage is back in use for staff to use as Cycle Parking.

- **If you're cycling always wear a helmet and keep your bike in tip top condition:** after riding in bad weather it's a good idea to give your bike five minutes TLC to keep things running smoothly. Rinse off any mud, salt or grit; check your chain, gears, brakes and wheel rims; and dry off with an old towel. Make sure you've checked your tyres too, that will allow better grip and help avoid unnecessary skidding.
- **Stay in control of your bike:** snow and ice are particularly hazardous cycling conditions, so you need to make sure that you are in full control of your bike at all times. When riding on settled snow, brake often to clear rims as braking can take up to six times longer when the rims are wet. If you encounter ice, steer straight, don't pedal, and try not to brake as this could cause you to skid and fall.

Finally, if you're heading out on a walk or ride in winter conditions, be sure to take extra care, give yourself extra time and don't put yourself at risk.

Lone Working Policy and Guidance Review

Following a review of lone working practices within the Council, a comprehensive audit was undertaken to determine the relative position of the Council as a whole as to the level of compliance and to the ongoing suitability of the lone working policy.

While the original policy was generally sound and legally compliant, it did require refreshing and updating in order to improve the effectiveness of its implementation, and to adequately reflect the diverse range of services and working environments encountered by council staff.

As part of the process, a survey was generated and distributed to the various services within the Council to help determine the level of knowledge and understanding around the lone working issue and to gauge the level of policy implementation and risk control in the various environments. Specific areas considered within the survey included awareness of corporate policy; risk assessments; training; procedures; and incident reporting.

The survey was well received and seen a good level of engagement by service managers. The information gathered helped further identify the areas requiring particular attention for improvement.



A Lone Working Guidance document has also been produced to assist service managers in implementing the policy and navigating the specific issues relating to lone working. While the guidance is generic, it highlights the key points for consideration and provides a basis for the production of a suitable safe system of work.

Work required within services:

- It's the responsibility of each Head of Service to review their operational practices and protocols while giving full consideration to the revised policy and guidance.
- Implementation must be with the full involvement of all staff affected by lone working to ensure all lone workers are correctly identified, and suitable and sufficient risk assessments are produced.
- Robust systems must be put in place for the control of risk to employees from lone working including the adequate training of staff and the provision of emergency arrangements where necessary.
- Further help and guidance will be available to managers from the Corporate Health and Safety Team.

STRATEGY TALK

impact of

Covid-19

on education

The Education Service in Moray covers the core delivery of learning across Early Learning and Childcare settings, primary and secondary schools. This service was enhanced during Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns with Childcare Hubs for Key Workers delivered initially. Then a more hybrid approach in the second lockdown, with schools being able to accommodate key groups of children and young people based on their knowledge of children and families in their care.

A move to remote learning had a major impact on how education was delivered and how children and young people were supported with digital devices handed out to families, a move to online platforms, flexibility for pupils to choose when and how they worked, as well as a new component of doorstep visits or learning walks where wellbeing was identified as a concern. A return to school buildings in August 2021 was hard for many with mitigations in place, however the opportunity to return to in-house learning was welcomed by all.

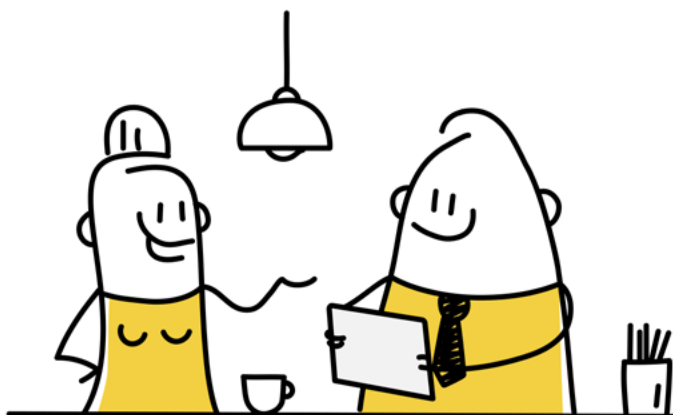
During the pandemic, staff at all levels pulled together and adopted with vigour new ways of working. Engagement with remote learning was variable and families' ability to support children and young people while dealing with their own work or adaptations to 'normality' were hard. A return to educational establishments was not a return to normal and ongoing changes to how education was delivered has impacted everyone.

Covid-19 recovery was a priority which coincided with a reviewed Education Strategic Plan with Education Resources colleagues. The Education Strategic Plan 2020-23 emerged 'For Moray's Children and Young People' with a focus on five key areas:

- **Improving outcomes for all:** ensuring all learners progress, achieve and attain and for some who have had increased trauma or adversity, supporting them to attend school full-time with clear plans and support in place
- **Curriculum:** taking a fresh look at curriculum delivery post Covid-19 with a key focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing initially and an opportunity for establishments to review their vision, values and aims taking their unique contexts and circumstances in to consideration.
- **Learning and teaching:** returning to delivery with less mitigations, providing our staff with the freedom to undertake pre-Covid-19 lessons with group work, cross class or stage working and building on the use of digital technology to support learning. The pandemic increased the opportunities for outdoor learning and allows us to further build on this.
- **Supporting all learners:** we can see the impact of lockdowns on staff and pupils with increased anxiety, mental and wellbeing issues, stress and depression. We're looking at the support for our staff with HR and key partners, to ensure that our families and staff are getting appropriate access to services. Increased evidence of concerning behaviour and additional support needs due to developmental delays or inability to access services has resulted in us revisiting our approaches with a key desire to roll out a nurturing approach.

- **Leadership:** the emergence of leadership skills and capability across our service grew during lockdown and we'll continue to develop and nurture leadership at all levels from children to adults to guide and steer us post pandemic and in to the future whilst continuing to grow leaders of the future.

The pandemic was hard on everyone, however we look to the future and the service is focussing on rejuvenation. Building on Covid-19 success stories and seizing opportunities to take a fresh look at our service to improve our offer to all. As we move to 2023 we'll keep this at the forefront of our minds as we refresh our strategic priorities for a new three year period. We cannot do this alone as we rely on partners, families and communities as 'it takes a village to raise a child' and not education alone.



Employee engagement activities

It's been a busy couple of months of employee engagement, with the Employee Conference taking the spotlight. Other engagement activities that the Corporate Management Team (CMT)/Senior Management Team (SMT) were involved in were:

Service question time

A pilot activity for 2022, designed so employees can engage directly with CMT. Using topical information, key messages are shared with the service followed up by a question time session. Staff have the opportunity to explore what this means for them and their service, ask questions and gain a better understanding of the topic.

A group of 24 employees from Environmental and Commercial Services; Finance; and Economic Growth and Development discussed budgeting for 2022/2023 with Deputy Chief Executive, Rhona Gunn.

Attendees voted on whether they thought taking a priority based approach to budgeting was the right approach and if a hierarchical approach to reducing our net expenditure works. Staff also discussed whether there are ways to transform our services that still need to be considered.

Rhona enjoyed listening to the views of the workforce and engaging with colleagues from a range of services. We look forward to planning more of these sessions in 2023.

Service learning visit to ICT and data centre

Head of HR, ICT and Organisational Development, Frances Garrow, alongside Cllrs Robertson and Cowe, completed a Service Learning Visit with the ICT team at HQ on 6 October 2022. Service Learning Visits allow staff across a range of services to engage directly with Senior Managers and give feedback with appropriate actions being taken where possible.

Frances said: "This visit was useful for the Elected Members to see and hear about the 'behind the scenes' engine of ICT with its many component and interdependent parts, as well as the sheer scale of the operation required to keep such a range of services running, updated and secure.

"It was also fascinating to see round the Data Centre and the facts and figures provided by Mike Alexander were a bit mind boggling to be honest! The team were very engaging and what came through to me was their diligence and commitment which are a credit to the service and the council."

Cllr Robertson said: "It was a real pleasure to meet the ICT team who are often overlooked. They are central to our whole Council service delivery, from delivery of hardware to design of web-based functions. I really appreciated how adaptable and responsive they are to resolving local IT issues to dealing with external threats that could potentially disrupt comms, delivery of service and financial corruption. A truly vital department for a modern Moray Council."

Management listening meetings

Our Chief Executive, Roddy Burns, chaired three Managers Listening Meetings in October and November. Benefits Manager, Norma Matheson, and Head Teacher at Elgin Academy, Kyle Scott, shared co-hosting for the meetings.

Managers built on the discussions from the last Leadership Forum, understanding and exploring how services are being impacted by poverty and the cost of living crisis. Ideas were shared and options considered to progress with the challenges of the crisis.

Roddy also gave the groups a budget update before closing the meetings.

Managers Listening Meetings are bi-annual events allowing managers to discuss outcomes from previous leadership forums and corporate issues. It's a great way to explore ideas and good practice, benchmarking across services and discussing issues and solutions.



Back to the floor visit at Forres Academy

Depute Chief Executive, Denise Whitworth, visited Forres Academy on 9 November for a morning working with four Pupil Support Assistants.

Denise enjoyed getting back out to meet colleagues face-to-face; "It's great that we're re-activating the workforce culture activities. Being able to get out and meet people gives a real insight and much better feel for what services and our workforce are experiencing every day.

"I have to admit I was a little nervous about going 'back to school' and into a live classroom but the staff at Forres Academy were very welcoming and, probably

like new pupils on their first day, I soon settled in as the school day absorbed me.

Denise spent time with pupils in the ASN base and said; "The pupils in the ASN base all have different needs so I was able to put to use my building skills and test my (shameful lack of!) knowledge of Horrid Henry in a quiz from a big fan. Later the class were thinking about food packaging, target markets and their own designs so it was really good to see life skills approached in a way that suited the range of needs and abilities.

"It was interesting to see the contrast between the S2 and S3 classes and how pupils with ASN were supported in mainstream classes. Maths and Chemistry were my subjects that day and I was pleased that I could still remember some maths during an algebra class - although the recap from the teacher helped!

"While I was sorry to have missed the chemistry experiment lesson, it was great to see how absorbed the young people were in reporting their results and I learned that crackers burn better than cheese puffs or raisins.

"My thanks to the staff and pupils at Forres Academy for making my back to the floor experience so enjoyable."

Up coming service learning and back to the floor visits

CMT and Senior Managers will soon be visiting Lossiemouth High School, Buckie Harbour, Roads, Woodview, and more!

Visits are an excellent opportunity for staff to engage directly with CMT and Senior Managers. If you would like a member of CMT / SMT to visit your team please contact Karen Baker...



eMail:

karen.baker@moray.gov.uk



Employee Conference 2022

The Employee Conference 2022 was held at Elgin Town Hall on 10 November.

The theme for the conference was 'New Horizons- Building Back Better', which focused on how the council will continue on its journey of transformation and the role that we all play in that journey as we look to a brighter future.

This theme helped us to gain an understanding of what the Council will achieve through the delivery of the Corporate Plan and LOIP priorities and consider what the future looks like for the workforce, the emerging financial position and what needs to change to enable the council to build a sustainable council for the future.

A string ensemble consisting of three pupils from Elgin Academy played music during registration and before Council Leader, Cllr Robertson opened the conference, giving a warm welcome to all delegates.



Chief Executive, Roddy Burns, acknowledged that due to the pandemic this was the first conference since 2019 and thanked everyone for their hard work and commitment over the last two years. He acknowledged the immense challenges of the pandemic and the positive impact of being back together. He recognised the ongoing contributions as we continue on our journey of recovery and transformation.

Denise Whitworth, Depute Chief Executive, updated the attendees on the Corporate Plan and Local Outcome Improvement Plan priorities, giving an insight into the challenges of 'New Horizons – Building Back Better' and what this means for Moray as a whole.

Interactive sessions saw the staff involved in discussion groups, with the first session focussing on what we need to consider to build a sustainable council for the future. We reflected on where we are now in the journey and where we need to be to build back better.

A coffee break provided refreshments for delegates who browsed stands from external organisations including Time for Talking; Occupational Health; 2622 (Highland) Squadron RAF Reserves; Royal Marines Reserves, as well as our own Money Advice Service; Transformation; eLearning; and Employee Engagement stands.

Chief Financial Officer, Lorraine Paisey, provided a financial update advising of the current financial challenges for the council.



The second interactive discussion session 'Morayopoly' saw everyone have the opportunity to consider the financial challenges and how we approach them. Thoughts were given about where we invest in services and considerations about where we might make some changes. This was an interesting session and demonstrated how difficult these decisions are.

Rhona Gunn, Depute Chief Executive, presented the economic recovery plans and investment bid outcomes, as we start looking forward to a brighter future ahead.

The Community Support Unit delivered a presentation showing their experience of working with and making a positive difference in the community.

Cllr Robertson then closed the conference, thanking all for their valuable contributions.

Some delegates took advantage of the Spaces for Listening sessions after the conference finished. These group sessions are a simple, structured process which creates a space in which colleagues each have an equal opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings, and to experience an equality of listening.

Thanks to all those who attended and took part in the conference. The contributions from everyone were very welcome and will be considered by senior managers as work progresses on the transformation of Building Back Better.

Feedback from the conference will be published on Interchange and in Connect in due course.



Be safe, have a mocktail this year

The Christmas season is nearly here, with parties, visiting family, and socialising on the cards for most of us. If you plan to drink and be merry, make sure that you've vested the responsibility onto someone who has not had a drop of alcohol to drop you home safely. Or consider designating a driver, taking a taxi or make arrangements to stay overnight.

Drinking alcohol slows down your reactions and impairs judgement, making driving unsafe and putting you, and others, at greater risk of accidents. It affects us all differently, one person's safe limit is not the same as the next person's, our weight, size and what we have had to eat, are all factors. While a glass of wine may be ok for some, it may be too much for others.

Whatever you decide to do, the message is clear, never drink and drive. This is also true for the morning after. Alcohol can take up to 24 hours or even longer to leave your system. You can still be over the limit and not safe to drive without realising.

The law in Scotland states that drivers cannot exceed: 50 milligrammes of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, 22 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath, and 67 milligrammes per 100 millilitres of urine.

If you need to drive, why not try a mocktail instead!

Mocktails are non-alcoholic mixed drinks meant to replicate cocktails, just without the alcohol. They can provide the same delicious taste as a cocktail, but without the headache the next morning, which is great news in general!

Whether you're the designated driver, a non-drinker or are simply looking for a new experience, mocktails create a great taste that's hard to beat.

Why not try a Pomegranate Mojito mocktail – this spin on the mint and lime classic contains delicious pomegranate seeds and juice.

Prep: 10 minutes plus freezing time

Makes: 1.5 Litres



Ingredients

- 3 tbsp pomegranate seeds
- Big bunch of mint
- 2 limes, quartered, plus slices to garnish
- 1L of pomegranate juice
- 500ml lemonade

Method

- A day ahead divide the pomegranate seeds between the holes in an ice cube tray, top up with water and freeze.
- Reserve half the mint for serving, and tear the rest into a large jug with the lime quarters. Using a rolling pin, bash the mint and lime to release the flavours. Add the pomegranate juice and lemonade. Put ice cubes in each glass, then strain over the pomegranate mix through a small sieve. Garnish with lime slices and more mint.



You can find lots more mocktail recipes online.
<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/search?q=mocktails>



Sport and Culture Hardship fund is open

Our new Sport and Culture Hardship Fund is open for applications.

At the 10 August full council meeting, elected members agreed to allocate £40,000 of Covid Economic Recovery monies to the new fund. A further £162,000 of Covid Economic Recovery monies went to the Flexible Food Fund.

The new Sport and Culture Hardship Fund supports children and young people under 18 years old to access leisure and recreation opportunities outwith school.

The fund also supports individuals between 18-25 years old to access a training or education course outwith school or further education that can support them into employment or develop key life skills.

Research shows there is an increase in the number of children and young people unable to join sports clubs, music groups, art, culture and digital activities due to financial hardship. Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to relax, play and take part in cultural and artistic activities.

Our Sport and Culture Service Manager, Kim Slater, said at the time of the fund opening: "With the cost of living challenges facing our families sport and culture activities are often the first to be dropped as a nice-to-do. This new fund means families may not have to make that choice.

"Young people need to have the ability to develop their personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the full. The ability to participate in extra-curricular groups or informal leisure opportunities is crucial to a child's development and this fund will support those experiencing hardship to do that."

Full details of the Fund, eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found on our website.



Sport and Culture Hardship Fund:

[www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/
page_144105.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_144105.html)

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Modern living means we're using more and more electrical appliances at home and in the workplace. Just 20 years ago, the average UK home would have had a hi-fi system and one TV or video. Today, it's more likely that there are at least two TVs, a DVD player, a satellite receiver, games console, microwave, computer and more. So, the risk of electrical accidents in the home and the workplace is much higher than before.

Around 75% of fires in the home are of electrical origin. Of those, eight out of ten were caused by faulty electrical equipment including white goods, lighting, phone chargers, battery chargers, etc.

Millions of people commit basic electric safety 'blunders' without realising they're exposing themselves to the risk of fire or electric shock. This includes overloading sockets, using items with damaged plugs and leads and using poor quality items.

Counterfeit and Sub-standard Electrical Products

With Christmas just round the corner, and the increase in the popularity of online shopping, it's become easier than ever for counterfeiters to sell fake or sub-standard products to unsuspecting shoppers.

It can be impossible to tell whether a product is genuine by looking at its online listing. Fake electrical products can appear sophisticated on the outside but they often contain faulty components that can overheat and catch fire or deliver a fatal electric shock. Listings can include imagery taken from official product sites, fake official safety marks and believable pricing and items can even be priced just a few pounds below the recommended retail value to avoid arousing suspicion.

Research carried out by the Charity, Electrical Safety First, has found that a third of the people who have bought fake electrical products purchased them from online marketplaces. These sites allow third party sellers to trade without adequate systems in place to detect counterfeit and substandard electrical products.

Advice for Consumers: when you're shopping online, always buy from a retailer that you know and trust, either directly from the manufacturer's website or a trusted High Street name. That way if something goes

wrong, you can return the product for repair or a refund. If you suspect you've purchased a fake, stop using it immediately. Report it to Trading Standards so that they can take action against the seller; selling fake products is illegal and puts people's lives at risk.

Product Recalls and Safety Notices

In the UK, the response rate to an electrical product recall is worryingly low, largely due to people failing to register their appliances. This means that there are potentially millions of recalled electrical items still in use in businesses and at home.

Manufacturers must ensure the products they put on the market are safe, but if a safety issue is later identified, a planned course of action is critical to provide a timely and effective response. This can significantly reduce the impact of such incidents and their associated reputational damage.

- **Product recall:** Be the first to know if your appliance is on recall. Register with the manufacturer before it's too late.
- **Employers and landlords:** Make sure you register the appliances in the properties you own or buildings you operate.
- **Do you live in rented accommodation?:** Check the landlord has registered your appliances. If not, you can do it yourself.
- **How old is your appliance?:** Check the manufacturers website. Some appliances up to 12 years old can be registered.
- **Small appliances can have a big impact:** Faulty toasters, kettles, heaters etc can all cause fires. Register with the manufacturer before it is too late.



Check to see if you have any recalled items in the workplace or at home:

www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/product-recalls/



M365 what's happening

ICT, with the help of others across the Council, is currently undertaking a project which will see the rollout of Microsoft 365 (M365) across the Council during 2023.

What is it?

Microsoft 365 (M365) includes a range of products which have the potential to help you in your day-to-day work.

Once M365 is rolled out, using Microsoft Teams, you will have access to a range of applications which will help you manage your day, your projects and your data. It'll also facilitate improved collaboration both internally and externally.

What does that mean for me? You will be able to have a team created within Microsoft Teams which will allow you to work more closely with your colleagues. You'll be able to centralise everything you need to make life a little easier, okay perhaps not everything, but a lot. The following are some of the applications you could have pinned to that team:

- Employee ideas (idea campaigns)
- OneNote (gather ideas/information)
- Tasks by Planner and To Do
- Shifts (manage rotas)
- Team calendar
- Whiteboard
- Wiki

Use 'Employee Ideas' to give everyone in the team a way of putting forward ideas. OneNote as a digital notebook to create, organise and share your notes and ideas. Use the Tasks by Planner and To Do to manage projects, allocate tasks, set deadlines and graphically demonstrate progress.

It is powerful, however.

M365 is a powerful suite of applications. Policies and guidance will have to be put in place to not only help protect against unintentional data loss, but to also manage that data in line with Public Records (Scotland)

Act 2011. M365 with all its abilities to help make life easier is also an electronic documents and records management system (EDRMS) and will need to be treated as such.

What do I get on day one?

For more information regarding day one please check out the M365 project page on the Interchange. Here you'll find information about the project, current M365 FAQs and information regarding team 'Microsoft 365'.



M365 Project:

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_142376.html

Team 'Microsoft 365' has been created within Microsoft Teams in a bid to improve communication regarding the Microsoft 365 project. Within the team you will find a place to communicate, information about the project and a list of M365 FAQs.

For more information about the team and how to join it, go to the Team Microsoft 365 Interchange page. Or, go straight to the M365 FAQs and click on 'Connecting to team Microsoft 365'. This'll show you how to join the team.



Microsoft Team 365:

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_144775.html



M365 FAQs:

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_142384.html#general

When will I get M365?

Work is ongoing to configure the infrastructure required to make M365 available. A trial is scheduled to start February/March 2023 and work is currently underway to put this in place.

Watch this space for more information... coming soon!



Get ready for winter driving

Winter Driving

It's that time of year again when we dig out the winter coats and woolly hats, put the heating back on and prepare for winter. It's also the time of year we have to consider the potential for hazardous driving conditions and prepare our vehicles for what may lie ahead.

Driving in the winter can be very different than at other times of the year. Adverse weather and longer periods of darkness make driving more hazardous. Sometimes conditions can be extreme, with prolonged periods of heavy snow and floods. The geography of Moray means a single journey can take us into very different weather conditions even just over the distance of a few miles, so we should adapt the way we drive according to the conditions.

Some of us may have little experience of driving in extreme conditions, such as snow, so take some time to consider how it affects your driving rather than driving as normal.

In very bad conditions, we should avoid driving completely, unless we absolutely have to make the journey and driving is the only option.

Prepare your vehicle

It's a good idea to have vehicles fully serviced before winter and have the anti-freeze tested. If you can't have it serviced, do your own checks. In particular, check:

- Lights are clean and working
- Battery is fully charged
- Windscreen, wiper blades and other windows are clean and the washer bottle filled with winter screen wash
- Tyre condition, tread depth and pressure (of all the tyres, including the spare)
- Brakes are working well
- Fluids are kept topped up, especially windscreen wash (to the correct concentration to prevent it freezing), anti-freeze and oil

It's also a good idea to stock up on de-icer, windscreen wash, oil and anti-freeze at the start of winter.



Emergency Kit

When extreme weather is possible, keep an emergency kit in your car, especially if you're going into rural areas. If this seems unnecessary, take a moment to imagine yourself stranded in your car overnight, due to a snow storm or floods. How would you stay warm? What would you eat and drink?

If you must drive in these conditions, consider carrying:

- A shovel and de-icing equipment
- Warm boots
- A hazard warning triangle and first aid kit
- A working torch
- Warm clothes and Emergency Rations (including hot drink in a flask)
- Mobile Phone (fully charged)

Prepare your journey

Listen to local and national weather broadcasts and travel bulletins. As conditions can change rapidly, check them regularly and be prepared to change your plans if conditions worsen.

If conditions are very bad, and the emergency services are recommending that people don't travel, then avoid making your journey unless it is absolutely necessary. Can you postpone your trip? Can you travel by other means, or avoid the need for the journey completely by using the phone or email?

Of course, what's 'essential' to one person may not be to another; we each have to make our own decisions according to our circumstances. But, try to be realistic about which journeys are essential and which ones could be postponed. Always tell someone where you are going and when you anticipate arriving. Ensure you have plenty fuel or battery charge for the journey.

Moray Gift Card

Hands up who else is smug when they've finished their Christmas shopping by October?

Now admit you also have someone very difficult to buy for. Or someone you forgot. Or are facing an unexpected last minute visit from Auntie Jean who you didn't get anything for in the end of Summer sale!

Fear not! We've got you covered. The Moray Gift Card is a perfect last minute gift, the perfect present for picky relations and ideal for a secret santa.

Not only can you put anything from £5 to £500 on a Moray Gift Card, it can be used in over 160 shops and businesses across Moray. What a fabulous way to support our local economy!



Find out where you can spend your Moray Gift Card, and order one, here:

[https://
scotlandgiftslocal.com/
product/moray-gift-card/](https://scotlandgiftslocal.com/product/moray-gift-card/)

Think about it!

*If every adult in Moray
spent £5 a week shopping
locally, around £37m would
go into the local economy.*

