ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP POLICY

Policy Summary

This policy outlines the principles and procedures governing inward and outward advertising and sponsorship arrangements adopted by Aberdeenshire Council.

This is a revision of the Commercial Sponsorship Policy and Procedures approved in June 2009. Revisions of the original Policy are documented in section 6.

Policy Status	**Approved by the committee on 20/11/2025**
Responsible Officer	Tara Murray, Project Manager
Policy Sponsor	Craig Innes, Head of Commercial and Procurement, Procurement
Authorised By	Aberdeenshire Council
Policy Review Date	20/11/2030

1. Policy Statement

The purpose of the Policy is to ensure the Council's advertising and sponsorship process is transparent, consistent and aligns with the Council's values and strategic objectives. The Policy will also raise awareness of sponsorship across the Council and partners.

The Policy will support the Council's strategic priorities by:

- Supporting a sustainable economy through building partnerships with local businesses and organisations and strengthening links and collaboration with the private sector.
- Connecting communities through supporting community groups, programmes, sports, and local environmental initiatives.
- Supporting residents to live well locally through aligning with sponsors that support sustainability, inclusion, and wellbeing.
- Bringing climate change and sustainability benefits through supporting sustainability initiatives and events and promotion of low-carbon lifestyles.
- Bringing additional income to the Council which can be used to improve services and raise the Council's profile and reputation with the public.

2. Scope of Policy

2.1 The Advertising and Sponsorship Policy applies to all Aberdeenshire Council employees and councillors; all advertising and sponsorship opportunities involving Council owned or managed assets, services, events, publications and digital platforms; all third-party advertising and sponsorship agreements involving the Council, and all partner organisations working with or on behalf of the Council.

2.2 Definitions

I. Advertising is defined as paid-for messages promoting products, services, or causes, displayed on Council-owned or managed platforms.

II. Sponsorship is defined as the act of supporting an event, activity, person or organisation, or premises by way of a financial contribution or through the provision of products or services.

2.3 This means that sponsorship is a business arrangement where the sponsor can legitimately expect to benefit, usually by taking advantage of marketing opportunities through the sponsorship arrangement. It is not a donation, nor is it a means by which the Council or the sponsoring company manages, measures and reports on its commitment to the improve its positive impact on its residents and the environment, nor is it a commercial contract.

2.4 There are three forms of commercial sponsorship:

I. Financial sponsorship. For example, a cash payment to sponsoring of street furniture, sporting events etc., in return for company branding on publicity material.

II. In-kind sponsorship. For example, provision of equipment by the private company or access to staff of the private company

III. Promotions. For example, voucher schemes where consumers collect points by collecting a company's product with the council subsequently receiving resources in exchange or loyalty schemes where consumers collect points by using the council's services and can then exchange them for private sector goods.

2.5 Where the selling of advertising space on posters, directories etc. is covered by a procurement contract, this is a commercial contract even though it may behave like commercial sponsorship

3 Policy Principles

3.1 The Council will only enter into Commercial sponsorship agreements if the benefits to the Council and/or the public outweigh the costs.

3.2 All advertising and sponsorship must be:

- Be legal, decent, honest, and transparent.
- Not conflict with Council values, policies, or statutory duties.
- Not promote political parties, messages, campaigns, or lobbying activity
- Not promote religious messages, campaigns, or activity.
- Not promote activity where a clear conflict of interest arises.
- Not imply Council endorsement of products or services.

3.3 The Council will not accept sponsorship that undermines health promotion. For example, sponsorship from companies that produce or promote tobacco, food with a high fat content, or high sugar drinks.

3.4 Extra care will be taken where consumers are children or young people. The Council will not enter into commercial sponsorship agreements that lead to the advertising or promotion of products to children or adults under 18 years of age that are high in fat, saturated fat, salt or sugar, include a direct exhortation to children to buy advertised products or persuade their parents or other adults to buy advertised products for them or are likely to result in physical, mental or moral harm of children or could be seen to exploit the vulnerability or lack of experience of children. Sponsorship should be used to reinforce positive, healthy behaviour.

3.5 In line with the Scottish Government's Policy on Alcohol Marketing and Restrictions statement in September 2024, the council will be a lead as a public body in terms of alcohol advertising and sponsorship. The council recognises the potential health and social impacts of alcohol consumption and will regulate alcohol-related advertising to ensure it aligns with council values, public health priorities, legal standards and community values.

3.6 The council will assess sponsorship and advertising opportunities from local brewers and distillers on a case-by-case basis.

3.7 Under the Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act 2002, the council will not enter into any agreement with a tobacco company or any other company which would promote a tobacco product. A "tobacco product" means a product consisting wholly or partly of tobacco and intended to be smoked, sniffed, sucked, or chewed. This includes Snuff (smokeless tobacco). Although the Act does not cover Vapes (e-cigarettes), the council will not enter into any agreement with company which would promote vape products.

3.8 The council will not accept sponsorship which conflicts with our policy objectives around climate change.

3.9 The council will ensure that the marketing benefit resulting from commercial sponsorship is proportionate and that the association made between the company and the council is responsible. The council's Corporate Communications Team will work with sponsors to support communications activity. This will include the provision of advice and guidance but not the delivery of communications.

3.10 In the normal course of events the Council will not use Inward Sponsorship to fund core services but will only use it for service additions or improvements. However, any specific sponsorship may be proposed by a Chief Officer to be used for core services to support Council priorities. Such proposals would be considered on a case-by-case basis and approved by the relevant Policy Committee. Any such arrangements would be subject to annual review.

3.11 The council's name and logo will not be used by sponsors without the permission of the council. This will included approval from the Customer and Digital Heads of Service to ensure any use of the council logo complies with the council's Corporate Branding Guidance.

Approval Process

3.12 In line with the Scheme of Governance Part 3 – Financial Regulations 4.18. All sponsorship agreements, both inward and outward, must be based on a written agreement. For agreements with a value less than £1,000, an exchange of letters will be sufficient evidence of a written agreement. For agreements with a value in excess of £1,000, a full contract is required.

3.13 Outward Sponsorship. Outward sponsorship refers to any financial or in-kind contribution made by the council to external individuals, organisations, or events to support activities that promote the council's priorities, deliver public benefit, or enhance the visibility and reputation of the council and /or the area.

3.14 All outward sponsorship activity must support one or more of the council's priorities, demonstrate clear and measurable public or community value and not be used as a substitute for grant funding or procurement where those mechanisms are more appropriate.

3.15 Proposals for outward sponsorship must include:

- A business case or sponsorship proposal detailing objectives, expected outcomes, costs and alignment with council policy.
- A defined funding source and value for money justification.

- An assessment of reputational, financial and legal risks with appropriate mitigation; and
- Provisions for monitoring, review, and termination.

3.16 All outward sponsorship must be approved by the relevant Director following consultation with the Head of Finance, the Head of Customer and Digital and where appropriate the Head of Legal. Where sponsorship commitments are in excess of £10,000 or span more than one financial year this must be approved by the relevant Policy Committee.

3.17 Sponsorship commitments. The relevant Policy Committee must approve the following:

- Equal to or exceeding £10,000; or
- Spanning more than one financial year

3.18 All approved sponsorships must be supported by a written agreement, regardless of value. The agreement must specify:

- The sponsorship purpose, deliverables, and timeframe.
- Financial terms and conditions of support including clarity between firm and indicative funding, the latter of which is subject to change or withdrawal.
- Any branding, publicity, or acknowledgement arrangements
- Termination and clawback clauses in the event of non-delivery or misuse of funds

3.19 Directors must ensure effective monitoring of all outward sponsorship and retain evidence of delivery and compliance for audit purposes.

3.20 Following the completion of the commercial sponsorship, the Service will carry out an evaluation of the agreement. Evaluations will be kept in the central register. The evaluation should include:

- An assessment of whether the consumers/public benefitted from the sponsorship
- Any unforeseen costs to the council
- Whether the sponsorship met the aims of the sponsoring organisation
- Views of consumers/public on the sponsorship
- Media reaction to the sponsorship
- Would the staff involved do anything different in future

4 Supporting Policies and Documents

The Policy reflects the following:

(i) Financial Regulations
(ii) List of Officer Powers
(iii) Joint Procurement Strategy 2023 to 2026
(iv) Partnership Working Policy

(v) Corporate Asset Management Plan
(vi) Road Asset Management Plan

This Policy replaces the previous Commercial Sponsorship – Policy and Procedures approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 11 June 2009.

5 Council Strategic Priorities

This Policy supports the delivery of all the Council's Strategic Priorities:

Pillar	Priority	How does the policy reflect the Council's strategic Priorities?
A sustainable economy	We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.	Through building partnerships with local businesses and organisations and strengthening links and collaboration with the private sector.
Connected communities	We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.	Through supporting community programmes, sports, and local environmental initiatives
Living well locally	We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.	Through aligning with sponsors that support sustainability, inclusion, and wellbeing, and not accepting sponsorship that undermines health and wellbeing.
Climate Change	Climate change and the drive to net zero will be at the heart of how we make decisions and deliver services to support the delivery of our strategic priorities in the long term. Our decisions will be informed through the lens of climate change to support our communities to have a sustainable future.	Through aligning with sponsors that support sustainability and the drive to net zero and not accepting sponsorship that negatively impacts nature or undermines climate change and the drive to net zero emissions.

6 Policy Revision

The policy will be reviewed every five years or sooner if required. Sponsorships will be monitored on an annual basis to ensure compliance with this policy.

Version Number	Revision Date	Committee Approval Date	Summary of Changes
1.	NA	10/05/2009	NA
2.	27/08/2025	20/11/2025	Format has been changed in line with the new Policy template. Addition of section 1. Policy statement and links to strategic priorities. Definition of sponsorship has been amended 2.2 (1.1 in version 1). Addition of bullet points (3.2). Amendment of 3.3 to include alcohol and tobacco (3.2 in version 1). Amendment of 3.5 regarding alcohol sponsorship in line with Scottish Government (3.4 in version 1). Addition of 3.7 to consider climate change priorities. Amendment of approval process in line with Financial Regulations 3.11 to 3.22 (4 in original version). Addition of sessions 4. Supporting Policies and Documents.

7 Policy Distribution

Name	Designation	Organisation
Allan Whyte	Head of Service	Property and Facilities, Aberdeenshire Council
Amanda Roe	Area Manager	Area Managers, Aberdeenshire Council
Claudia Cowie	Team Leader	Environment and Sustainability, Aberdeenshire Council
Craig Innes	Head of Service	Commercial and Procurement, Aberdeenshire Council
Ewan Wallace	Head of Service	Environment and Sustainability, Aberdeenshire Council
Karlyn Watt	Strategic Finance Manager	Finance, Aberdeenshire Council
Kate Bond	Head of Service	Customer and Digital, Aberdeenshire Council

Martin Hall	Strategy Manager	Environment and Sustainability, Aberdeenshire Council
Melanie MacKenzie	Strategic Commercial Manager	Commercial and Procurement, Aberdeenshire Council
Patricia Jericevich	Legal Services Manager	Legal and People, Aberdeenshire Council
Paul Macari	Head of Service	Planning and Economy, Aberdeenshire Council

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