

## **GULBERWICK, QUARFF & CUNNINGSBURGH COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 29<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022** **VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING AT 7.30PM**

**A. THE CIRCULAR CALLING THE MEETING HELD WAS READ BY THE CLERK.**

**Nominations for chair were called for but none were forthcoming. Mr C Clark agreed to stand in as interim chairperson for the meeting.**

<b>B. PRESENT</b>	Mrs L Johnston Mrs P Christie	Mrs M Davis (from 9.05pm)	Mr S Douglas
<b>EX OFFICIO</b>	Mr C Smith	Mr P Campbell (until 8.38pm)	
<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>	Mrs K Geddes Mrs Robina Barton, SIC Transport Policy & Projects Officer (until 8.38pm)	Mr John Simpson SIC Team Leader – Energy Efficiency (until 8.05pm) Mr Dennis Leask (until 8.38pm)	Mr Carl Symons, SIC Executive Manager Environment and Estate Management (until 8.05pm)
<b>CHAIRPERSON</b>	Mr C Clark (interim)		
<b>APOLOGIES</b>	Mrs S Wishart Mr M Duncan Mr R McGregor	PC Gordon Mackay Mr R Skinley Mrs A Arnett	Mr E MacPherson Mr G Smith
<b>NOT PRESENT</b>	Ms A Hawick	Mr A Duncan	Mr S Flaws

**Information** – due to the Covid-19 Virus pandemic meetings are being held online.

**C. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

As a member of the SIC Planning Board Cllr C Smith declared an interest in agenda item 9 – Planning Applications.

Mrs P Christie declared an interest in the Cunningsburgh Village Club grant application as she had supported the group to fill out the application as part of her role in the SIC.

Mrs K Geddes declared an interest in the item in AOCB discussing clerk’s pay.

**D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 15 February were approved on the motion of Mrs L Johnston and seconded by Mrs P Christie.

**1. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising this month.

**2. POLICE REPORT**

There was no police report available.

**ACTION:** Clerk to send out the report when it arrives via email. It is due soon.

### 3. FUEL POVERTY CONCERNS

Mr Carl Symons, Executive Manager – Environment and Estate Operations spoke through the operational portfolio he controlled. He has a large area of responsibility:

- Building & Burial Services, which includes operational maintenance of the Council's non-domestic estate such as schools and care homes, circa 135,000m<sup>2</sup> of estate. Learning estate strategy.
- Climate Change Strategy, this team are leading on the Council's response to Climate Change and are working on our Net Zero Route Maps.
- Energy Efficiency, which is about utilities management and includes electric vehicles. Heating strategy, energy upgrades, Net Zero Route Maps.
- Environmental Health, includes licensing, imports/export certificates.
- Fleet Management, for a mixed fleet of over 300 vehicles. Looking at decarbonisation. Looking to roll out a Shetland wide car club based on electric or alternative fuel vehicles.
- Trading Standards, weights and measures, consumer and business advice and compliance. People are becoming targets for scams while seeking the best deals, and loan sharks are back on the scene.
- Waste Management Operations which includes refuse collection and recycling. Also covers ERP and heat from waste. Investigating how we could expand the roll out of district heating to rural communities, including consideration of hydrogen CHP at schools and care homes. Linked to the rollout of charging stations and car clubs.
- Getting the message across to others - a range of audiences and engaging with Scottish Government, mostly noting that "one size fits all" as an approach doesn't work. Ensuring the message is clear and doesn't get muddled.
- Energy Efficiency Team

He came to address members concerns about fuel poverty and made several points:

- Highly frustrating – Westminster help generally targets schemes that provide support to those who don't need it, like heat pumps and PV which require substantial householder investment. Those in fuel poverty don't usually have £20K sitting around to invest!
  - Our main delivery mechanism is the Area Based Scheme which sees around £1.2m invested year-on-year. Sounds like a lot? If we spent £25K on every Shetland home that would need £250m investment. To address fuel-poor homes that could potentially need £132m to bring homes up to standard.
  - Hugely bureaucratic with a raft of qualification standards. It is not attractive to local contractors. Despite that we continue to deliver around 150 upgrades per year but it's really just scratching the surface.
  - Doesn't target what we need it to i.e., windows and doors. The one size fits all approach does not work in places like Shetland.
  - Our ambition is to double interventions but we have difficulty actually spending the existing £1m budget. Lack of labour resource is our main constraint.
  - Limited to £9K per dwelling, with grant allocations effectively going backwards due to inflation which as high as 30% in certain parts of the construction market.
- Major Works Squad
  - Focussed on renewables and energy efficiency. New skills and new jobs.
  - Encourage youngsters to enter construction
- Affordable energy and a "Shetland" tariff - Don't have all the levers but being pursued at CE level – needs political buy in.
- No hardship grants

- Climate Conversations – These are ongoing now and the aim is to inform us what the community want but uptake by Community Councillors has been disappointingly low. Open workshop on the 7<sup>th</sup> April (1900-2100). It isn't unreasonable for us to expect people to tell us what we want?
- Community Halls could be upgraded to provide warmth and security – long term they could be linked to alternative fuels and host charging stations. The community benefit scheme is coming online so could be a source of funds?

Mr John Simpson SIC Team Leader – Energy Efficiency spoke next and highlighted the direct financial support mechanism available – the Home Heating Support Grant. It has been successful in getting money directly into folks' pockets. A total of 93 households benefitted with an average award of £680 and £63,000 in total. This iteration of the scheme ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March but as it is the second year it has run for he is hopeful that the fund will open again next year.

He spoke through other help available to folk who are fuel poor or who are self-rationing their energy use to be able to afford other things. Often this is linked to weather or temperature and it has to be below zero for seven days – something which doesn't often happen in Shetland. This eligibility has now been removed and is linked to benefits meaning more folk in Shetland can access the low-income assistance flat rate of £50.

There are also rebates of £150 of Council Tax for every household in receipt of Council Tax Reduction in any band and everyone living in council tax bands A to D. The Scottish Government is also extending its Fuel Insecurity Fund at a cost of £10m for 2022-23. This fund targets those who are at risk of self-disconnection or who are rationing their energy use. He mentioned again how good the Home Heating Support Fund had been too.

Mr Clark asked what would be replacing the Domestic Renewable Home Heat Incentive payments as without this payment he didn't feel that the purchase of a heat pump was viable for most folk in Shetland. Mr Simpson replied that there was not yet any information on what the replacement would be, though it is due to finish at the end of this financial year. The RHI and the Feed-in Tariff Scheme before it was for those who had the money to spend on the technology in the first place – it does not those who are fuel poor.

Mr Douglas asked if there were any figures as to how many people in Shetland were living in fuel poverty.

Mr Symons said the last figures they had from surveys said 53% but the difficulty they have is that they have an unknown number of people who are just heating part of their house and some people are too proud to come forward for help. If last year you were on a Scottish Power fixed tariff you were paying an average of £130, with the price cap changes on 1<sup>st</sup> April it could be £290 and going forward it could be as much as £490 which means it's going to get an awful lot worse. It changes week to week as people get into debt and into strife.

Mr Simpson explained that the figure of 53% came from a local study but that the Scottish Government keeps changing the definition of fuel poverty and fuel poor. The extreme fuel figure where you spend over 20% of your income on fuel was over 20%. The rising fuel costs will of course have a severe impact on fuel poverty figures.

When asked what they can offer folk in fuel poverty Mr Symons explained that by and large they were a nuts-and-bolts service but they don't have the resources to be able to deliver what they would like to. They are also held back by bureaucracy and are frustrated by the fact they have to jump through multiple hoops to be able to make any positive changes in peoples lives.

He said the further away from London you are the higher your tariff is. If you are close to the power we generate we should have lower tariffs. We need to get that across to the next elected council – if the energy is generated here, a reduced tariff should be available. We need to get the help to those who really need it, those who are deciding whether to heat the house or feed the kids. Fuel poverty is just one aspect of poverty – child poverty, food banks - and it is all related. It has to be looked at in the round. We need to take a step back and think about what is the bigger picture – the biggest levers are taxation and grants and that has to be the Government who leads on that.

Members thanked Mr Symons and Mr Simpson for their time.

--- Mr Symons and Mr Simpson left 8.05pm ----

#### **4. ACTIVE TRAVEL UPDATE**

Mrs Robina Barton, SIC Transport Policy & Projects Officer explained that the Active Travel Strategy was approved in March 2021 and since then the focus has been on implementing it. The recommendations were to carry out settlement audits and eight areas of best fit as defined by the current Local Development Plan were chosen. Systra were contracted to do the settlement audit work.

The audits are all encompassing, not just looking at new cycle or footpaths. They look at things such as access to and between key facilities, kerb drops, lighting, car parking and look at the entire settlement in this detail. Systra have come with presentations of their findings to the Community Councils in the settlement areas as well as other key stakeholders for validation, to find out if the identified issues really were issues and to get a sense of community priorities. The presentations have been done and Systra are producing the final settlements just now.

A programme of Active Travel Interventions based on the settlement audits will be taken to the SIC in June to get a project of ongoing works approved. There is money out there to get. They are hoping for some design work to be started in the next few months and audit work will also continue with a new round of seven or eight settlement audits starting soon – Gulberwick is likely to be one of the areas next on the list and Cunningsburgh may also be considered soon.

When responding to members' frustrations about the perceived lack of progress Mrs Barton agreed nothing happens very quickly and that they are challenged in terms of staff resources. It might also be challenging to find contractors. She explained that there have been a lot of recommendations which have come out of the audits but that we may be in it for the long haul. She spoke about an audit of what bikes are available locally to be borrowed and how they can help facilitate the loaning of them all. Funding is available so that is not an issue.

She shared her screen and showed what detail the audits go into, sharing the Aith Settlement Audit and explaining some of the issues which had been identified – several which no one had probably realised before. She is hoping that a minimum of two projects will be taken to the design stages this year but ideally wants four or five projects.

Mr Clark said that we have heard there has been money available both this year and last but it appears that Shetland is missing out.

Mrs Barton agreed and said that the processes required to go through to get any funding can be cumbersome and frustrating. Some funding requires match funding and they have yet to get any local authority funding for active travel. She also said they could do with more staff. She is working alone just now but has a new colleague starting on Monday who will replace a colleague who left a few months ago.

She also explained that they had 57 proposals from Community Councils and they wouldn't want to do a route and miss out on all the other things which would be of benefit to a community. They don't just put a cycle path in the settlement audits look at other things which will make it more conducive to cycling and walking. The audits are also needed as evidence by the funders so are really valuable documents.

Mr Dennis Leask, an ex-GQC Community Councillor was invited by the chair to speak. He explained how he had been part of a group which had spent a lot of time at short notice to put forward ideas for paths four years ago. He said it has been misleading as it seems like it will be six, seven or even eight years before anything will actually get done and it will only get done in areas deemed to be of best fit. He said that there were suggestions put forward which could just cost £20-£30 thousand instead of the huge projects which the audits are identifying. These smaller paths would make a huge difference locally and he is frustrated that it may be ten or twenty years before any of these improvements are made. He also asked whether he was right in his assumption that the local community can develop paths and try to access funding themselves.

Mrs Barton said she shared everyone's frustrations and said it seemed like we are in a position in society more generally, where processes become more important than what we are trying to achieve with them. We need staff too. The transport system is based around buses, cars, trains and planes for years and we are now moving to look at walking, cycling, car share clubs. We can't achieve it all with just the staff we have at the moment who are already committed.

She spoke about measures which had been taken in other local authorities like Dumfries and Galloway who reduced 90 speed limits to 20mph, stepping outside the national guidelines to do so and said that there are a lot of big changes which could be happening in the next few years which is bigger than just cycle and footpaths.

She said she would certainly be happy to support any community who would like to take things forward by themselves and spoke about some of the support she had already given to some communities.

Members thanked Mrs Barton for attending.

---Mrs Barton left 8.38pm---

## **5. FINANCE**

The bank statement on March 29<sup>th</sup> reads £4,495.91.

The £1,500 Cunningsburgh Hall grant to extend the Free Hot Meals service was paid, as was the £800 grant to the Cunningsburgh Parent Council for outdoor clothing and wellies. £74.99 was paid out for AVG Internet Security and £113.76 for the Microsoft Licence.

Outgoings for the rest of the year – any grants awarded at this meeting, perhaps the Clerk's backpay and a possible charge of approximately £100 for the website hosting.

### Grants Spend

We have spent £5,448.92 of our grant funds this year so far. Our grants total is usually in the region of £5,000-£6,000 per year. We only spent £2,495.37 of our £3,000 CDF Distribution Fund so have to make sure we spend £3,504.70 this year to make up for the underspend – we have done this.

### Covid Relief Fund

The Cunningsburgh Hall has been paying for the meals using the grant – the past five weeks 83 meals have been served up to 17 people each week and this totals £1080 – the grant was for £1,500 so there are a couple of weeks left at least. We have also got the good news that we have been successful in our application to the Shetland Charitable Trust

Small Grants Scheme for £4,500 which is great news. We still have a few grocery vouchers left for Mackenzie's and Sound.

## **6. GRANT APPLICATIONS & SHETLAND COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND UPDATE**

There was one Community Council grant application – members decided to award the full amount requested.

The Cunningsburgh Village Club was awarded £387 to pay for the shipping costs for soft play equipment they had purchased.

There were five applications from the Shetland Community benefit Fund Advanced Grant Scheme. Four were awarded the full amount requested:

Gulberwick Toddlers - £500 towards running costs

Ness United Football Club - £1,250 towards the cost of purchasing goal posts

Ability Shetland - £812.50 towards the cost of holding the ASN Holiday Club

Shetland Care Attendants Scheme - £1,500 towards providing respite in carers own homes

A part award of £1,000 was awarded to Shetland Gymnastics Club to pay for the training costs for gymnasts for the next two years.

**ACTION:** Clerk to pay the grants via online banking and complete the paperwork for the SCBF.

## **7. ROAD ISSUES/CAMPAIGN FOR REDUCED SPEED LIMITS**

There was nothing to report.

## **8. GULBERWICK, QUARFF & CUNNINGSBURGH DEVELOPMENT GROUP UPDATE**

Mr C Clark reported that they had had a good meeting with Community Council Liaison Officer/Grant Officer Michael Duncan and Community Involvement and Development Officer Ana Arnett recently. They have agreed to send information through on how to set up a charitable development group. They have advised it is important to have public meetings so the community are kept informed, so they can have input and so there is evidence of support from the community for funding bids going forward.

We need to have 'spade ready' projects for when the money comes in from the SCBF.

Mrs Christie expressed interest in joining the group and she was welcomed on to it straight away.

--- Mrs M Davis joined 9.05pm ---

**ACTION:** Mr Clark to keep everyone informed.

## **9. PLANNING**

There were three planning applications which members were required to comment on. None of them had any objections or comments to return:

[2022/048/PPF](#): Erect dwelling house with air source heat pump, Plot 4 Aisterlea, Cunningsburgh

[2022/049/PPF](#): Erect dwelling house with garage and heat pump, Plot 6 Aisterlea, Cunningsburgh

[2022/008/WL](#): Install a septic tank outfall pipe, South Edge, Aithsvoe Piers Breakwater, Cunningsburgh

## DRAFT MINUTES – Subject to approval at the May 2022 meeting

The last application was discussed at the February meeting and members asked for more information before commenting. This was provided by the applicant as well as SIC Planning and members felt able to respond to it without objection or comment as a result.

One other application was on the planning website but did not require comment:

[2022/073/PPF](#): Construct two extensions to existing dwelling house, Willowburn, Scarpigarth, Cunningsburgh

### 10. AOCB

#### 1. Road Issue - Cunningsburgh

Mr Douglas requested that we look at the possibility of extending the 50mph limit at the north end of Cunningsburgh out to the other side of Mackenzie's Farm Shop. There are more houses there, there are several busy junctions and it is much busier generally thanks to the houses and shop and café. The Aithsetter junction has also become an informal bus stop.

The matter has been suggested to SIC Roads before but it was agreed to contact them again about the issue.

**ACTION:** Clerk to contact SIC Roads requesting an extension of the 50mph limit at the north end of Cunningsburgh to past Mackenzie's Farm Shop.

#### 2. Dog Waste Bins

Mr Clark has met with a council official to look at possible locations for the bins. He has taken photos which the clerk is to share with members.

**ACTION:** Clerk to share the photos showing the locations of the bins with members. Members are to reply with comments and suggestions for Mr Clark.

#### 3. Mr C Smith's Last Meeting

As Gulberwick is now to come under the Shetland South Ward then this will be Mr C Smith's last meeting as a Lerwick South member. He has been attending for 15 years and wanted to thank all the folk of Gulberwick, Quarff and Cunningsburgh and the Community Councillors over that time – he said it has been a privilege and an honour.

Mr Clark thanked him for his time and effort and said that we have been very lucky to have been so well supported by our SIC Councillors.

#### 4. Clerk's Pay

The new pay scales for the clerks have been released by the Community Council Liaison Officer Michael Duncan and members agreed to raise the pay by 34p in line with salary scale H2 – the pay scale recommended by the ASCC. As the new pay scale came into effect on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 members also agreed to pay back pay of £138.72.

**ACTION:** Clerk to transfer the back pay and to put the monthly pay direct debit amount up.

### 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

Meeting Ends – 9.25 pm.

**CHAIR**

**12. OUTSTANDING ITEMS**

January 2021 - Torches for school children from Elaine Skinley, SIC Road Safety Officer. To be distributed when the schools open again.

February 2021 – Radicle Road – an SIC Roads engineer is to look at the road to see if any maintenance work can be done to the verges to improve the road for all users.

September 2021 – Heathery Park Path Clearing – a third meet-up to clear the last weeds off the path was unable to be organised. Members to look again in spring 2022.