

Sandness & Walls Community Council

Chairman:

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Minutes of a virtual meeting of Sandness & Walls Community Council held via Zoom on Tuesday 2nd August 2022 at 7.00pm

Present:

I Walterson (Chair)
I Sandison (Vice Chair)
M Forrest
J Puckey
L Moncrieff
J Laing
J Gear
Cllr L Peterson

In Attendance: D Forrest (Clerk), Two members of the public

1. Chairman's Welcome

I Walterson (Chair) welcomed all those present and gave a warm welcome to the two members of the public who were in attendance.

2. Apologies

Michael Duncan, Roselyn Fraser, Cllr J Leask, G Jamieson, J Haswell

3. Declarations of Interest

None were made at this time.

4. Future of Health Service Provision at Walls Health Centre

4.1 Chair's Introduction

The Chair began by expressing his sadness that the current practice GP, Dr Christina Hallam, is having to retire in November on health grounds. He went on to describe how her imminent retirement was giving rise to concerns in the community regarding the future of health care in the Walls practice, especially regarding a GP service. He made the point that, as yet, no communication regarding this matter has been received from the NHS Shetland. He went on to pose the question, 'Will the post be advertised?'

4.2 List of Concerns

All those present were invited to express their concerns regarding health care in the area covered by the Walls Health centre including the two inhabited islands of Foula and Papa Stour. The following points were made:

- Pharmaceutical provision is not working well largely due to the fact that the dispensary in Walls is only permitted to carry a very limited stock of medications which can result in major problems for patients especially from a Friday afternoon through to a Monday. It was noted that in the past the Health Centre carried a more comprehensive stock of essential drugs, but this is no longer the case. It is believed that end of life medication was also held by the Centre but again this has been withdrawn.
- Staffing levels have been cut back. Currently a GP is present at the Walls Health Centre all day on Mondays and Tuesdays and mornings only on Wednesdays and Fridays. (The point was made that with there being no GP provision on a Friday afternoon, it meant there was no GP cover from midday on a Friday until Monday morning.)
- Because of The Walls Health Centre's proximity to the only Care Centre on the Westside of Shetland, frequent demands are placed on Health Centre staff to address the needs of the residents. This is exacerbated by the fact that the Care Centre staff are not medically trained and have to refer all health related concerns to the Health Centre.
- There are currently major GP recruitment difficulties nation wide thus making it less likely to find a replacement for Dr Hallam. The point was made that it has been possible to find semiretired GPs who are willing to spend extended periods of time in Shetland on a locum basis and, in the case of Bixter for example, work a rotation system with

other similar practitioners and thus provide an element of continuity.

- It was suggested that NHS managers should be encouraged to spend time in rural practices to gain a better understanding of how these remoter practices function and to get to know the staff concerned.
- There is an issue with appointment reminders sent via texts. They state that the appointment is at Bixter when it should state Walls.

Actions: 1. The Clerk to draft a letter to NHS Shetland outlining the concerns listed above.
2. An urgent meeting be requested with Health Board personnel to discuss the way ahead given the shortage of time before the post falls vacant.

5. Police Report

Members were referred to the email of 25th June 2022 from Sergeant Alexander Barry concerning police related incidents in April and May of this year. It was noted that three incidents had taken place in that time in the Sandness and Walls area.

6. Minutes from 7.6.22

The adoption of the minutes of the meeting of 7th June 2022 was proposed by J Puckey and seconded by M Forrest.

7. Matters Arising

Re: 9 of 6/22 Papa Stour Ferry update

J Puckey informed the meeting that the Monday Papa Stour ferry situation has now been resolved following a meeting between islanders and SIC Transport officials that took place on Papa Stour on Friday 17th June. Cllr L Peterson was also present. Members congratulated J Puckey for her perseverance on this matter and were delighted with the outcome. J Puckey indicated that there are now return sailings on Mondays and this is set to continue through the winter months.

Re: 17.4 of 4/22 Abandoned Boat Hull

It was noted that the abandoned hull has not been removed although it was indicated via email that it should have been gone by now.

Action: The Clerk to email Environmental Services to seek action on this matter.

(J Gear left the meeting.)

Re: 14.1 of 3/22 Dog Fouling on New Pier Road

I Sandison was unclear as to whether or not the promised signage work had been carried out.

Action: I Sandison to find out if work has been completed and report back to members.

Re: 13 of 6/22 Walls Public Toilets

I Sandison indicated that the request for volunteers to clean the toilets had proved very successful with enough people willing to clean for a week each to keep going until November. However, she indicated that whilst some donations had been received, some major expenses had been accrued including repairs to a door and a pipe leak. Annual insurance was also due. The Chair suggested the Waas Development Group apply for assistance from the Community Council, but this could not include the insurance. Cllr Peterson suggested funding be discussed with Roselyn Fraser. It was agreed to defer a funding request until the next meeting by which time it is hoped to have received the invoice for repairs.

RE: 15.2 of 6/22 School Catchment Areas on the West of Shetland

Cllr Peterson indicated that she had been able to agree a local solution to the school transport issue. As far as making permanent changes to school catchment areas are concerned it would appear that this is a matter for the Scottish Government and cannot be addressed locally. Cllr Peterson is going to discuss the matter with Jan Riise.

8. Housing

8.1 The Difficulties of Connecting Newbuilds to Mains Electricity

The Chair expressed his view that this situation seemed bizarre.

8.2 Housing Development in Central Walls

An unofficial source had indicated that work on the site was due to commence in September. Cllr Peterson stated she was due to attend a housing seminar on 24th August and would attempt to have this verified. She indicated she would push for progress.

9. Roads

The Chair described his sense of horror on first reading the Safety Check on the A971 from the West Burrafirth Junction to Walls. He felt it was a sentiment shared by other members. Cllr Peterson indicated that the business case for a double track road was currently being drawn up and should be before council by Christmas. She went on to say that she is due to have a meeting with Mr Dave Coupe (Head of the SIC Roads Department) to discuss this stretch of road including a replacement for the Bridge-of-Walls. It was suggested that an up to date traffic survey be carried out especially at a time when salmon is being transported from the Walls Pier.

10. A Modern and Sustainable Ferry Service for Scotland

Cllr Peterson encouraged all members to complete the survey and pointed out that it can be completed by individuals or it can be submitted as a group response.

Action: Members are asked to complete the above survey.

11. Shetland Community Benefit Fund

11.1 SCBF Grant Application for the SRT

After a brief discussion it was agreed to support application 180266 with £200 being granted to the Shetland Recreation Trust.

Action: The Clerk to complete and submit the Community Council's response to the Shetland Community Benefit Fund.

11.2 Initial Consultation on the use of Viking Community Fund

It was noted that the date for the Zoom meeting had passed and it was agreed to await future correspondence on the matter.

12. Financial Update

The Clerk provided a financial update. Whilst no funding requests have been made it is possible that some may be made in the near future.

13. Correspondence (including Emails)

The Clerk indicated that all correspondence had been circulated and that items requiring members' input had been presented at the meeting.

14. AOCB

14.1 Defibrillator for West Burrafirth Pier

The Chair stated that a defibrillator would be of great benefit to the West Burrafirth pier including commercial and pleasure users. He went on to say that David Brown of Cooke Aquaculture deals with charitable applications which should be made online. It was suggested that defibrillators compatible with those supplied by the 'Lucky2Bhere' organisation would be preferable.

Action: The Clerk to apply to Cooke Aquaculture for funding for a defibrillator for the West Burrafirth pier.

14.2 Mr and Mrs R Hudson's Retirement from the Walls Swimming Pool Association

It was noted that Mr and Mrs Hudson are retiring from the Walls Swimming Pool Association after 40 years. Members expressed their gratitude to the couple for their hard work and dedication to the community.

Action: The Clerk to write a letter to the Hudsons expressing the members' gratitude.

14.3 Community Council Elections

It was noted that there are only two S&WCC meetings left prior to the elections which will be held in November. A question was asked regarding having dedicated members for sub-wards; e.g. Foula, Gruting etc.

Action: Cllr Peterson to ask Jan Riise about this matter.

14.4 The Foula Airstrip Extension

Following a question from M Forrest who had received a phone call from a Foula resident asking why work on extending the runway on Foula had been halted, Cllr Peterson stated that she had been advised that not all environmental assessment checks had been carried out and that work could not continue until they had been completed. She indicated that it is hoped that work can recommence early next year. An application for a dispensation to continue using the airstrip in its current condition has been made.

15. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold the next meeting via Zoom.

The Chair thanked all present for their attendance. The date of the next meeting was set for Tuesday 6th September.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.