

# **Sandness & Walls Community Council**

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Minutes of a hybrid meeting of Sandness & Walls Community Council held at the Walls Public Hall on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 7.00pm

Present:

I Walterson (Chair)  
F MacBeath (Vice Chair)  
M Macgregor  
E Johnston  
M Forrest  
J Gear  
J Puckey  
C Venus  
S Johnston  
Cllr L Peterson

**1. Chairman's Welcome**

I Walterson (Chair) chaired the meeting and welcomed all those present.

**2. Apologies**

M Duncan, J Haswell, J Laing, R Fraser

In attendance: D Forrest (Clerk),

**3. Declarations of Interest**

None were made at this time.

**4. Visit by Mr Billy Mycock**

This visit has been postponed at Mr Mycock's request owing to ill health.

**5. Police Report**

No Police report was available this month.

**6. Minutes from 10.1.23**

The adoption of the minutes of the meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023 was proposed by M Forrest and seconded by E Johnston.

**7. Matter Arising**

***Re: 11.2 of 1/23 Petrol supply issues***

M Macgregor stated that following discussions she had had with B Wishart MSP and SIC officials, the SIC is open to negotiating with the Walls Shop lease holder and the Community Council on the matter of having the petrol tank repaired/replaced.

**Action: M Macgregor to liaise with B Wishart MSP on this matter.**

***Re: 14 of 10/22 AOCB (Track to Littla Boust, Sandness)***

Cllrs L Peterson and C Smith held a meeting with Mr N Grant (Development Department Director) during which they fully briefed Mr Grant on all the issues surrounding the track to Littla Boust in Sandness. They pointed out that a turning point and a designated coastal core path are vulnerable to erosion. They are awaiting a response from Mr Grant.

***Re:14.1 of 8/22 Defibrillator for West Burrafirth Pier***

The Clerk informed the members that whilst Cooke Aquaculture have agreed to provide a defibrillator for West Burrafirth Pier, currently there is a supply issue, and the installation will not be possible until later in the year. Members went on to discuss the need for a defibrillator for the Walls Pier and for the New Advance, the Foula Ferry.

**Actions: 1. The Clerk to request a defibrillator for the Walls Pier from Cooke Aquaculture.**

2. The Clerk to request a defibrillator for the New Advance from the Ports and Harbours Department.

## **8. Housing**

### **8.1 Social Housing at Forratwatt in Walls**

Cllr Peterson stated that she had attended a housing seminar and a Development Committee meeting during both of which she raised the issue of social housing for the Sandness and Walls area. Mr N Grant (Development Department Director) told her that de-crofting the site at Forratwatt in Walls should be completed soon. Members expressed their doubts based on anecdotal evidence with the Crofting Commission. Cllr Peterson stated she intends to keep pressing this matter at every appropriate opportunity.

### **8.2 Housing Needs in the Sandness and Walls Area**

Cllr Peterson has requested data on the level of demand for housing in the Sandness and Walls area. To date, she has not been supplied with this information. In a wide-ranging discussion on the topic of both social and private housing needs, members expressed their frustration at the difficulties in having new properties built. It was pointed out that local businesses are finding it difficult to recruit staff because of a lack of suitable accommodation. The point was made that there is a lack of housing throughout Shetland. Given that the SIC appears reluctant to use land they own at Kirkdale in Walls for building, the question was asked about their willingness to sell this land to a private building concern. Cllr Peterson suggested that this might be possible as part of the Council's budget setting exercise. Other issues touched on were the 20-minute travel policy and the disconnect between this and the Government's desire to future proof remote communities. IT connectivity and suitable electrical power supply for electric car charging facilities were also discussed.

## **9. Roads**

The Chair and Vice Chair are to meet with Cllrs Robinson and Peterson to discuss how improvements to the A971 west of the Murrister Quarry might be achieved. The Chair pointed out that this road routinely carries a significant quantity of seafood, knitwear and agricultural produce thus reinforcing the business case. He went on to say that the Roads Department's preferred option is a double track road but that meeting the £9.5m cost is not possible under the current financial constraints. There was consensus amongst the members that every effort needs to be

made to push the project through the next phase of the Gateway process. It was recognised that a considerable amount of survey and planning work has already been carried out and that the Strategic Outline Case comprising some 70 pages has been completed. Members went on to discuss such matters as active travel and the possibility of having some limited resurfacing work done as an interim measure. The question of seeking Levelling Up money for the road was raised but Cllr Peterson felt this to be an unlikely source of funding.

#### **10. Future of Health Service Provision at Walls Health Centre**

Given that there has been no recent communication from the Shetland Health Board, members felt it was time to enquire about the status of the promised report and to find out if another meeting with Mr Chittick's team would be appropriate at this time.

**Action:** The Clerk to email Mr Chittick to find out how the report is progressing and to ask if another meeting between the Community Council members and Mr Chittick's team would be appropriate.

#### **11. Shetland Community Benefit Fund**

'180371 - AGS Application for consideration' was discussed. This is an application from Sail Training Shetland to all Shetland Community Councils in support of youths who wish to participate in the Tall Ship's Race in 2023. The grant being requested from the Sandness and Walls Community Council is £1400. Members felt by providing the funding there should be some benefit to the Sandness and Walls area and after some discussion it was felt that a request be made for a future visit to the area either by a tall ship or the Swan. On that basis, the grant was unanimously approved.

**Actions:** 1. The Clerk to complete and return the application form indicating the members' approval.  
2. The Clerk to write to Sail Shetland requesting a visit by a tall ship or the Swan.

#### **12. Financial Update**

The Clerk provided a financial update and stated that a request for a Community Council grant had been received from the Foula Heritage Trust but that the Clerk had replied indicating that all available grant money had been expended in the current financial year. He went on to say that he had advised the group to reapply in the next financial year.

### **13. Correspondence (including emails)**

The Clerk stated that all correspondence had been received via email and had been forwarded to members.

### **14. AOCB**

#### **14.1 Household Hardship Fund**

M Macgregor reminded members of an email from Roselyn Fraser concerning the Household Hardship Fund from which appropriate organisations including Community Councils could draw down up to £5k to distribute amongst families experiencing hardship during the current time of high inflation and energy costs. During the ensuing discussion it was pointed out that Community Council's did not have access to data on individual incomes making it very difficult to assess who was in most need. No other Community Councils in Shetland have applied to this fund.

#### **14.2 Petition to ban Peat Extraction**

J Puckey raised a concern she had received from a Papa Stour resident relating to a petition to the Scottish Government calling for a ban on peat extraction. This has been reported in the Scottish Crofting Federation Newsletter. Whilst there is an acceptance that it could be appropriate to ban peat extraction for horticultural use, the concern is that the ban may be extended to its use as a fuel by the crofting community. Whilst the Government has assured crofters that this practice is not under threat, crofters are anxious that those promoting the petition are seeking to end all peat extraction. Members asked J Puckey to forward details of the petition to the Clerk who, in turn, has been asked to write to the Scottish Crofting Federation seeking clarification as to the scope and nature of the petition.

**Action: Clerk to liaise with J Pucky and write to the Scottish Crofting Federation seeking more information about the peat extraction petition.**

### **15. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was set for Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March in the Walls Hall at 7 pm.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Draft Minutes of the February 2023 S&WCC meeting subject to approval at the next meeting