

Association of Shetland Community Councils (ASCC)

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Paper 2

**Minute of the ASCC meeting held on
Tuesday 20 September 2022, 6.00 pm,
Town Hall Chamber, Lerwick and online using Microsoft Teams**

Present

Jim Anderson (Chair)	Association of Shetland Community Council
Ian Walterson (Vice Chair)	Association of Shetland Community Council
Janice Jones (clerk)	Bressay Community Council
Niall O'Rourke	Burra & Trondra Community Council
Alastair Cooper	Delting Community Council
Helen Moncrieff	Dunrossness Community Council
Colin Clark	Gulberwick, Quarff & Cunningsburgh Community Council
Pat Christie	Gulberwick, Quarff & Cunningsburgh Community Council
Willie Simpson	Nesting and Lunnasting Community Council
Iris Sandison	Sandness and Walls Community Council
John Priest	Sandsting & Aithsting Community Council
Bryan Peterson	Sandwick Community Council
Mark Burgess	Scalloway Community Council
John N Hunter	Scalloway Community Council
Violet McQuade (clerk)	Skerries Community Council
Andrew Archer	Tingwall, Whiteness & Weisdale Community Council
Claire Priest	Unst Community Council
Annette Jamieson	Yell Community Council
Laurence Odie	Yell Community Council

Officers in Attendance

Neil Grant	Director – Development Services Department, SIC
Vaila Simpson	Executive Manager – Community Planning & Development, SIC
Jan Riise	Executive Manager – Governance & Law, SIC
June Porter	Team Leader – Community Development, SIC
Michael Duncan	Community Council Liaison Officer – Community Planning & Development, SIC
Joanne Fraser	Community Involvement & Development Officer, SIC
David Welsh	Hubnorth Scotland
Moraig Lyall	Shetland Islands Council

Officers Observing

Anne Cogle	Team Leader – Governance & Law, SIC
Frances Browne (note taker)	Community Involvement & Development Officer - Community Planning & Development, SIC

Local press

Ryan Nicolson	Shetland Times
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1. Introductions

Chairman Mr Jim Anderson welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was agreed that the meeting would be recorded for minute taking purposes.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Fetlar Community Council, Whalsay Community Council, Suzanne Shearer, Jonny Wiseman, Michael Craigie, Ana Arnett and Roselyn Fraser (all Shetland Islands Council).

3. Declarations of Interest

None

4. Local Place Planning

Neil Grant opened the topic of Local Place Planning and introduced David Welsh to the meeting virtually. David works for Hub North Scotland, who are the consultants developing a Shetland Place Based approach for the Shetland Partnership. Shetland are one of the first Local Authorities working on this.

David outlined definitions for place and place based approaches, the national policy context for Place based approaches, the work done so far in Shetland investigating place based approaches at a strategic level, as well as the next stages of work focussed on Brae and the North Mainland.

Bryan Peterson stated that Sandwick Community Council have a desire to investigate a local place plan and wondered if there was a waiting list to which communities may receive support. Neil responded that if a community is interested they should get in touch with the SIC Planning Service. Neil also stated that the community needs to consider its capacity to drive forward a place plan as it is a significant piece of work.

A discussion took place regarding the difference between the Scalloway Place Plan and the work starting in Brae. Scalloway developed its plan in response to community aspiration. The Scalloway Community Council undertook a range consultation and engagement methods with the local community. This process created a useful plan which identified a list of projects and aspirations, and is now helping to bring tangible benefits to the community. It is an ongoing process.

The current work in Brae is in response to a need to ensure new developments – including the proposed new Junior High School - for Brae and its surrounding communities are considered in a joined up fashion. Having an understanding of several agency priorities for Shetland enables agencies to consider these projects in the context of planning for Brae, (or in future for other places). It also enables everyone to consider Brae as a hub for the communities it provides services for, including healthcare and education, and in terms of what it can provide for Shetland. The Brae community still need to be engaged so at the moment it isn't a place plan based on community aspirations but it may develop into one in the future.

David thought that the approach to place planning will be different for each place depending on the needs in each community. The work just now is to help set up frameworks for delivering place plans in the future. He also stated that the large projects that agencies are hoping to achieve need to be considered in terms of place, and connecting the work of the agencies across in Shetland.

Ian asked about 20 minute communities, as for rural communities there are some concerns about this being used in local planning and could be hindering development. Neil Grant responded that this worked well for some communities and not for others. So whilst it is an aspiration to make things more accessible for people, it is not something that will be used literally in Shetland. Neil could not foresee 20 minute neighbourhoods being taken into account when making decisions in individual planning applications. Neil suggested that individual Community Councils with any concerns around 20 minute neighbourhoods were to contact him directly.

David Welsh left meeting at 7.15pm

Pat Christie left meeting at 7.15pm

5. Note of the previous meeting held on 14 June 2022 for approval.

Proposed by Bryan Peterson

Seconded by Ian Walterson

6. Matters arising from previous minute not on the agenda

Agenda item 8 Community Council Core funding - Michael advised that the ASCC wrote to finance about this. Finance responded that core funding allocations would be dealt with through budget setting. The SIC have policy for no overall growth, but there may be potential within own departments.

Agenda item 10, Alistair Christie-Henry confirmed that he had attended the external transport forum on behalf of the ASCC in June. Laurence Odie advised that he also attended a meeting about Ferries across Scotland. He was able to raise issues around Shetland Ferries and the desire for fixed links. The minutes from this haven't been circulated yet.

It was also noted that Alistair Cooper will represent ASCC on the Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation.

7. Representation to Scottish Government and Northlink

Lerwick Community Council asked if the ASCC would like to make representation to Scottish Government about the lack of capacity on the Northlink Ferries.

The group discussed the concerns around lack of capacity on Northlink. This included the ability for local people to travel, the ability for people to come to Shetland, freight capacity and customer service on board Northlink. The removal of access to shared cabins, possibility of extra cabin space and different type of cabins was also discussed. The group also wondered if there were figures available for people who are unsuccessful in booking. MORAIG LYALL informed the group that she had raised these issues including shared cabin, and figures on people unable to travel with Mr Wilcock at Transport Scotland.

Michael confirmed that similar representation has been made to Northlink previously.

8. Community Council Scheme Review

MORAIG LYALL left meeting at 7:25pm

Jan Riise, Executive Manager - Governance and Law, introduced a paper setting out options around the Community Council elections. It had previously been decided that a review of the Community Council Scheme of Establishment should be delayed until the Boundary Commission had reported on changes for Member wards. The Boundary Commission work has been completed so the Community Council Scheme Review may now begin. It is acknowledged that the timing of this report to Council is very close to the Community Council Elections.

As the September 2022 ASCC meeting was delayed by a week, there is now very little time to incorporate views into a report to Council. However Jan advised that Anne Cogle from the Governance & Law team was in attendance specifically to take notes to ensure any comments received can be added to the draft report in the morning.

Jan reflected on the on issues around democratic process with Community Council elections not returning full Community Councils at the first time of asking. This outcome requires vacant seats having to be filled via a mixture of By-Elections and co-options.

It was also noted that a number of other Local Authorities which have carried out scheme reviews adopted the Scottish Government model scheme. In Shetland however, it opted out of the model scheme many years ago and elected to implement its own Community Council scheme. Shetland is somewhat behind the curve in terms of undertaking a Scheme Review. This report is about the Scheme review converging with the Community Council elections and puts forward three options, which are not before Community Councils to reject or consent, but for consultation.

Option 1 – do nothing.

This is not actually doing nothing. It just means that we do not change what is immediately before us, which means that we would continue with the election in November for a 4 year term and we would begin the review simultaneously. New scheme would not be implemented until the next Community Council term commences, namely 2026.

Option 2 – extend the current term of elected Community Council members for a further 2 years.

This would enable the review to be carried out within those two years using existing Community Councils, with elections to be held in November 2024.

Option 3 – proceed with the election in November but limit it to a two year Community Council term.

That the conclusion of that shorter Community Council term would coincide with the completion of the review.

From the choices presented Jan put forward the view that Option 2 has more to offer than the other options.

Disappointment was expressed by a number of Community Councils about the lack of time to consult its members. Yell Community Council advised that it has already started promoting the 2022 elections. Annette Jamieson asked how many Community Councillors are re-elected at elections. Annette also expressed the view that Community Councils are an important nursery ground for growing Elected Members for the Council, and felt that the paper presented had undervalued the Community Councils.

Jan apologised if the report gave the impression of undervaluing Community Councils, stating that he was writing about strength of an electoral mandate, which isn't very strong despite a considerable amount of effort going into the promotion of elections. Jan stated he would like the review to focus on improving this.

Jan raised gender and age balance in Community Councils, and although the gender balance is good, he stated that similar to the Shetland Islands Council, Community Councils were not particularly successful at attracting younger voices.

Jan wondered if Option 2, and the ability to co-opt and attract people to try being a Community Councillor for a shorter term, might help to improve the mix and representation of Community Councils. Jan went on to explain that he had some concerns around the idea of a six year term, but by also freeing up of the co-optation procedures, it is hoped that Community Councillors would not feel that they had to stay on for longer than the four year term if they chose not to, and that Community Councils could co-opt as necessary.

Andrew Archer had already asked Tingwall Whiteness and Weisdale Councillors for their views. 6 of its members had expressed a view, 5 in favour of elections going ahead, 1 undecided, but there was a strong feeling that residents should get the opportunity to select representatives.

Alistair Cooper stated that Delting Community Council have not met yet to discuss but he will see what they say. Alistair's personal view is that if the review is going to be radical, for example suggesting ward changes, then it would be good to have Community Councillors available who already know Community Councils very well and are equipped to give due consideration to what is needed.

John Priest has asked Sandsting & Aithsting Community Councillors for feedback but it hadn't met as yet, nor had they reached a consensus view, so there was a need for their members to discuss it further when they next meet. Whilst the core of consultation would have to be done with Community Councils, it would be sensible to include the wider community and any former Community Councillors that have stood down. It may be also worth co-opting previous Community Councillors on for a short time during the review to utilise their experience.

Helen Moncrieff advised that Dunrossness CC haven't met yet, but it will feedback its preferred choice after it has met to consider options.

Claire Priest stated that Unst Community Council haven't met yet either, but will meet on Monday 26th September and will feedback after that.

Helen Moncrieff asked how long people would be co-opted on for. Jan answered that it would last for 2 years until next election (under option 2).

Jan commented that younger people may be less concerned about losing an election, but the opportunity to join for 2 years without an election and be able to get involved in Community Council business might encourage more people to stand. He also stated that the SIC could help provide different types of training for aspirant Community Councillors. Jan stated that the scope for the review isn't set as yet and that detail will come back to the ASCC at a future date for comment.

Helen wondered if hybrid Community Council meetings and access to meetings using different types of technology could be helpful in encouraging more people to take part. Jan agreed.

Andrew pointed out that Community Councils should let their local Elected Members know the Community Council's views before the Council meeting on 28th September.

Jan Riise agreed the Community Councils may provide feedback to him up to the 27th, to allow some more time for Community Council to meet and discuss. Views will not be attributed to individual Community Councils and feedback does not need to be a consensus view. Jan will use the feedback received as part of the introduction of the report. Jan thanked everyone for their time and input.

9. Items for future discussion

Ian Walterson asked if Community Councils could be asked to consider whether provision of public toilets is adequate for Shetland, with the intention to pass on information received to the consultation on tourism infrastructure.

Helen raised the difficulties around recruiting social care workers and use of direct payment packages. She wondered if the ASCC could discuss ways of encouraging more people to work in social care.

Bryan noted he had undertaken “Money Worries” training recently which he had found was very useful and practical. Jim Anderson thought this could possibly be something to include in future training to Community Councils. Vaila Simpson noted that the Money Worries training should be continuing.

Michael Duncan advised that Community Councils should complete the ASCC Agenda Item Request form and send to himself for consideration. A call for agenda items will be sent out early in the New Year.

Jan asked if it might be possible to hold a special ASCC meeting before March 2023 on the Community Council Review. John Priest mentioned that there had previously been a Joint Liaison Group of Community Councillors and Elected Members and wondered if it might be useful to resurrect this for the review.

It was noted that in November in line with the ASCC’s constitution, Jim Anderson and Ian Walterson will step down as Chair and Vice Chair respectively and there will be a need to appoint a new Chair and Vice Chair at the next ASCC meeting. Jim thanked everyone for attending and wished Community Councillors good luck if standing for the upcoming elections.

10. Date of Next Meeting

- 14 March 2023, 6pm
- 13 June 2023, 6pm
- 12 September 2023, 6pm

Meeting closed at 8.05pm

Chairperson

Date