

# Association of Shetland Community Councils (ASCC)

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**Minute of the ASCC meeting held on  
Tuesday 14 March 2023, 6.00 pm,  
Town Hall Chamber, Lerwick and online using Microsoft Teams**

**Present**

Lindsay Tulloch	Bressay Community Council
Niall O'Rourke	Burra & Trondra Community Council
Alastair Cooper	Delting Community Council
Helen Moncrieff	Dunrossness Community Council
George Murray	Gulberwick, Quarff & Cunningsburgh Community Council
Ewen MacPherson	Gulberwick, Quarff & Cunningsburgh Community Council
Jim Anderson	Lerwick Community Council
Shayne Macleod	Lerwick Community Council
Willie Simpson	Nesting and Lunnasting Community Council
David Brown	Northmaven Community Council
Ian Walterson	Sandness and Walls Community Council
Finlay MacBeath	Sandness and Walls Community Council
John Priest	Sandsting & Aithsting Community Council
Bryan Peterson	Sandwick Community Council
Mark Burgess	Scalloway Community Council
Andrew Archer	Tingwall, Whiteness & Weisdale Community Council
Claire Priest	Unst Community Council
William Polson	Whalsay Community Council
Annette Jamieson	Yell Community Council
Laurence Odie	Yell Community Council

**Officers in Attendance**

Vaila Simpson	Executive Manager – Community Planning & Development, SIC
Jan Riise	Executive Manager – Governance & Law, SIC
Michael Duncan	Community Council Liaison Officer – Community Planning & Development, SIC
Joanne Fraser	Community Involvement & Development Officer - Community Planning & Development, SIC

**Officers Observing**

Roselyn Fraser (note taker)	Community Involvement & Development Officer - Community Planning & Development, SIC
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**Local press**

Kevin Craigen	Shetland Times
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**1. Introductions**

Community Council Liaison Officer Michael Duncan 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, Skerries Community Council, Anne Cogle, Ingrid Gall, Ana Arnett (All Shetland Islands Council)

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

None

## **4. Appointment of chair**

Jim Anderson Proposed Ian Walterson as Chairperson seconded by Finlay MacBeath but as Walterson was not present at the meeting no decision could be taken.

Mark Burgess then asked for clarification that there was nothing in the ASCC constitution preventing past office bearers re standing for appointment. Michael Duncan advised that there was not.

Mr Laurence Odie proposed Mr Jim Anderson for Chairperson seconded by Mr Mark Burgess. Mr Jim Anderson Declined as he felt there was a need for the chair to change periodically.

Mr Ian Walterson joined the meeting and was duly appointed as chairperson, chairing the meeting from this point.

## **5. Appointment of vice chair**

No nominations were forthcoming. The chair then asked for any volunteers. Shane Macleod expressed his willingness to take on the role. He was proposed by Jim Anderson and seconded by Niall O'Rourke/Finlay MacBeath.

## **6. Community Council Scheme Review**

Michael Duncan presented the paper and gave an overview of the proposed timeline then encouraged discussion and feedback from attendees.

Andrew Archer raised the issue of the structure of community councils prohibiting pursuing projects and could they be some sort of legal entity.

Ian Walterson asked what people's thoughts on boundaries were.

Jim Anderson said we need to consider what we want or would like so we have an agreed destination that we can all buy into.

Jan Riise said that there are things that must be looked at. Particularly recruitment of members which is becoming a real challenge, with no contested elections. Are elections the best way? Would a public meeting see more people willing? A good and open conversation is required to look at how best to recruit.

Annette Jamieson said the review is a good thing and it would be useful to have some analysis of the current and previous make up of community councils. How long folk have been on, who sits on CCs, demographics, how long do they stay, amount of elections etc.

Bryan Peterson proposed that the prospect of elections puts folk off coming forward. Typically wait til the last minute then when prompted will apply. Lindsay Tulloch said everyone should be encouraging young folk to get involved, to represent the community going forward.

Mark Burgess raised the issue that along with increased legal capacity will also come liability and that there can at times be a conflict of interest between development companies and community councils if both are run by the same people. Could it be specified that you can't be on both? He then asked what the review had in mind with regard to boundaries.

Michael Duncan replied that there was no hidden agenda, posing the question is what we have the right thing in terms of numbers and geography?

Mark Burgess then raised the high levels of churn of councillors and a closer look at this would be interesting. Community organisations are already finding it hard to recruit volunteers. He then went on to

highlight that the current core funding is stretched to capacity. Could the CDF funding be added back into core funding giving more flexibility?

Bryan Peterson said that there had already been informal discussion around merging the 3 South Community Councils.

Finlay MacBeath expressed concerns that taking the public meeting recruitment route has the potential to lead to single topic outfits skewing the membership for their own ends.

Andrew Archer then commented that the election issue was more of an issue for Jan and his team rather than the community councils. Elections add the legitimacy, openness and transparency that would be lost through other forms of recruitment.

John Priest added that there was already frustration over the levels of bureaucracy and controls over what we can and cannot do.

Ian Walterson added that standstill budgets, increasing clerk hourly rates, inflation and rising costs for groups meant that less was able to be achieved. CDF should come back into community councils core budget.

Jim Anderson asked if it would be possible to see who, over the last 10 years perhaps, had applied for CDF funding and got or not and what the funding was used for. He then suggested that a focussed workshop to look at the review with all community councils should be the way ahead, go through topics and capture as much as possible.

Jan Riise responded that he was open to the workshop suggestion. You can't increase responsibility without unpacking liability increase. We need to look at what the elections keep giving you, the same people. We need to find out what discourages people in terms of gender, age, ability etc. With enhanced powers you could attract more funding. Jane then proposed retaining the recording of this meeting for future use connected with the review of the scheme – all in agreement.

Niall O'Rourke stated that the best you could wish for as a community councillor is to make small differences. Extra powers bring extra strain. Thinking radically community Councils maybe need to be smaller, dynamic, financially incentivise councillors coming in, more and more folk are questioning their capacity/need to volunteer when others do not. Getting your voice out to communities is difficult.

Mark Burgess asked will the SIC regards Community Councils as a separate independent identity?

Jan Riise responded that identities depend on the scheme of establishment decided upon. There are statutory steps that provide statutory protections. The evolution of what we have currently is illogical.

Ian Walterson asked will the review be complete within the 2 year period?

Michael Duncan responded that it would and the indicative timetable has some tolerance for delays.

Jan Riise then proposed a conference within the open consultation period to talk meaningfully. There is no ASCC meeting before the report to agree the scope goes to council. He then requested that all community councils adds the review to their agendas to get feedback by the end of April.

It was agreed that the ASCC would hold an additional, single agenda item meeting to consider this either the last week in April or the first week in May, date to be confirmed.

Ian Walterson, as chair, agreed to the extra meeting.

Michael Duncan to write to all community councils for feedback by the end of April then meet to review the feedback and agree the direction required.

## **7. Note of the previous meeting held on 20 September 2022 for approval.**

Proposed by Jim Anderson. Seconded by Niall O'Rourke.

## **8. Matters arising from previous minute not on the agenda**

None

## **9. Community Resilience**

Annette Jamieson introduced the topics by asking what role could the ASCC play in strengthening the resilience of Shetland. In the recent cold spells the SIC did well getting information out. Community councils know their areas but with the power out and phones off the halls became the community hubs. Could the ASCC work closer with the SIC resilience group to see how it can help in such circumstances? Could we improve the community ability to respond? There is also an individual responsibility folk need to take as well.

Ian Walterson said that the resilience of the remaining power network was in question and what plans are there to survey the network?

Michael Duncan mentioned that Ready Scotland and SSEN Resilience fund would be opening soon. Communities could get funds to strengthen resilience. Information can be requested from Ingrid Gall. This may be the last round of this fund. Community Planning & Development Service can help to support applications.

Jan Riise added that it is about how communities realise they can pull together and rally in an emergency. Each community should have their own emergency plan with support from SSEN and that Community Councils should have a role.

Lindsay Tulloch then added that in Bressay when the ferry is tied up they are also vulnerable especially with no health care on the island. This all needs to be included in an emergency plan.

Mark Burgess suggested that each community needed a single point of contact as it had worked well during the pandemic when distributing support.

Jim Anderson said that from January 2026 there would be no phone landlines to fall back on making communities even more vulnerable.

Ian Walterson added that Michael Duncan would distribute information highlighting the importance of every community having an emergency plan.

Lindsay Tulloch reminded everyone that each community was unique so they all need their own plan.

Jan Riise clarified that in order to access the community resilience funding a local emergency plan would be required. Michael Duncan to liaise with SSEN to get a template and it was suggested that as Lindsay Tulloch is an expert he could provide guidance, do a bit of work then feedback for the next meeting.

Annette Jamieson stated this was satisfactory as a response to her agenda item then requested if it would be possible to have sight of the SIC Emergency plan.

Michael Duncan responded that information would be sent out as soon as possible to help support plans.

## **10. British Telecom Land Lines**

Mark Burgess introduced the topic of the removal of BT landlines drilling down into community resilience. In the power outage in December 2022 there was no means of communication, right back to pre 1950s resilience. This is a retrograde step. Default digital format meant a total loss of connection. Can we as a community approach BT Openreach and request that people are allowed to remain connected via their existing landline if they so wish? There are too many unknowns in a community's resilience and there is also not enough sharing of resources across mobile companies. The power outage revealed the vulnerabilities of the system. Can we pose these questions to BT Openreach?

Andrew Archer asked if the SIC Resilience body was better placed to do this?

Mark Burgess replied saying it should not be either or but both in parallel to each other's efforts.

John Priest added that he agreed with everything Mark was saying and also the issue with mobile masts needing backup power for these circumstances.

Jim Anderson said he would second Mark Burgess proposal to make representation to anybody and everybody and to ask what their plans are for addressing these issues in future.

Lindsay Tulloch added that everyone shares Mark's concerns and also suggested that the ASCC write to the Chair of the Shetland Community Resilience Board requesting answers to the questions.

Jan Riise recommended that the ASCC invite BT Openreach representatives to attend the June meeting. He is also aware that this is being raised at national level asking what their solution is. Jan will find out what happened at the last resilience board meeting and let everyone know.

Ian Walterson asked Mark Burgess to share his information with Michael Duncan in order to prepare communications.

Mark Burgess said he agreed with Jim Anderson and added that this also creates an issue for individuals with home link system resilience and functionality. How will this work going forward? Digitisation does not work in a rural landscape.

John Pries raised the former connectivity forum and whether there would be any mileage in setting up that type of forum around these issues?

Mark Burgess finished by saying that he is very keen that BT Openreach feed back to the ASCC.

**11. Items for future discussion**

**None**

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

Additional Special Meeting to Consider Feedback on the review – Late April/Early May 2023

13 June 2023, 6pm

12 September 2023, 6pm

Meeting closed at 8.10pm

**Action Tracker**

Action: Michael Duncan to write to all community councils for feedback by end of April then meet to review the feedback and agree direction required

Action: Michael Duncan to circulate template plans to community councils and link to the SSEN Community Resilience Fund

Action: Michael Duncan to invite BT Openreach to June ASCC meeting