

Association of Shetland Community Councils (ASCC)

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Paper 1

**Minute of the ASCC meeting held on
Thursday 7 December 2023, 6.00 pm,
Town Hall Chamber, Lerwick and online using Microsoft Teams**

Present

Ian Walterson	Association of Shetland Community Councils (Chair)
Shayne McLeod	Association of Shetland Community Councils (Vice Chair)
Richard Burrell	Bressay Community Council
Alastair Cooper	Delting Community Council
Irvine Burgess	Dunrossness Community Council
Lucy Cummings	Fetlar Community Council
Ewen McPherson	Gulberwick, Quarff & Cunningsburgh Community Council
George Murray	Gulberwick, Quarff & Cunningsburgh Community Council
Jim Anderson	Lerwick Community Council
Willie Simpson	Nesting and Lunnasting Community Council
Osla Jamwal-Fraser	Sandsting & Aithsting Community Council
Bryan Peterson	Sandwick Community Council
Mark Burgess	Scalloway Community Council
Paul James	Skerries Community Council
Andrew Archer	Tingwall, Whiteness & Weisdale Community Council
Caroline Hunter	Unst Community Council
Annette Jamieson	Yell Community Council

Officers in Attendance

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

Officers Observing

Evie Tait (note taker)	Projects Officer - Community Planning & Development, SIC
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Local press

Kevin Craighens	Shetland Times
Chris Cope	Shetland News

1. Introductions

Chair welcomed all present and acknowledged that a few community councils were absent.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Niall O'Rourke - Burra & Trondra Community Council; Finlay MacBeath - Sandness & Walls Community Council; Laurence Odie – Yell Community Council; Ana Arnett, Frances Browne, Roselyn Fraser, Joanne Fraser, Lynsey Hall - Shetland Islands Council and Neil Grant Director – Development Services Department, Shetland Islands Council.

There was no contact from Northmaven Community Council and Whalsay Community Council.

3. Declarations of Interest

Bryan Peterson is an Elected Member, Shetland Islands Council.

4. Community Council Scheme Review

The Chair, Ian Walterson, explained that phase one of the CC scheme review was in progress and five options were open to the public to feedback on, with a deadline of 12 January 2024.

Jim Anderson asked if the meeting was seeking to reach a consensus on which option everyone would prefer.

Bryan Peterson commented that only option 1 and 2 effect his area so they can only comment on these.

Andrew Archer agreed, stating that he didn't believe they should be commenting on the small islands. He pointed to the fact that if the boundaries were to be shrunk, planning applications would become complicated because they would struggle to decide on planning in areas they didn't know.

Bryan Peterson, Caroline Hunter, George Murray, Lucy Cummings, Irvine Burgess and Alastair Cooper agreed that they didn't want to speak on behalf of other communities but commented that enlarging the boundaries would mean the areas would be too wide to keep on top of. All believe that their community councils work well as they are at the moment.

Annette Jamieson made the point that the one advantage of putting Yell, Fetlar and Unst together would mean that all of the SIC councillors could all attend the meetings.

Alastair Cooper made the point that it is better to keep distinct areas separated to stay on top of issues because the system and boundaries is currently working so it's best to leave it.

Osla Jamwal-Fraser made the point that although some community councils are struggling for numbers, she believes that clumping the areas together into larger geographic areas would be counterproductive as people would care less. But communities can come together to deal with local issues.

Chair, Ian Walterson, agreed that instead of changing the size of community council areas, community councils could come together to deal with problems.

Mark Burgess pointed out that work load for clerks and the volume of bureaucracy would increase with larger community councils. Community Council could end up with very long meetings and less engagement in issues.

Jim Anderson stated that changing the area sizes of community council areas wouldn't encourage people to join. Osla Jamwal-Fraser agreed and explained there should be a separate work done to encourage more people to join because when she joined it was hard to find information on what being part of a community council would entail in terms of commitments. She also pointed to the need to go into schools and encourage young people to get involved in local democracy.

Annette Jamieson queried if there had been any responses to the public consultations. Michael Duncan responded, explaining that the consultation period would end on the 12th January and it was too early to start looking at what had come in.

Bryan explained that Sandwick CC would be in favour of option 1 and they thought small islands would probably want to remain connected to the community council area that their ferry travels to.

Lucy Cummings pointed out that larger areas will lose representation and if Yell and Unst are put together, Fetlar community voice will become lost.

Chair, Ian Walterson, asked Jim Anderson if he is putting forward a proposal and Jim Anderson said he would put forward option 1 to council. This was questioned by Andrew Archer as to whether it was the right thing to do and Jim Anderson responded saying they could discuss it but that is his proposal from Lerwick Community Council.

Paul James made the point that there was value in keeping the local democracy as close as the point of use as possible. He looked at the option of matching up the community council boundaries to the Council ward boundaries but couldn't find a good reason for this because they already have their elected representatives. He stated he thinks option 1 is the best and this should be put to the council.

George Murray asked what process of the scheme review was undertaking and Michael explained the process of the review scheme timeline.

Irvine Burgess explained that for Fair isle and Dunrossness, they would prefer to be connected to where the ferry docks. Bryan Peterson explained that there is a separate group for islands with small populations that covers specific things to the islands so there is no need to change the community councils to deal with this.

Ian Walterson asked Jan Riise about the boundary option procedure. Jan explained there is no expectation of a numbers game and stated that all options need to be weighed up. He made the point that, at the current time, the status quo is the only option being considered but questioned if this is going to benefit the community councils in any way.

Irvine Burgess explained that Dunrossness Community Council had looked at the alternatives and kept finding disadvantages to which Jan replied that this was good because, as part of the process, there is a need for more of a conversation rather than Community Councils saying they can't discuss the options. Jan explained he wants Community Councils to be more creative and look at creating their own boundary options and the status quo should only be chosen because it is shown to be working effectively at the moment. Reasons to demonstrate this will need to be found and put into a report to take to council.

George Murray asked if there were documents available on how to run a Community Council. Michael Duncan explained there are documents online, and added at the last community council scheme review the model scheme was not thought to be the right structure for Shetland.

Action: Michael agreed to send out the current model scheme documents.

The chair, Ian Walterson, finished the discussion on the scheme by coming back to the point that Skerries and Lerwick are wanting to put forward a proposal to adopt option 1 and asked if anyone wanted to adopt any other options or weren't happy with this. No one put forward any other options.

Decision:

Association of Shetland Community Councils supports boundary option 1 (status quo)

Proposed by – Jim Anderson

Seconded by – Paul James

5. Note of the previous meeting held on 13 June 2023 for approval.

On page five West coast needs to be changed to North coast where it is discussing the North Coast 500.

Action: Michael will look at this.

Proposed by Andrew Archer

Seconded by Ewen McPherson

6. Matters arising from previous minute not on the agenda

Mark Burgess asked if the information that was promised by Juliet Scott from Openreach was coming or if there was any update on this.

Action: Michael Duncan said that he would follow up on this.

Mark commented on the need to have an overarching view of the capacity of the Shetland networks. He explained that the Ofcom guidance refers back to European guidance which may not still apply and we can't be sure on this because of vague government documents. Mark explained that the principal is that in any power outage, landlines should be available for at least an hour but, with the nature of the network in Shetland, he believes this is not achievable at the moment. Juliet who attended the last meeting from Openreach committed to going back and establishing what capacity there was in Shetland for retaining connection. Mark stated there is an assumption from Ofcom that people will have mobiles in the case of a power outage for communicating with emergency services but we also need to know if the mobile providers have resilience measures in place like generators and batteries to maintain that hour of continuity in an outage. He suggested the onus could be put on the Council's community resilience board to take this forward or the community councils should make further approaches themselves. Mobile signals are also an issue so without the landlines, it would leave some areas without any connection.

Andrew Archer responded by saying that a lot of this was covered at the Digital Forum event hosted by Alastair Carmichael MP held a few weeks previously. At the Forum they went over both mobile network, power back up and the loss of lines and how this was bad for Shetland. Andrew stated that he thinks there is not a lot that the ASCC can do or add, given what Council and Alastair Carmichael are doing.

Irvine Burgess asked Michael Duncan if Juliet has sent anything. Michael said some information was sent but he needed to go back to check on this. Irvine also asked if Michael had been put on an email list for information from a meeting Juliet has spoken about that takes place every two months. Michael said he wasn't on the list but would follow up on this.

Andrew Archer stated that Ofcom are the only ones that can change anything and, unless Alastair Carmichael can put pressure on Ofcom, there won't be anything helpful that could come from Openreach because they are stepping back.

Bryan Peterson explained that there was a councillor's seminar with Openreach a few months previously, at which the person from Openreach thought Shetland was quite far ahead of the curve compared to other rural communities - possibly because Shetland understands the scale of the problem more so than other areas. There is a good understanding of where Shetland is at and those who don't have mobile phones will need to be provided with one. The mobile phone network service providers will also need to be checked for their resilience because in other parts of the country there isn't a requirement for the level of detail as to knowing whether masts have a backup. The Council does have a good idea of the state of play at the moment.

Jan Riise explained that Shetland was one of 8 or 9 local authorities that had responded to the request to receive this briefing. Part of the reason for being ahead of the game was because there are more issues to resolve but it's allowed this early dialogue. Jan then proposed that someone from the Association should attend the follow up meeting that the Council has been invited to on the 12th December with Openreach.

Bryan Peterson nominated Mark Burgess to attend this seminar. Mark said as long as the meeting was on-line he could attend. Jan said he would try to get an invite sorted and sent to Mark.

Mark Burgess made several more points about the importance of home links and services such as NHS Shetland and the Council's Social Services being reliant on having connectivity.

Jim Anderson brought up the issue that mobile phones only have so much battery life and also brought up the fact that the meeting is with Openreach but Ofcom are taking over and Openreach are pulling the plug so writing to Ofcom would be a good option.

Osla Jamwal-Frazer made the point that many areas in Shetland have no phone signal and that's without a power outage. Therefore without a landline they are effectively cut off. Irvine Burgess suggested it would be better if there were representatives for all the mobile service providers at the meeting because the current mobile service is worse than it was 20 years ago and it needs to be addressed.

Mark explained that in the Ofcom guidance, the obligation is on the network service provider to identify everyone in an area that don't have a mobile phone and provide back up for them individually - but this information is not circulated. Lucy Cummings made the point that in Fetlar, if there is a power cut, the mobile tele-mast will go down too.

Ewan McPherson asked if the Shetland Way topic and potential over tourism in Shetland could be looked at and discussed again because he didn't feel there was adequate time to discuss the Shetland Way fully in the previous meeting. Ewan commented that a number of community councils did not contribute to the discussion and he just wanted an opportunity for ASCC members to comment on the plans.

Osla asked if there could also be representation from the Lerwick Port Authority if Tourism was to be an item for the next meeting because it is the cruise ships that are putting pressure on local infrastructure in terms of over tourism.

Jan made the point that having someone with the knowledge of Shetland Way proposal present at the meeting would be best because there will be questions that can't be answered if no one is there with knowledge on the plans.

George Murray asked that the points Ewan raised be put forward as a future agenda item.

Ewan McPherson replied saying he just wanted an opportunity for members to comment on the plans.

7.20pm – Andrew Archer left the meeting

7. Lerwick Lanes Master Plan

The Chair explained that there was a request from Gulberwick, Quarff & Cunningsburgh Community Council to have this as an item.

Ewan McPherson made the point that parking spots in Lerwick town centre need be retained. If not, there will be parking issues across Lerwick and it could kill off the street if these parking spaces go without others being available. This needs to be factored into the plans.

George Murray explained that when cruise ships come in during the summer, Victoria Pier is often unavailable which limits the level of parking spaces in the town centre. George also asked when the architect's proposals would be available. Chair Ian Walterson explained that the masterplan is currently out to public consultation.

Jim Anderson stated that he believed it was premature bringing this item to the meeting before the consultation had taken place.

Jan Riise responded explaining that other community councils outside of Lerwick are not statutory consultees so if other areas don't put forward their thoughts, they won't get their chance again to put forward opinions from their areas.

Mark Burgess explained that he believes the consultation is to see if the area could be designed better whilst also retaining the same amount of parking spaces. Everyone can put forward their views forward and see what comes from it.

Chair, Ian Walterson, asked what the timescale was for the master plan and Jan Riise explained the consultation deadline was the 14th January for responses and a meeting was planned to take place in February.

The Chair made the point that it would be good to encourage as many people as possible in their respective areas to engage in the consultation. Jan asked if any of the community councils had any more meeting planned before the consultation period ends. None of the community councils had another meeting in this time period. It was decided that this could be communicated by email and could also be shared across social media.

8. Items for future meetings

Jim Anderson brought up the issue with bookings for Northlink not being open for bookings past Easter. Discussion followed and it was noted there was limitations to making longer terms bookings.

It was decided that Transport Scotland be contacted to see if they could change the current booking system set up so people can book further into the future and pay later.

Action: Michael Duncan and Jim Anderson to prepare a letter from the ASCC to Transport Scotland

9. Date of Next Meeting

- 12 March 2024, 6pm
- 11 June 2024, 6pm
- 10 September 2024, 6pm

Meeting closed at 8.05pm

Chairperson

Date