

GULBERWICK, QUARFF & CUNNINGSBURGH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 27th AUGUST 2024 AT CUNNINGSBURGH SCHOOL AT 7.30PM

A. THE CIRCULAR CALLING THE MEETING HELD WAS READ.

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| B. PRESENT | Mr P Coleman
Mrs M Davis | Mr E MacPherson | Mrs P Christie |
| EX OFFICIO | Cllr A Duncan | | |
| IN ATTENDANCE | Mrs K Geddes | Michael Craigie, SIC
Executive Manager of
Transport Operations | Moira Philips
David Sweeney
(both Cunningsburgh
School parents) |
| CHAIRPERSON | Mr C Clark | | |
| APOLOGIES | Mrs A Arnett
Cllr R McGregor
Cllr A Armitage | Cllr B Peterson
Mr G Murray | Miss E Copland
Mr M Duncan |

NOT PRESENT

C. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 4TH JUNE 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4th June were approved on the motion of Mr E MacPherson and seconded by Mr P Coleman.

3. PUBLIC BUS SERVICES AND CONTRACT – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This item was moved up the agenda to allow Mr Craigie to leave at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr Craigie, SIC Executive Manager of Transport Operations spoke through prepared slides and took questions. He explained that ZetTrans has commissioned a company to support them in the development of a business case for the future delivery of the public bus network and school transport. They're looking to identify the current problems with the bus services and highlight any opportunities to improve the network. He spoke through the timeline and said that if all goes to plan the contracts will be awarded from February 2025 onwards, after the final business case in January and in plenty of time for operators to get ready for starting the new timetables and services in August 2025.

They're aiming to speak to as many people as possible to find out who uses buses, why they use them, their destinations and preferred travel times – all in an attempt to tailor services to better meet specific needs. They are also very keen to speak to people who do not currently use the buses in order to find out why, and perhaps change things to remove barriers.

There are currently 28 timetabled bus services, 30 dial a ride services, 15 different operators across Shetland and no bus services at all in Foula, Fair Isle, Whalsay or the Skerries. Several members were unsure what Dial-a-Ride services were so Mr Craigie explained that they were

timetabled routes and services but ones which would only run if someone phone and pre-booked it.

Fares vary by distance with longer journey times generally costing more. Over 60s and under 22s travel free but Transport Scotland reimburse a proportion of the cost – approximately 61% of an adult fare for over 60s and 75% of an adult fare for under 22s. They are aware that not everyone knows about the free transport so part of the consultation is to provide people with information.

There was a lot of questions and discussion around the bus service from the airport, particularly when flights are late. There is no dial-a-ride service for the airport and drivers are unable to linger for late flights – punctuality and reliability standards mean they are required to leave no later than five minutes after their scheduled time (or be five minutes late at a stop) and leave no more than one minute early. There is a 9.30pm service designed to pick up any stragglers and to serve some airport staff but they recognise that if flights are delayed later than this the scheduled service does not work.

There is a problem throughout Shetland and Scotland as a whole with a shortage of drivers and there is also a shortage of buses which adds to the issue. When asked why some large buses are travelling with only one or two passengers Mr Craigie explained that they specify minimum passenger requirements for routes but that operators are able to use their vehicles any way they want to, sometimes having to use a larger bus than required because of their own logistics.

There has been a huge jump in bus travel when free travel for under 22s came in – 12.5% up on pre-covid levels. 61% of journeys in 2023/24 were made by those with concessionary bus passes. The busiest route is the Sumburgh to Lerwick route and the busiest times are between 7-8am and 3-4pm. Historically buses had been there to support 9-5 Monday to Friday working but with an increased number of people working from home or working flexibly or shifts, they now have a challenge to try to provide services that are actually needed and not to provide services that could end up losing money.

It was asked whether they had ever considered having a bus go through Gulberwick because of the rise in population and families there and Mr Craigie said any decision would have to take in the extra time it would add to other journeys.

Mr Craigie also confirmed that people can flag the bus down at any point on the route – not just at designated bus stops. Passengers can also request to get dropped off – if safe to do so – at a place of their choosing.

Questions about capacity on buses during the tourist season as well as the behaviour of some (often younger) passengers led to further discussion. They have looked at several ways to deal with behaviour, including sharing that reasonable behaviour is not just expected but a requirement. They have also supported bus drivers with training around neurodiversity and age and health/disability related conditions. Additional information about tourists is being collected from Visit Scotland surveys and they are aware some people do not feel safe or comfortable travelling standing on a bus so they are also trying to figure that out.

School transport makes up a part of the consultation and there is a school transport policy review happening now. Mr Craigie explained that SIC Education are responsible for the school transport policy and SIC Transport procure the network for them – they take what the policy requires and build that into the services and the network. The different teams are constantly speaking with one another.

Mr Craigie spoke through in more detail the routes and services currently available in the south mainland and encouraged questions and comments to take back to his team as part of the consultation. He also directed everyone to drop-in sessions happening and an online survey to use if you can't attend a session in person.

Members thanked Mr Craigie for the presentation and information.

4. SCHOOL TRANSPORT ISSUES – CUNNINGSBURGH PRIMARY

This item was moved up the agenda to allow Mr Craigie and members of the public attending for this item to be able to leave at the earliest possible opportunity.

The chair asked the clerk to summarise the background and she explained that a parent, Mr Sweeney had originally got in touch to explain parents concerns about both the lack of school transport for a number of families in the summer and spring months, as well as worries about road safety at drop-off and pick up time at the school. The school role had gone up increasing traffic, additional cars during summer months from these families were adding to the issue and single-track roads and a reduction in unofficial overspill carparks were further problems.

Members were also concerned and had been in contact with various council departments but had hit a brick wall in that the school transport policy was set and would not change. There were other schools with similar issues and changing for one school would mean changing for all schools – at a time when budgets were increasingly stretched.

Mr Craigie explained that his understanding was that the Walking Risk Assessments (WRAs) were up to date and still relevant but agreed that it was about confidence in safety. The WRAs are part of the school transport policy and are quite specific: entitled or not, safe or not. He said he got a real sense that it doesn't feel safe even if it is legally safe. He wanted to bring his colleagues into it as there was a collective set of components to it which needed to be brought together in terms of does something need to change with the policy as we can only act within the policy.

When it comes to the other components such as parking and traffic management, as these things cost money it can often lead to a hard line as it mostly comes down to budgets.

He said there are many features at play, how we live in society and the push for active travel but we need to make people feel safe. We need to have a conversation to look at it as a whole to see if things need to change but also be honest about where the hard limits lie – money, walking assessments, policy.

Cllr Duncan reiterated the fact that it came down to policy and that they can't set a precedent by changing it for one school. He shared details of an email Cllr Armitage sent after investigating the issue and said the last he had heard was that parents were considering paying for a bus themselves.

Mr Sweeney explained that one of his biggest frustrations as a parent was the lack of engagement he had had. The last WRA was done in 2019 and he said the SIC refuse to do another one despite circumstances having changed – there are more bairns, more junctions, more traffic, grass cutting on the verges not done satisfactorily and the Aithsetter junction leading out to a 60mph road. He doesn't feel safe as an adult walking the route let alone walking with his children there. He spoke through details of accidents he had witnessed at the junction and thanked Cllr Duncan for visiting his house where he was able to tell him in more detail about the serious accident where he had had to administer first aid at.

Mrs Philips is also a parent and backed up all of Mr Sweeney's points, adding that the drop off and pick up at the school was of increasing concern to parents. Unofficial overflow car parks are being used but one is under development and there are double parking along residential roads causing issues for residents and their carers visiting them. She said that there are 14 families or 26 children affected which is 30% of the school role. Expecting working parents to have the time to accompany children is not realistic and car sharing is not an option due to the need for car seats.

Mr Sweeney explained that a council official had been down to investigate the car park issues but there has been no engagement as a result of that and the department has firmly closed its doors to them. Even if the WRA is redone he doesn't have faith that the views of the community and parents will be taken into account.

The parents explained that the new route for summer actually adds distance on in an effort not to go past the Aithsetter houses like it does in winter, adding additional costs as the bus has to reverse and double back on itself.

Mr Craigie said that it doesn't seem like a joined-up approach has been taken so he resolved to go away and bring Roads and School Service colleagues together to look at the issue more holistically. He will report back to the Community Council and to the individuals concerned. He has taken notes about how it feels around the safety for children and access to the school and admits that due to their nature, the policy and WRA documents can be insensitive. He acknowledged that the routing feels a bit bureaucratic when there seems to be a more sensible option. He finished by saying that he can't guarantee anything but it seems like there may be an opportunity to do better.

The chair thanked Mr Craigie for his time and expertise and thanked the members of the public for attending and speaking.

ACTION: Mr Craigie to speak to colleagues in various SIC departments about the issues raised and report back to the Community Council and parents attending at his earliest convenience.

--- Mr Craigie, Mr Sweeney and Mrs Philips left at 8.55pm ---

1. MATTERS ARISING

1. NorthLink Drydock

Members were concerned at the loss of the use of the freight boat earlier in the year and wrote to NorthLink Managing Director Stuart Garrett about the negative impact it was having on local businesses and the day-to-day life of Shetlanders. A detailed reply was received on June 17th explaining the circumstances. Members were pleased with the response and agreed that NorthLink seemed to try to do as much as possible to reduce any negative impact for passengers and customers – it is in their interests as a business to do so after all.

The conversation then turned to what many around the table felt was the main issue NorthLink customers have to deal with – the inability to get a booking for a car or cabin much of the year round. It was agreed to reply asking what efforts were being made to solve this, perhaps with thought being given to bringing in some type of priority booking for islanders and increasing berths.

ACTION: Clerk to write to NorthLink asking what efforts are being made to reduce the problem of islanders not being able to secure a booking.

2. Aithsetter Bus Shelter

A member of the public requested that the Community Council look into the replacement of a panel at the Aithsetter Bus Shelter as it had become opaque, meaning passengers often had to stand out in the rain to watch for buses. The Roads Department confirmed via email on 22nd August that the panel had been replaced.

3. Active Travel

The clerk requested more information on the new cycle path above Gulberwick and Neil Hutcheson at SIC Roads sent through the plans as well as some notes. He explained that the intention is to extend the path into Lerwick and further south but that it will take some time to survey the route and draw up the draft designs. The next stage to be designed will be to the North of Hillside as far as the Black Gaet junction – it is to be surveyed soon.

Members were grateful to hear that Mr Hutcheson will send them a copy of the draft design and will update them on any developments with the strategic long-term route between Lerwick and South Mainland.

Members wondered whether new paths are automatically added to the gritting route.

ACTION: Clerk to email thanks to Mr Hutcheson for agreeing to keep them in the loop for future Active Travel plans in the Community Council area. She is also to try to find out whether the new path will be gritted.

4. Benches

The benches gifted to the Community Council by SSE are awaiting locations to site them. Community Councillors agreed to get precise locations for the clerk so she could progress planning permission.

ACTION: Mr Coleman to get location for Shurton Brae bench and Mrs Christie to get location for Mail beach bench.

5. Commemorative Artists Plaque

The plaque gifted to the Community Council as part of a Shetland-wide art project to remember the experiences of the community during Covid has been delivered to the clerk's address. The GQC plaque is to be sited at Cunningsburgh Hall.

ACTION: Clerk to deliver plaque to Cunningsburgh Hall committee member.

6. Meeting Clash with Sandwick

The Sandwick CC Clerk has explained they are unable to change their meeting nights back to a day which does not clash with GQC but they are willing to look at moving one-offs if there is likely to be an issue. There will probably just be one scheduled meeting a year which clashes but it can also become a problem if meetings have to be rescheduled. The clerk is to keep an eye on the issue and keep in contact with the Sandwick clerk.

2. POLICE REPORT

The Police Report for April/May 2024 had already been circulated and members had no comments or questions. There were six incidents recorded in the Community Council area over the time period – careless driving, two driving with no MOT, a theft, a concern for person and a medical matter.

There were no police officers present but Mr Duncan in his role as the chair of the Community Safety and Resilience Board was able to give an update on the new Chief Inspector. He is due to arrive in October and in the meantime Chief Inspector Scott Robertson – Local Area Commander for Orkney – is Acting Chief Inspector for Shetland too and is in daily contact with staff up here.

5. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The bank statement on August 22nd read £13,735.01.

The Zoom subscription of £155.88 and the VAS membership of £35 were both paid out in June.

Our grant funding for both the Core Grant and the CDF grant are now in the bank.

The 2023/34 accounts were submitted to VAS in April but we have only received confirmation last week that they have started to work on them.

It was agreed to see whether there is a cheaper alternative for use for online meetings.

ACTION: Clerk to investigate whether Microsoft Teams could be used for online meetings.

6. GRANT APPLICATIONS

Shetland Community Benefit Fund

There were no SCBF applications to consider.

The vice-chair signed the MoU and Data Sharing agreements.

GQC CC Applications

No grants. Grants will be considered at the October and November meetings so everyone is encouraged to spread the word. Forms can be found here: [Community Council Documents – Shetland Islands Council](#)

ACTION: Clerk to return the signed paperwork to the SCBF. Everyone to share the word about grant applications.

7. ROADS

Cllr Duncan took the opportunity to speak further on the school transport concerns for Cunningsburgh School, specifically on the visit he took to Mr Sweeney’s house to see the road, junction and lack of safe walking route. He was also able to hear details of accidents which had happened along the short stretch of road and at the junction and in particular one in which Mr Sweeney had to provide medical assistance to someone involved in a collision. The speed increase from 50mp to 60mph just after the junction is of concern to him and he agrees with residents that the 50mph speed limit should be extended past the farm shop building.

Following the visit Cllr Duncan met with SIC Roads staff and he believes they are taking the issue more seriously now due to the details of the accident he was able to share. He is hopeful of a positive outcome.

Members agreed that it was a ‘shocking bit of road’ particularly in misty conditions, and the lack of a safe walking route was considered very worrying. There is a stretch of pavement which goes around the corner and stops, meaning walkers need to continue on along the hard shoulder and/or try to cross a main road to a pavement on the other side. The 50mph limit would be welcomed by many people as the football pitch and hall are accessed regularly on foot.

ACTION: Cllr Duncan to keep everyone updated on the issue.

8. GULBERWICK, QUARFF & CUNNINGSBURGH DEVELOPMENT GROUP UPDATE

It was agreed that a meeting is needed to progress things. Mrs Christie also agreed to support the clerk with putting together an application for some funding for some community consultation events based around bringing people together for food.

ACTION: Meeting to be organised and clerk and Mrs Christie to explore possible funding application to the Shetland Community Benefit Fund to fund consultation events.

9. UPDATES FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

Cllr Duncan has already supported in earlier agenda items and said that the Council is really only just getting back into the swing of things after the summer, so he does not have anything else to report. He was asked whether there was any update on the winter fuel allowance and he said there was not, but that he would keep us posted.

10. CORRESPONDENCE

1. Stoura Windfarm Public Exhibition

ESB Generation and Trading, the company behind the Stoura Wind Farm plans off the east coast of Shetland, are holding a public exhibition on September 19th. Anyone wishing to attend can do so at the Shetland Museum between 2 and 8pm that day. Further details of

the project are available at the project website [Welcome to the Stoura Offshore Wind Farm Website](#).

ACTION: Anyone wishing to attend the public exhibition to do so on September 19th, 2-8pm.

2. Local Place Plan Events and Information

SIC Planning have launched an LPP Portal webpage for community bodies who have registered an interest in creating an LPP. It can be accessed via the button on the LPP page: [Local Place Plans – Shetland Islands Council](#)

There are also several in-person launch events coming up – registration is via the portal. There are meetings on Tuesday 3rd September at 7-9pm in the Scalloway Youth Club and on Thursday 5th September in the Carnegie Hall 2.30-4.30pm.

The Planning Department say that although LPPs are relatively simple in principle, this is your chance to grill the experts, ask questions, share ideas and get a proper grasp of what an LPP is and what preparing one could entail and what practical support is available.

In a separate but relevant project, they will be running a free training day on Place Mapping with Children and Teenagers at the Islesburgh Centre in Lerwick on September 26th. Although focusing on working with children and teenagers, the mapping exercises themselves are equally valid for most sections of the community. The techniques covered are therefore directly relevant in helping folk express their aspirations about the place they live in.

ACTION: Clerk to sign up to portal. Anyone who wishes to attend a launch event or training to do so.

3. Winter Maintenance Policy Review 2024

The Council's winter maintenance operations are being reviewed in response to concerns that the policy – last approved in 1991 – is outdated due to the increasing numbers of drivers travelling out with the hours that gritting takes place.

The proposed policy has been circulated and members are asked for comments before the Environment and Transport Committee meeting on September 9th.

Members commented that the gritting team do a great job over winter and wanted their thanks to the relevant staff noted.

ACTION: Anyone with comments or queries to return them to the clerk for sending in as soon as possible.

4. Dogs in Play Parks

A member of the public has got in touch with concerns about dog owners taking their dogs into the Cunningsburgh playpark, possibly due to insufficient signage. The dogs are often off their leads and one owner stated they had not seen the sign and was not aware dogs are not allowed. The clerk has already emailed SIC Environmental Health for advice and support but has not had a reply yet.

ACTION: Clerk to follow up email to Environmental Health.

5. Redundant Vehicle Information from Shetland Amenity Trust

Shetland Amenity Trust is no longer contracted with the CarTakeBack Recycling Scheme and the responsibility now sits with SIC Environmental Health. SAT have provided a leaflet for the public to let them know of the new procedures and who to contact.

ACTION: Clerk to share leaflet.

7. Da Voar Redd Up

The dates for the 2025 Voar Redd Up has been announced as Saturday 19th to Friday 25th April. The information on which groups took part in the 2024 redd up in our area and which groups would like funding has also been provided so the clerk has been in contact to find out which organisation or charity the group would like a £50 donation to go towards. There are three groups so a total of £150 this year.

ACTION: Clerk to follow up with the DVRU groups about where they would like their donation to go towards.

11. **PLANNING**

There were three planning applications to consider:

- [2024/172/PPF](#) – Construct two houses, Lower Hillside, Gulberwick, ZE2 9JX
- [2024/186/NMV](#) – Non material variation: erect dwelling house, Plot 1, Aisterlea, Cunningsburgh
- [2024/197/PPF](#) – Change of use from Church of Scotland, to residential unit & café, Cunningsburgh

Members had no comments or objections to return on the first two but members wanted to pass a comment back about the change of use of the church. They were keen to support it but noted the objections by the road service on the grounds of insufficient parking and subsequent safety issues which may arise due to the impact on traffic flow. Members feel some of these safety issues are within the power of the SIC as a local authority to address, especially if calls by locals for lowering speed limits was listened to.

The following application did not require comment:

- [2024/176/PPF](#) – House extension, Baelarie, Aithsetter

ACTION: Clerk to send comments to the SIC planning department in response to the planning applications considered.

11. **AOCB**

1. Request to Attend Meeting by UHI Shetland re Marine Restoration/Enhancement Projects

A marine scientist from UHI Shetland would like to attend the October meeting as part of community engagement for an action plan to restore and enhance areas of the sea or the coast around Shetland. Possible projects could include tackling underwater marine litter, antipredator netting around breeding seabird colonies or replanting seagrass in places such as the Vadills.

ACTION: Clerk to invite the scientist to the October meeting and share the draft agenda for the discussion with members.

2. Vodafone Network Developments

Due to the summer break members missed the opportunity to input into a meeting the local authority was having with the Vodafone Public Sector Account Manager. The clerk asked for feedback following the event and SIC Executive Manager of ICT, Performance and Improvement James Cunningham replied. He said he doesn't have too much to share at

DRAFT MINUTES – Subject to approval at the October 2024 meeting

present other than they have been having some conversations around improving the general situation across Shetland.

He said: "While initially they are focusing on replacing the 2G mast in Lerwick, to improve the dire situation there, they will also be looking at expanding and improving the capacity across all sites in Shetland where possible."

There are to be further meetings with Vodafone and the Planning and Economic Development teams to see where they can assist with moving things along and he has said he will keep us informed.

3. Earlier Start Time for Meeting

An earlier start time for meetings was proposed and it was agreed that subject to approval from the school, a start time of 7pm for the remaining meetings of the year would be trialled.

ACTION: Clerk to check whether the school can accommodate us meeting earlier, and if so, to communicate a 7pm start time to everyone when sending out the October agenda.

4. Get Well Card

It was agreed to send a get well card to Cllr McGregor wishing him a speedy recovery.

ACTION: Clerk to send a get well soon card to Cllr McGregor on behalf of the Community Council.

5. ASCC Meeting Reminder

The next Association of Shetland Community Councils meeting is to be held on September 10th. Clerk to send out agenda and reminder to members to ensure we have a volunteer to attend.

ACTION: Clerk to send out ASCC agenda and ask for volunteer to attend.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is on Tuesday 1st October 2024.

Meeting Ends – 9.45 pm.

CHAIR

13. OUTSTANDING ITEMS

March 2024 – Clerk to create a draft application to SCBF for a community event involving food and consultation for future projects for a development group. To look at over summer.