

# MINUTE

# A & B

**Audit and Scrutiny Committee**  
**Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick**  
**Wednesday 30 April 2008 at 10am**

**Present:**

F B Grains	A G L Duncan
R S Henderson	A J Hughson
C H J Miller	C L Smith
J W G Wills	

**Apologies:**

A T Doull

**In attendance (Officers):**

G Johnston, Head of Finance  
S Cooper, Head of Environment and Building Services  
D Williamson, Building Services Manager  
D Coupe, Area Engineer, Maintenance  
M Gordon, Human Resources Advisor  
P Peterson, Performance Management Co-ordinator  
S Pearson, Safety and Risk Manager  
L Adamson, Committee Officer

**Chairperson**

Mrs F B Grains, Chairperson of the Committee, presided.

**Circular**

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

**Declarations of Interest**

None.

**Minute**

The minute of the meeting held on 5 March 2008, was confirmed.

**09/08 – Information on Capital Projects Past and Present**

The Committee noted that Officers were undertaking detailed investigations into a number of projects and this information would be presented to a future meeting.

**12/08 – Disabled Access to Ferry Terminals**

In response to a query from the Chairperson regarding an alternative solution for disabled toilets at Grutness Pier, the Head of Environment and Building Services agreed to follow this up.

Min. Ref.	Subject	Action/Info
13/08	<b><u>Education and Social Care Directorate – Requested Detailed Budgets 2007/08</u></b>	

Min. Ref.	Subject	Action/Info
	<p>The Committee noted a report by the Head of Finance (Appendix 1).</p> <p>In response to a question from the Chairperson relating to recruitment costs, the Performance Management Co-ordinator advised that the Council would be joining a national recruitment portal at the end of June. This portal would allow individuals to link to one central site to obtain information on all vacant local government posts in Scotland. Regarding costs, the Performance Management Co-ordinator advised that during the first year, there would be no charge to the Council to use the portal, and thereafter the cost would be £500 per month, for unlimited use. This should result in substantial savings, as some of the larger advertisements in national newspapers cost in the region of £1,000. The proposal would be that smaller advertisements would be placed in national newspapers/relevant supplements, informing of the link to the portal.</p> <p>Referring to training costs, the Chairperson said it was important that Council staff were highly trained, and therefore training should not be cut. Mr C L Smith suggested that more use should be made of the excellent training facilities in Shetland, and instead of several individual staff travelling to the mainland for training, one training provider could travel to Shetland.</p> <p>Mrs C H J Miller referred to the overtime and inlands allowance costs for staff at Islesburgh, and stated that for a facility that recharges for the use of its facilities, these were extraordinarily high. Mrs Miller requested that a more indepth report be prepared advising on the services that Islesburgh offers, and how the charges equate to the actual costs. During the discussion, Dr J W G Wills said that the Community Centre was an important facility, particularly for children and young people, however he accepted that there could be scope for savings. Some discussion took place regarding the facilities associated with Islesburgh, however the Committee agreed that the report would provide clarity, and the information requested would be reported to a future meeting.</p>	
14/08	<p><b><u>Private Use of Council Vehicles</u></b></p> <p>The Committee considered a report by the Performance Management Co-ordinator (Appendix 2).</p> <p>The Performance Management Co-ordinator introduced the report and outlined the information contained in Appendix 1, which provided detail on the investigation into the use of Council vehicles to date.</p>	

In response to a question from Mr A G L Duncan, the Performance Management Co-ordinator advised that the proposals to reduce fuel consumption were covered in Section 6.3, which included suggestions that employees share vehicles wherever possible. In response to a further question from Mr Duncan regarding fuel additives, the Performance Management Co-ordinator referred to the bullet point in Section 6.1.1, and suggested that the "Committee could endorse the pilot studies and recommend to Council that a report be prepared for Infrastructure Committee showing the results and the plans to fully develop the potential for fuel additives".

Dr J W G Wills commented that this was a clear and comprehensive report, and he was pleased to note the involvement of the Unions, in addition to management. Dr Wills said that detailed investigations could be carried out on the staff that take Council vehicles home, however he considered that Managers could take on board the concerns raised, and be trusted to follow and implement the Private Use of Council Owned Vehicles Policy. He suggested that a follow-up report could be prepared after a year, and should no improvements be reported at that time, the Committee could request that further investigations be undertaken.

In response to a query, the Performance Management Co-ordinator advised that the Council's Fleet Management Unit are responsible for the procurement of fuel. Mrs Miller stated that as the cost of fuel was absolutely crucial to the Council, she suggested that an investigation be carried out as soon as possible to find out whether sourcing fuel from outside Shetland would be a cheaper option.

Mrs Miller referred to Section 6.1.1, and commented that the proposal to fully develop the potential of fuel additives was an excellent suggestion. She added that alternative fuels should be seriously considered, and when purchasing new vehicles fuel consumption should take priority.

Mr A J Hughson stated that with the rising price of fuel, the practise of staff taking lorries home at night was a luxury that could not continue. He also considered that some larger vehicles could be downsized.

In referring to the increasing costs for fuel, Mr C L Smith questioned whether this issue could be left for a year as suggested by Dr Wills. Mr Smith stated that there was a need to look at vehicle use and consider efficiencies, and suggested that management attend a meeting to provide further information to Members.

Mr A G L Duncan referred to the points raised by Mr Hughson and Mr Smith, and stated that he would like to see the recommendations in 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 fulfilled.

	<p>Mr R S Henderson advised of instances when larger lorries, getting 8 miles to the gallon, were being driven home at night. He said it would be more economical to transport a number of employees in a van. Mrs Miller suggested that management should look closely at whether workers should be taking lorries home at night.</p> <p>Mr Smith advised that this investigation was not targeted at any particular member of staff, but was to look to make savings. He said that it was necessary for management to attend a meeting so that they are aware of the issues of the Committee. The Performance Management Co-ordinator noted that a number of issues had been highlighted for further investigation, and he agreed to arrange a meeting with the relevant managers to meet with Members of the Committee.</p> <p>Dr J W G Wills referred to the recommendation in the report and moved that the Committee approve the report, and that the practical measures are implemented as soon as possible. Mrs F B Grains seconded.</p>	PP
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15/08	<p><b><u>Insurance Claims</u></b></p> <p>The Committee noted a report by the Safety and Risk Manager (Appendix 3).</p> <p>The Safety and Risk Manager provided Members with an illustration and explanation of an unplanned incident, and how the indirect costs can mount up, with other jobs delayed and overtime costs incurred.</p> <p><i>(Mr A J Hughson left the meeting).</i></p> <p>The Safety and Risk Manager then introduced the report, and advised that Appendix A contained information on the breakdown by Policy type of all insurance claims in 2007/08. She provided some explanation on a number of the individual claims in Appendix 2, and advised that Appendix 3 illustrated the variances in the claim patterns during the past three years.</p> <p>In response to questions from Mr C L Smith, the Safety and Risk Manager advised that the Council's risk management procedures were working well to keep incidents to a minimum, and the recent European tendering process has assisted in reducing insurance premiums still further. She advised that the Council's insurance policy was a 5 year contract, with an annual renewal. She added that the benefit of the 5 year contract was that the insurer would understand the business of the Council, and the work being done to control risks and therefore had the confidence to offer good premium rates.</p> <p>In response to a question from Dr J W G Wills, the Safety and Risk Manager advised that as the Council has a good risk management structure in place, which meant that the Council</p>	
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could self insure the first £1,000,000 on property claims and the first £25,000 on liability claims which produces a significant saving in premium.

Dr Wills then enquired whether the Council would be covered for compensation claims by Lerwick Port Authority. The Safety and Risk Manager advised that it would depend on the basis of their claim but that if liability was demonstrated then it would.

*(Mrs C H J Miller declared an interest, as a Member of the Lerwick Port Authority).*

Dr Wills said that this would be an opportune time to refer to his letter to the Chair of Audit and Scrutiny Committee, which proposes that the Committee investigate the costs being incurred on the Bressay Bridge Project.

The Chairperson stated that she had received the letter from Dr Wills.

*(Mrs F B Grains declared an interest, and therefore vacated the chair. Mr A Duncan, Vice-Chairperson took the Chair).*

Mr Duncan said that having read the letter, he considered that the Committee could follow up point No. 4, however he proposed that Members stay behind after this meeting to consider the content of the letter, to hear their views and to proceed from there. Dr Wills said that he had wished to notify the Committee of this request, and the issue would be for discussion in public, at a future meeting of this Committee. Mr Duncan reaffirmed that the matter would be discussed following this meeting and taken forward.

*(Mrs F B Grains assumed the Chair).*

The Safety and Risk Manager clarified that the costs of the claims associated with “Fire – Housing” included all damages to Council housing. Regarding malicious damage, she advised that the Council has an agreement with the Sheriff Court that the Council’s costs would be added to any fine handed down to the perpetrator.

In response to a question from Mr Duncan, the Safety and Risk Manager advised that the Council deals with three main insurance companies – one providing the general package, another to cover ferries and the third for Sella Ness (tug boats/operations/properties, etc.).

The Chairperson noted that the number of insurance claims appeared to remain quite constant each year, however the value of the claims change. The Chairperson then thanked the Safety and Risk Manager for the information provided.

16/08	<p><b><u>Personal Injury Notifications (PIN) Incidents</u></b></p> <p>The Committee noted a report by the Safety and Risk Manager (Appendix 4).</p> <p>The Safety and Risk Manager summarised the main terms of the report, and advised on the importance of monitoring PIN incidents as reoccurring incidents can be addressed and preventative measures taken. Referring to Appendix 1, the Safety and Risk Manager explained that the increase in PIN incidents predominantly related to improved reporting procedures. Appendix 2 provided a breakdown of PIN incidents by Department for the past three years, and Members noted that not surprisingly, as they are front line services, the highest number of PIN forms had been submitted by the Education and Social Work departments. Members noted with concern the high number of incidents relating to ‘assaults’.</p> <p>The Safety and Risk Manager explained that the main proportion of ‘assaults’ related to individual clients at Social Care, and to children in playgrounds/gyms or those with additional special needs. She went on to advise that the Safety and Risk Service regularly get involved with these issues and a lot of work is being done to try to improve the situation.</p> <p>Dr J W G Wills stated that the reported figures on instances of ‘assault’ on staff were appalling, and he questioned whether new procedures should be developed to protect staff. The Safety and Risk Manager explained that often the clients are not aware of their behaviour and the incidents were most often not a deliberate attack. Staff often view these incidents as “going with the job” and can become desensitised to these types of situation, however there may well come a point in time when the situation becomes too much to bear for a member of staff and they find themselves under stress and no longer able to cope.</p> <p>Mr R Henderson referred to the reported incidences in the ‘Hit/Stabbed’ category, and asked whether any offensive weapons had been used. The Safety and Risk Manager reported that these instances referred to being poked at with any type of implement, no instances involving an individual being stabbed with a knife had been reported, although staff have received verbal threats of this kind.</p> <p>In response to questions from Mrs C H J Miller, the Safety and Risk Manager advised that Social Care staff were very good at assessing situations, however there have been instances in the past when care has had to be withdrawn/altered as a client has repeatedly abused their carers. She said she believed it is also possible for clients to be provided with the funding necessary to source their own care. She added that whilst the Council has a duty to its clients, it also has a duty to provide a safe working environment for its staff and it was really a case of trying to</p>	
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	ensure that both duties were met. Mrs Miller suggested that this issue could be raised at the Performance Review Sessions.	
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17/08	<p><b><u>Occupational Health/Promoting Attendance</u></b></p> <p>The Committee noted a report by the Human Resources Manager (Appendix 5).</p> <p>The Human Resources Advisor summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the Service Plan had highlighted the increasing levels of absenteeism across the Council. Members noted that absenteeism was a matter that the Council takes very seriously, and the Human Resources Service would be working to improve absenteeism levels, to rank among the top eight Councils in Scotland, in line with the Council's corporate target.</p> <p>The Human Resources Advisor then provided an update on the Council's occupational health provision, advising of the proposal to carry out research with previous users of the occupational health service, to ascertain where improvements can be made to best promote the health of the workforce and to improve attendance statistics. She added that a new post of Senior Occupational Health Nurse had been established by NHS Shetland, and the newly appointed Senior Nurse would be taking up post at the end of June. This would assist in the development of the occupational health service, and it is anticipated that the health surveillance process would improve.</p> <p>In response to a question from Mr Duncan, the Human Resources Advisor advised that the health surveillance appointments were compulsory for certain staff and also for night workers.</p> <p>In response to a further question, the Human Resources Advisor reported that Shetland currently ranks quite low in the statutory performance indicators relating to absence rates, however, the Council has set a challenging target and all Services in the Council will work towards achieving improvements in attendance levels.</p> <p>Mrs C H J Miller said it was important to focus on preventative measures rather than cure, particularly with stress related issues. The Human Resources Advisor said that the Council's Staff Welfare Officer arranges confidential counselling for staff, and it is proposed that statistical information will be gathered regarding staff that have had support through the counselling/welfare service.</p> <p>Members noted that an update on the work to promote attendance across the Council, and the review of the occupational health provision, would be reported to a future meeting.</p>	
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	<p>Dr J Wills advised that he had provided the Performance Management Co-ordinator with a number of suggested areas for investigation by this Committee. It was reported that the current work programme was scheduled until the summer, when the suggestions could be considered for addition to the programme.</p>	
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The meeting concluded at 11.45am.

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F B Grains  
Chairperson