

Services Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Thursday 12 June 2008 at 10.00am

Present:

L Angus	E L Fullerton
L F Baisley	J Budge
A T J Cooper	A T Doull
A G L Duncan	F B Grains
I J Hawkins	R S Henderson
J H Henry	A J Hughson
F A Robertson	R C Nickerson
G Robinson	J G Simpson
C L Smith	A S Wishart

Apologies:

A J Cluness	W H Manson
C H J Miller	Dr J W G Wills

In Attendance:

H Sutherland, Executive Director – Education and Social Care
J Reyner, Quality Improvement Manager
A Edwards, Quality Improvement Manager
C Ferguson, Head of Community Care
W Weis, Service Manager – Community Care Resources
C Medley, Head of Capital Programmes and Housing Service
S Morgan, Head of Children's Services
J Thomason, Management Accountant
A Cogle, Service Manager - Administration
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Mr L Angus, Chairperson of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

The minute of the meeting held on 1 May 2008, having been circulated, was confirmed.

Members' Attendance at External Meetings

Mr R C Nickerson	Hamefarin 2010 Committee
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The Committee congratulated the Library Service and mobile libraries on winning the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals President's Shield for Best Small Mobile Library in the UK.

43/08 **Advocacy Development Plan 2008-2011**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Community Care (Appendix 1) and approved the recommendation contained therein on the motion of Mrs E L Fullerton, seconded by Mr G Robinson.

The Head of Community Care said that she was very grateful to Advocacy Shetland for the work they had done to contribute to the Plan, and to the Grants Co-ordinator and Shetland Council of Social Service for their work in putting the Plan together.

44/08

Community Health and Care Partnership Agreement 2008-2011

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Community Care (Appendix 2). An updated version of the Executive Summary was circulated at the meeting (Appendix 2a).

The Head of Community Care advised that the full document was intended to be a useful reference document for Members and contained details of all the community health and care partnership arrangements.

Some discussion took place regarding the Local Service Delivery Groups (LSDGs), and concerns were expressed that there was duplication and overlap with other organisations, and that the LSDGs in some areas did not function as intended.

The Head of Community Care said that the LSDGs had been developing differently in the different areas. A first year report had recently been received from the South Mainland LSDG, and she advised that she could circulate this to Members so that they had a fuller insight and she hoped that it would also illustrate that there was no duplication. It had been felt that Shetland was 'ahead of the game' with LSDGs, and she pointed out that Community Councils could use the LSDGs to achieve some of their aims and make a difference in localities without having to go through several layers of bureaucracy.

Members pointed out that there had been difficulties in operating the LSDGs in some areas, and that there had been some confusion over their roles and remits. Whilst there were good examples in some areas of Shetland, it was suggested that there was a need for strong leadership and constant officer support in order to promote LSDGs across Shetland.

In response to a query regarding the funding streams for the CHCP Agreement, the Head of Community Care advised that funding for GP services did come within the Agreement and that she would advise of this figure when it was available. She went on to say that each of the partners involved had a range of statutory duties and responsibilities. As the local authority had a greater burden with regard to these statutory duties and responsibilities, this was reflected in the funding streams.

Mr A T J Cooper moved that the recommendations in the report be approved, with the addition that a report is presented to the next meeting of the Committee regarding how the Local Service Delivery Groups could be re-energised.

Mrs L F Baisley seconded and the Committee agreed.

45/08

Rural Schools – The Scottish Government's Consultation

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 3).

The Chairperson advised that he was disappointed that there was no specific reference to island areas within the document, and he felt that the first response should be to contact the Scottish Government to point this out as he felt that it was therefore a flawed document.

Mr R C Nickerson concurred and referred to the significant implications for Shetland. He moved that officers present a draft response to the consultation to the next Services Committee, and that the Convener be asked to raise the issue at the Highlands and Islands Convention meeting in October.

Mr J G Simpson seconded and the Committee agreed.

It was noted that the Convention agenda was set some time in advance, but that it may be possible to include it as an additional item at the next meeting. It was also pointed out that the lack of specific reference to island areas was more widespread and indicative of a central approach to government planning, and that it would be useful to get together with other island areas to make sure that this did not happen again.

46/08

Consultation on Shared Management in Yell Schools

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 4).

Mr R S Henderson advised that the two communities involved supported different models and that as he represented the whole area, he would not take part in any vote on the matter.

Mr C L Smith said that he felt that it was important to take the forthcoming Blueprint for Education into consideration when making a decision on this matter. He therefore moved that a decision be deferred until the Council had considered the Blueprint for Education, and Mrs E L Fullerton seconded.

During the discussion that followed, Members referred to the success of shared management models in other areas, particularly in relation to the stability it had provided for smaller rural schools and in enabling teachers to remain in class for a larger percentage of the time. A Member pointed out that the success of such models could sometimes be dependent on the ability and personality of the individuals involved, and that there were concerns that, as such, this was not always sustainable.

The Quality Improvement Manager (J Reyner) advised Members that the report recommendations were based on full consultation with both communities involved, and that the Committee should note and take account of the conclusions in paragraph 8.1 of the report as it would be a change in direction if shared management was to be imposed rather than adopted in two or more communities that supported the model. There were currently a number of national consultations that would have to be taken into account in relation to the Blueprint for Education, and some would not be concluded until the end of the year. With regard to attainment levels in the schools involved, he confirmed there had been a drop in attainment levels in both schools over the last three years. This information had not been included in the report, as it was not considered significant because figures in small schools were notoriously unworthy.

47/08

Shared Management for Schools in Shetland: Fetlar Primary School and Baltasound Junior High School

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 5) and approved the recommendation contained therein on the motion of Mr J G Simpson, seconded by Mr R S Henderson.

48/08

Consultation on Secondary Education Qualifications

The Committee noted a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 6).

The Quality Improvement Manager (J Reyner) issued a table illustrating the proposed new qualifications (Appendix 6a), and pointed out that, if adopted, the proposals would have a major impact on secondary education, particularly in that there would be no point in having four-year secondary schools.

49/08 **Children and Young People's Services Plan**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Children's Services (Appendix 7) and approved the recommendation contained therein on the motion of Mrs L F Baisley, seconded by Mr C L Smith.

It was noted that the table referred to on page 56 of the appendix had been omitted.

50/08 **Forums and Industry Panels – Remits and Membership**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Legal and Administration (Appendix 8) and approved the recommendation contained therein on the motion of Mrs E L Fullerton, seconded by Mr C L Smith.

51/08 **Shetland Population and Migration Study**

The Committee considered a report by the Policy and Development Assistant (Appendix 9).

It was suggested that there was a need for the Chief Executive to take the lead and bring forward action points out of the study in terms of developing the next Corporate Plan, as it was felt that there was no appropriate mechanism in place to take the study forward. However other Members felt that it was up to Members and the Committees to use the study for forward planning in all services. It was noted that the Infrastructure Committee had agreed that the Study should be referred to Industry Panels and Forums, and that a seminar should be held to consider the Study.

Some discussion took place regarding the housing issues in relation to the Study. The Head of Housing and Capital Programme advised that the Scottish Government had indicated that it was going to cut funding available to housing associations, therefore Hjaltland Housing Association's (HHA) future developments would be curtailed because of these cuts. In the current financial climate, it would be difficult for HHA to borrow money at a reasonable rate. It was unlikely that new money would be made available for local authorities. The money that the Council had for its new build programme largely related to the replacement of the chalets at Hoofields, so there would be no significant net gain in housing available. Some social housing would also be lost through the Right to Buy legislation.

The Chairperson suggested that the housing issues could be considered in some detail at the seminar to be held to consider the Study.

(Mr J H Henry left the meeting)

Mrs L F Baisley moved that the Committee adopt the recommendation made at the Infrastructure Committee with regard to this report, namely that it be referred to the Industry Panels and Forums in the first instance, prior to a seminar being held to discuss the Study.

Mrs I J Hawkins seconded and the Committee agreed.

52/08 **Healthy Eating in Schools**

The Committee noted a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 10).

53/08 **Little Tikes – Progress Report**

The Committee noted a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 11).

It was pointed out that Nesting was being considered as an option whereas the consultation had indicated that Tingwall was the preferred option. However the Head of Capital Programme and Housing advised that all options had to be considered as part of the feasibility study in order for the Council to arrive at its conclusion.

54/08 **Community Learning and Development HMle Action Plan Progress**

The Committee noted a report by the Executive Director of Education and Social Care (Appendix 12).

55/08 **Progress Report on Blueprint for Education**

The Committee noted a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 13).

It was suggested that both Highland and Argyll and Bute should be included in the general comparisons, that the projected enrolment figures should take account of the longer-term projections, and that some discussion should take place with the Planning Service as to where there were likely to be increases and decreases in house building in future.

A Member pointed out that it had originally been agreed to hold a seminar for Members before the Blueprint was published in order that Members could discuss the terms of reference, but that this had not taken place. The Chairperson undertook to organise a seminar, in consultation with officers, the Vice-Chairperson and the Education Spokesperson.

56/08 **Shetland College Board of Management – 28 May 2008**

The Committee noted the minute of the above meeting (Appendix 14).

20/08 - Director's Report: Music Development

Mr R C Nickerson advised that he had requested a report on the content of music courses, not the framework for the provision of music courses.

57/08 **Consideration of Best Value – Housing Services**

The Committee noted a report by the Head of Capital Programme and Housing Services (Appendix 15).

Some discussion took place regarding the rental loss due to empty properties. Whilst it was noted this had been greatly decreasing, some Members expressed concern at the time it was taking to relet properties, and that there was a public perception that some properties were remaining vacant for long periods of time.

The Head of Capital Programme and Housing advised that the actual turn around of properties had to be considered as low priority in relation to the provision of a sustainable service and homeless service. However it was recognised that it was an issue and successful efforts were being made to address it, as illustrated in the report. He also requested that any queries relating to a particular vacant property should be addressed to him, as there was usually an explanation as to why a

property had been left vacant for a longer period of time. He would be happy to provide this information to Members on request.

The Chairperson pointed out that he had requested that the Executive Director provide update reports on capital projects as a regular item on the Services Committee agenda, and that the Head of Capital Programme and Housing could contribute to this.

Members referred to staffing numbers, as illustrated in paragraph 4.10 of the report. It was noted that there had been a 14% reduction in staff over the last six years, and it was suggested that the Head of Capital Programme and Housing should bring forward a report regarding the implications of this decrease in staffing on planning for new builds and other issues that had arisen as part of the inspection by Communities Scotland. Concern was expressed that staff may be overstretched and that this would hamper future development.

In response to a query regarding property maintenance, the Head of Housing and Capital Programme confirmed that a separate group of staff carried out the housing property maintenance, although there was some overlap with other staff. The reason the workforce had been separated was in anticipation of the housing stock transfer, which had not occurred. Whilst there may be a case to amalgamate the workforce, he was not entirely clear of the advantages and disadvantages of doing this. However this was something that could be addressed in the future. He went on to say that there was a need to balance best value and ensure that tenants were getting the service they paid for. Therefore tenants would ultimately have to pay for additional staff through increased rents, and he was not sure that they would find this acceptable.

In response to a further query regarding the rehousing of people with housing arrears, he confirmed that he had the power to block an allocation that had come through the general needs or transfer list providing it met certain criteria. However he had no such powers in relation to allocations from the homeless list. With regard to a possible housing stock transfer, he advised that the Council had previously decided to retain its housing stock because there were no advantages to the Council in transferring its stock at that time. There were still no incentives or reasons for the Council to transfer its stock to a housing association, particularly given the current economic climate where the Scottish Government was putting housing associations under financial pressure.

(Mr G Robinson left the meeting)

Mr R C Nickerson moved that the Head of Housing and Capital Programme present a report on the potential implications on his staff regarding the delivery of the aspirations in terms of new builds and in addressing the issues that arose as a result of the inspection report.

Mrs I J Hawkins seconded.

In response to suggestions, the mover and seconder of the motion agreed that the report should also include reference to the implications of combining the Housing and Capital Programmes staff that were involved in property maintenance, and that the Head of Housing and Chief Executive consider both the Capital Programme and Housing Service, how they interact and where the pressures were.

Other Members questioned if there was a need for an additional report, given that the Housing Service was providing a good service and many of the issues raised would be dealt with in the course of the Service's work. It was also pointed out that extra staff would ultimately have to be paid for by tenants, and there was concern at asking tenants to pay for this in the current economic climate.

Mr A T J Cooper moved, as an amendment, that the recommendation in the report be approved, and Mr A S Wishart seconded.

Voting took place by show of hands and the result was as follows:

Amendment (Mr A T J Cooper)	8
Motion (Mr R C Nickerson)	6

58/08

Housing Service – Application to Buy Sports and Recreation Area, Bressay

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Capital Programmes and Housing Service and approved recommendation 6.2 on the motion of Mr C L Smith, seconded by Mr A S Wishart.

The meeting concluded at 11.55am.