

SHETLAND PARTNERSHIP BOARD
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Thursday 14 February 2013 at 10am

Present:

I Kinniburgh, Chair, NHS Shetland
G Angus, Chair, Voluntary Action Shetland
M Bell, Convener, Shetland Islands Council
A Black, Chief Executive, Shetland Charitable Trust
M Boden, Chief Executive, Shetland Islands Council
A Cooper, Member Northern Joint Police Board
A Duncan, Member Highland and Islands Fire Board
C Hughson, Executive Officer, Voluntary Action Shetland
Chief Inspector A MacInnes, Northern Constabulary
L Odie, Association of Shetland Community Councils
S Laurenson, Lerwick Port Authority, Business Representative
N Mouat, Youth Representative
D Ratter, Chair, Shetland Charitable Trust
G Robinson, Leader, Shetland Islands Council
V Simpson, Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development
J Smith, Executive Manager – Improvement and Performance
L Adamson, Committee Officer

Also in attendance

B Fox, SIC
D Morgan, Criminal Justice, SIC
S Pearson, Safety and Risk, SIC
A Robertson, Voluntary Action Shetland
K Kenmure, NHS Shetland
L Rosie, Communications Officer, SIC
K Valente, Family Support Services, SIC

Apologies:

R Roberts, Chief Executive, NHS Shetland
M Sinclair, Scottish Government
A Wishart, Chair, ZetTrans

Chairperson

Mr Kinniburgh, Chair of the Partnership Board, presided.

01/13 Minutes of the Partnership Board – 13 November and 20 November 2012

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 November 2012 and 20 November 2012 were confirmed on the motion of Mr Robinson, seconded by Mr Kinniburgh.

02/13 Matters Arising/Actions from Previous Meeting

In response to a comment regarding references within the previous minutes to “Chief Executive”, it was agreed that in order to provide clarity the complete title would be used in future minutes.

15/12 – Community Benefit Framework

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the Community Benefit Policy is to be progressed by the Council’s Executive Manager – Economic Development with assistance from the Chief Executive, SCT. The Chair reported that a worthwhile meeting had been held with Mr B Hunter, Chair of the Shetland Community Benefit

Fund Ltd. (SCBF), and he would expect the Policy to be developed in consultation with Mr Hunter, and that an update on progress would be reported to a future meeting of the Partnership Board.

The Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development undertook to provide an extract from the minutes of the meeting on 13 November 2013 to the SCFB Ltd.

20/12 and 23/12 – Welfare Reform

Comments were made on the implications to Shetland from the Welfare Reform proposals, and it was confirmed that an update report would be presented to the next meeting of the Partnership Board, on 16 May 2013.

03/13 Shetland Partnership Membership

The Chair welcomed Ms S Laurensen, General Manager, Lerwick Port Authority, to her first meeting, following her recent appointment as a business representative on the Partnership Board.

The Chair provided updates on recent changes to the membership of the Partnership Board:

- Correspondence had been received from Mr Patterson, Chief Executive of Highlands and Islands Enterprise seeking approval for Ms R Hunter, Area Manager, Shetland Enterprise, to be added to the membership of the Partnership Board. This arrangement is in line with similar appointments in other areas of Scotland.
- The Shetland Fisheries Training Centre Trust has agreed for Professor D Gray, Director of the NAFC, to be a substantive member of the Partnership Board.
- The Chair of Youth Voice, Ms N Williamson, will attend future meetings of the Partnership Board, replacing Ms E Shaw who is now studying in Edinburgh.

Mr Ratter commented that he was not opposed to any of the changes to the membership, however he believed that a smaller group encourages better reasoned decisions and could be more effective.

The Board considered a report by the Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development (Appendix 2).

In introducing the report, the Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development advised on the proposed changes to the membership of the Partnership Board following the recent appointments to the Police and Fire and Rescue Services.

Mr A Cooper, Member Northern Joint Police Board, and Mr A Duncan, Member Highland and Islands Fire Board advised of their willingness to concede office.

On the motion of Mr Robinson, seconded by Mr Kinniburgh, the Partnership Board approved the recommendations in the report. The Chair thanked Mr Cooper and Mr Duncan for the valuable work they have done over the years in regards to the Police Board and Fire Board, and for their contributions to community planning.

(Mr Cooper and Mr Duncan left the meeting).

04/13 Shetland Single Outcome Agreement 2013 Development Arrangements.

The Board considered a report by the Executive Manager – Performance and Improvement (Appendix 3), which described the requirements, objectives and a process for the development of the 2013 Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) in the context of the current Community Plan, the 2012 SOA and guidance recently supplied by the Scottish Government.

In referring to the Statement of Ambition and recent national guidance, the Chair commented on the high expectations on community planning partners to drive forward public sector reform, and for locality directors to provide strong and productive challenges to the development of the new SOAs, which should fully reflect the guidance, and make a real impact on delivery going forward.

In introducing the report, the Executive Manager – Performance and Improvement reported on the raised expectations around community planning in regards to the new SOAs, and that SOAs that are not stretching and ambitious will not be agreed. He highlighted the timetable for producing the SOA at Section 4 of the report, and advised on progress to date and on the proposed actions that would drive forward the work by the end of March, which included a Seminar on 18 March where the draft SOA would be presented to Members of the Shetland Partnership Board to endorse and to agree any remaining work to be done. He said it was hoped that Murray Sinclair will be available to attend to speak directly on the SOA.

The Executive Manager – Performance and Improvement acknowledged that a weakness in the previous SOA had been the lack of data to feed into the indicators and targets, and he reported on the need for the new SOA to be robust, competent and appropriate. It was noted that the number of indicators has reduced to 56 from approximately 100 in the previous SOA.

During the discussion, there was general agreement that the new SOA has to be focused and include indicators that can be evidenced and are achievable, and it was reported that with the targets in the SOA being binding the agreed priorities need to be those that can be delivered and make a difference in communities. CI MacInnes said that he supported the reduction in the number of indicators, however he advised on the argument to retain certain targets that are more difficult to achieve as external resources could be accessed to deliver on the outcomes in future years.

Reference was made to the importance of cross partnership resource alignment in formulating the new SOA, and to consider any duplication or areas where resources are not being used to their full potential.

Mr Robinson advised that he had recently received a copy of Scotland Enterprise's commitment to community planning, and he suggested that, to encourage commitment locally, similar pledges could be made by community planning partners in Shetland. Mr Robinson undertook to provide the Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development with a copy of the document, for circulation to community planning partners.

Subject to the comments made and further feedback from the Strategic Groups, the Partnership Board approved the recommendations in the report, on the motion of Mr Robinson, seconded by Mr Kinniburgh.

05/13 2012 Single Outcome Agreement Progress Report

A report by the Executive Manager – Performance and Improvement (Appendix 4), provided an overview of delivery on the Shetland 2012 SOA.

In introducing the report, the Executive Manager – Performance and Improvement advised that progress was fairly robust against the key outcomes, however there were still some concerns relating to youth unemployment and inequalities.

The Partnership Board noted the report.

06/13 Early Years Collaborative

The Board considered a Briefing Paper entitled “Early Years Collaborative Launch” (Appendix 5) which informed on the objectives, the stretch aims and the proposed four work streams for taking forward the Early Years Collaborative.

It was reported that with there being overlaps in the four work streams it has been decided that the objectives for Shetland will be delivered through one work stream which will encompass from conception through to 5 years. Three workshops have been arranged which will bring together the stakeholders with the aim to map the services already provided, to challenge to find any gaps in the work streams and to agree how things can be done more efficiently. Ms Kenmore said it was important to recognise that a lot of good work and good practice was already embedded in services locally, and she confirmed that the Early Years Collaborative belongs to the community planning partnership and updates would be reported to the Partnership Board as progress is made.

During the discussion, reference was made to the requirement that all organisations working with children have to sign up to the collaborative process, and will be required to intervene appropriately.

The Chair said that the Early Years Collaborative will build on work already in place, and provide an opportunity to refocus efforts to give early years a higher priority, which will fit in well with the proposals in the SOA. The Chair encouraged Members of the Partnership Board to attend one of the workshop events.

07/13 Community Safety Board Report

A joint report from the Team Leader – Safety and Risk, SIC, and the Area Commander, Northern Constabulary (Appendix 6), provided an update on progress of the Pathfinder Project and sought approval for the formation of the Community Safety Board (CSB).

The Team Leader – Safety and Risk summarised the main terms of the report, and advised that the Council had recently approved proposals to set up a CSB to deliver on the safer strand of the Single Outcome Agreement.

Ms C Hughson referred to the decision at the Council meeting to include representation from the Voluntary Sector on the CSB, however she noted that reference to the Voluntary Sector in the membership of the CSB had not been inserted in all of the documents. The Team Leader – Safety and Risk apologised for the oversight, and confirmed that she would make the necessary update to the “Terms of Reference”.

The issue of arbitration was questioned should there be any dispute within the CSP, for example, in regards to commitment or allocation of funding. Following a discussion, it was agreed that any conflicts would in the first instance be discussed by the Performance Group and if agreement could not be reached the issue would be addressed by the Partnership Board.

On the motion of Mr Angus, seconded by Mr Bell, the Partnership Board approved the recommendations in the report.

08/13 Redesigning the Community Justice System

The Board considered a report by the Executive Manager – Criminal Justice, SIC, which reported on the Government’s consultation on proposals for the redesign of the Community Justice System and Criminal Justice Social Work Services.

In introducing the report, the Executive Manager – Criminal Justice advised on the 3 Options put forward by the Scottish Government on proposals to change from the current Community Justice system. She reported on the importance for the responsibilities to remain with local authorities and to retain local control, which would be supported through delivery of either Option ‘A’ or Option ‘B’, and she asked that the Partnership Board respond to the consultation.

During the discussion, members of the Partnership Board advised on their support for Community Justice to remain under local control, and their preference for an enhanced Option ‘A’ taking in CJA and the Police. It was noted that with the Scottish Government’s recent decisions favouring a centralised approach, their preference would be for Option ‘C’.

There was agreement that a response would be sent from the Partnership Board to support Option ‘A’, and that the response should inform that the Partnership Board is opposed to Option ‘C’. The Executive Manager – Criminal Justice advised that following the decision on the way forward, which is expected in the autumn, she would prepare an update report to the Partnership Board. It was noted that the implementation date for the redesigned Criminal Justice System was 2015/16.

09/13 Electric Vehicle and Plugged in Places Charging Infrastructure Procurement Support Scheme Update

A report by the Team Leader – Transport Operations, SIC, provided an update on the Electric Vehicle and Plugged in Places Scheme, including recent activity in Shetland and funding for 2013/14.

The Partnership Board noted the contents of the report.

10/13 AOCB

There was no further business.

11/13 Future Meeting Dates

- Thursday 16 May 2013 at 10am
- Friday 21 June 2013 (provisional date for annual summit)
- Thursday 15 August 2013 at 2pm
- Thursday 14 November 2013 at 2pm

The meeting concluded at 11.35am.

I Kinniburgh
Chair

SHETLAND PARTNERSHIP BOARD

ACTION TRACKER

Meeting Date	Action No.	Agenda/ Min. Ref.	Action Description	Owner	Partners Involved	Status	Update/Final Outcome
08/08/2012	1.6	04/12	Consideration, at a later date, to be given to extending the term of the Chair of the SPB	V Simpson, Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development			To be considered at a future meeting
13/11/2012	2.1	14/12	Request made to Living Lerwick BID Team to seek representation on the Board from a business in the Living Lerwick BID area	V Simpson, Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development		Complete	Letter sent 16/01 – response received declining invitation due to level of own time already committed to meeting objectives of Living Lerwick
13/11/2012	2.2	17/12	Suggestion that the format of reporting to the former CPB could be considered as a means of reporting to the SPB	V Simpson, Executive Manager, Community Planning and Development		Complete	Covered under agenda item 5 of Feb meeting.
13/11/2012	2.3	18/12	Short-Life Working Group to take forward key aspects of the National review to report to the SPB in the next 2 cycles of meetings.	V Simpson, Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development		Complete	As above

20/11/2012	3.1	23/12	Request for a 6 month update report to SPB on Welfare Reforms	E Perring, Policy Manager			Include as an agenda item at May meeting
14/02/2013	4.1	02/13	Update on progress with the Community Benefit Policy to be reported to a future meeting	Executive Manager – Economic Development			
14/02/2013	4.2	02/13	Provide Shetland Community Benefit Fund Ltd. with an extract from the minute of the SPB meeting on 13/11/2012	V Simpson, Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development			
14/02/2013	4.4	04/13	Reference was made to Scotland Enterprise’s commitment to community planning, and it was suggested that CPPs could draw up similar pledges to community planning. Mr Robinson undertook to provide V Simpson, EM - CP&D, with a copy of Scotland Enterprise’s commitment to community planning, for circulation to CPPs.	G Robinson, Leader, SIC			
14/02/2013	4.5	08/13	SPB to respond to the consultation on Redesigning the Community Justice System. Support for Option ‘A’	D Morgan, Executive Manager – Criminal Justice			
14/02/2013	4.6	08/13	Following the decision on the way forward for the community justice system,	D Morgan, Executive Manager – Criminal Justice			

			which is expected in the Autumn, an update report would be presented to the SPB.				
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Shetland Partnership Board

16 May 2013

Constitutional Reform

Item: 04

From: Executive Manager, Chief Executive's Department, Shetland Islands Council

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide an update to the Board on the project currently being undertaken by the Council around potential constitutional reform post independence referendum.

2.0 Decision required

- 2.1 I recommend that the Partnership Board:
- 2.1.1 Agree to engage positively with this project, acting as a strategic sponsoring body.

3.0 Details

- 3.1 The Scottish Government is holding an Independence referendum on 18 September 2014. The Government has labelled this process as "Scotland's most important decision for 300 years".
- 3.2 This piece of potentially major constitutional reform offers significant opportunities for Shetland, but, equally recognised, also presents possible threats.
- 3.3 A project was set up by the Shetland Islands Council in February 2013 with an aim of assisting the Council to order its thinking on potential constitutional reform, and ensure regular liaison was taking place with Western Isles and Orkney Islands Councils. The project has the following objectives.

To consider the relevance, potential impact and opportunities posed by possible constitutional reform. In particular:

- what relevance does potential constitutional change have to Shetland and the Shetland Islands Council?
- what does the Council need to think about and plan for?
- the opportunities for Shetland arising from the independence debate
- what Shetland could wish for from possible constitutional debate



- are there any threats to the ZCC Act from independence?
- the position taken by the Council at previous referendums
- constitutional status of other islands groups
- joint accord with the other islands groups
- opportunities to work together with OIC and Western Isles to strengthen common causes

These objectives aligned very closely with those of the Member-Officer Working Group in Orkney.

Ultimately, our main objective from this project is to ensure that we secure the best outcome for Shetland, regardless of the independence referendum result.

- 3.4 A Project Board was established consisting of the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Convener and Political Leader. In order to drive forward the delivery of the project, a Project Team was also established and has met twice.
- 3.5 A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis was carried out with elected Members on 11 March 2013. MSP for Shetland, Tavish Scott was in attendance and participated in that exercise. The outputs from the SWOT were analysed by the Project Team, and have been used as the main basis for section 4 of this report.
- 3.6 Having completed this first phase of the project, we are now entering a crucial second phase through to July 2013, which must involve reaching out to the wider Shetland public and focusing of our lobbying activity onto a few areas of highest importance. That said, we must always retain the flexibility to make the most out of any changes that may arise. The need for closer engagement with the Shetland Partnership, and alignment with Single Outcome Agreement objectives was raised by Members at the full Council meeting on 24 April.
- 3.7 During the lifetime of this project, views have been gathered from senior management and Members on the areas that they feel are most important for Shetland and present us with the highest likelihood of successful negotiation. Elected Members endorsed these at the full Council meeting on 24 April. They are:
- A greater local role in all aspects of inshore marine resource management and utilisation.
 - Ongoing and extended participation in the very significant Oil and Gas exploitation which continues to be carried out around Shetland.
 - The effective development of Shetland's world class renewable energy resources with genuine community participation and benefits.



- Potential changes to fiscal arrangements to allow Shetland to benefit more directly from the exploitation of local resources.
- Recognition at EU level of Shetland's status.
- More local influence on external and internal transport arrangements to obtain better solutions in light of our geography.
- Better local decision making and greater efficiency opportunities arising from public sector reform.

3.8 Three recurring features have also emerged, which link these strands together:

3.8.1 Shetland must seek to retain its position as a distinct islands authority post-referendum. If there is to be a Scottish Constitution, this must make specific provision for island authorities.

3.8.2 All of the powers currently devolved to Shetland must be protected.

3.8.3 Shetland's interests would be better served if it had a greater ability to influence and control its own affairs.

3.9 The underpinning argument for devolution of powers is that decisions being taken by local bodies that are closer to the people of the area and know the particular challenges being faced, represents an altogether more democratic system of government.

3.10 This ability to create and deliver solutions appropriate to local need unpins social justice and creativity. Constitutional change cannot just be about transfers of power between Westminster and Edinburgh, but must extend across Scotland's communities.

3.11 These general points have been taken as the underpinning drivers for the Council's position going forward.

Developing lobbying strategies

3.12 In order to be able to deliver an effective lobbying strategy during the window that is presented over the next few months, more detailed work is being carried out on the seven areas outlined in section 3.7.

3.13 The purpose of this is to:

- clarify the detail around the current position on each theme
- understand what would be the most beneficial outcome for Shetland to



lobby/negotiate on.

- formulate an effective lobbying strategy for each strand, to ensure we give ourselves the best possible chance of achieving a positive outcome during the coming months.

- 3.14 With a tight window of opportunity to make Shetland’s voice heard, it will be important that we now move things forward from the discussion stage, to deliver a tangible and deliverable set of lobbying points. High-level overview statements have been prepared for each of the seven strands and these were discussed by Members at a seminar on 8 May.
- 3.15 Shetland is in a favourable position in that it has the Zetland County Council Act 1974. The project needs to understand more fully the powers that provides Shetland and the opportunities for providing a vehicle through which some of these desires could be achieved. We also have potential strength through our community planning arrangements, the ‘Shetland Partnership’. The future confidence to present as “one Shetland” in negotiations with the UK or Scottish Government, with strong and effective partnership working, will be an important factor in achieving meaningful results.

Wider engagement

- 3.16 Members are keen that attempts are made to engage with the wider community on what they see as the significant issues for Shetland and the things we must lobby for. Public debate on this within Shetland has so far been reasonably muted. However, Members have made the point that it will be important to understand more fully the views of the community and that this information can help provide another layer of strength to any negotiations / lobbying with government.
- 3.17 It proposed that a toolkit be circulated to all Community Councils as a practical way of getting them involved in analysing the subject and feeding in their views. It is also proposed that a public debate be organised, with a panel of keynote speakers. It is hoped that this would stimulate further discussion and debate. A number of avenues for public comments will also be created, including a simple web-based survey and a dedicated internet page on the Council’s website which would include some documents from Shetland’s past involvement in the devolution/independence subject.
- 3.19 For clarification purposes, the engagement exercise would focus solely on the areas Shetland should seek to lobby/negotiate on, and will not seek to influence a “yes” or “no” vote in the referendum.



- 3.20 During discussions with Western Isles and Orkney Islands Councils, a proposal has been developed to hold a conference on the subject of constitutional reform. Although still at the planning stage, it is likely this will take place in September this year.

4.0 Implications

Strategic

- 4.1 Delivery On Corporate Priorities – Securing the best for Shetland, now and in the future, is at the heart of Shetland Islands Council’s and the Shetland Partnership’s objectives. Maximising the opportunities and managing the risks in significant constitutional reform is key to that.
- 5.2 Community /Stakeholder Issues – The next phase of this project will include engagement opportunities for the public, partner organisations, stakeholders in the widest sense. A key to delivering a successful lobbying strategy will be the strength that comes from community buy-in.
- 5.4 Risk Management – This potentially major constitutional reform offers potentially significant opportunities for Shetland, but equally recognised, also present possible threats. Fundamentally this whole exercise is about strategic risk management and specific risk assessments will need to be part of individual option appraisals.
- 5.5 Equalities, Health And Human Rights – No specific implications at this stage.
- 5.6 Environmental – No specific implications at this stage.

Resources

- 5.7 Financial – It is likely that some expenses and research expenditure will be necessary to progress this project effectively. Estimates of those costs are not possible at this stage but would be considered and reported against the 2013/14 contingency budget held by the Council’s Finance service under the approved arrangements.
- 5.8 Legal – No specific Legal issues at this stage however specialist legal opinion may well be required as various options need to be evaluated.
- 5.9 Human Resources - No specific Human Resources issues identified at this point
- 5.10 Assets And Property – NONE



5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 This report has sought to update the Partnership Board on progress being made through the Constitutional Reform project. Specifically, it focuses lobbying activity going forward on to seven areas and sets out a programme for wider engagement with the community and seeks the Board's engagement and support for continuing work in this area.

For further information please contact:

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09/05/2013

Constitutional Reform

SWOT ANALYSIS TOOL – Page 1

WHAT ARE SHETLAND’S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN TERMS OF OUR POSITION ON POTENTIAL CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

STRENGTHS - what does Shetland have going for it? What unique negotiating points do we have at our disposal? What do we have that other areas perhaps don't have? How can they be translated into lobbying points?

WEAKNESSES - it is important to know what might undermine our negotiating position with the Scottish Govt and UK Govt. So, what do you see are Shetland's possible weaknesses? How best can we manage these weaknesses or, even better, could we turn them around and make them strengths?

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS TO SHETLAND MIGHT THERE BE FROM CHANGE – REGARDLESS OF A YES OR NO VOTE IN THE INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM

OPPORTUNITIES - what are the potential opportunities for Shetland from reform to Scotland's constitutional position? What might we be able to ask for? What might we want to demand? How will we use the bargaining powers identified in the strengths section, above, to make our negotiating position stronger? What might the Constitution of an independent Scotland contain that could benefit Shetland, or, indeed, the other islands authorities?

THREATS - this is about using your knowledge and experience of the political landscape, the SNP as a body, UK Govt, economic situation etc, to have a think about the risks and threats of change for Shetland. What could be taken away from us? Will independence affect the status of the ZCC Act? Could there be more regionalisation? Would we be amalgamated with another Council area?



Shetland Partnership Board

16 May 2013

Strengthening Community Involvement

Item: 05

From: Brendan Hall, Policy Officer and Vaila Simpson, Executive Manager – SIC Community Planning & Development

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This project was initiated by the Shetland Partnership Board to explore ways in which community involvement in Shetland can be strengthened.
- 1.2 It was carried out because participation of individuals and communities is a key element of community planning.
- 1.3 The consultation has provided a vision for how communities and agencies in Shetland will work together in the future.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to present the key findings from the project, to propose some points for discussion by the Board and to seek the Board's approval on the way forward and next steps.

2.0 Decision required

- 2.1 I recommend that the Partnership Board:
 - 2.1.1 Use existing community structures to strengthen the role of community involvement, by asking Community Councils in a multi-member Ward to come together on a regular basis, alongside Elected Members, Parent Councils and Community Development organisations. Consideration should also be given to the involvement of young people, and the wider public, in these meetings.
 - 2.1.2 Establish a partnership, to replace the Community Engagement Network and Community Regeneration Partnership, which would oversee the development of these recommendations and ensure the successful implementation of all elements of this work as detailed in section 5.
 - 2.1.3 Ask each organisation to nominate a senior manager to be allocated a multi-member ward to attend and represent the Shetland Partnership Board at meetings where Community Councils in an area come together with others.



- 2.1.4 Endorse that support for the implementation of the above recommendations is provided by those with a Community Learning and Development (CLD) role within organisations, in recognition that the level and extent of change required will need considerable and skilled professional support.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 This project was initiated by the Partnership Board to explore ways in which community involvement in Shetland can be strengthened.
- 3.2 The decision was taken to carry out this project because participation of individuals and communities is a key element of community planning. In addition, national policy work and local developments around community planning mean that it is timely to consider Shetland's approach to ensuring people feel involved in their communities and in supporting their communities and Shetland as a whole.
- 3.3 The project was carried out in two stages. The first stage researched national and local drivers for strengthening community involvement (appendix A), and considered community engagement practice in other local authority areas (appendix B).
- 3.4 The second stage involved consultation meetings with members of the Partnership Board, Councillors, Community Council representatives, a number of senior managers and local officers with a role and remit for strengthening communities. A list of those who have been involved and the framework of questions is included in the full project report, which can be viewed at http://www.shetland.gov.uk/communityplanning/community_consultation_involvement.asp

4.0 Key Findings

- 4.1 A full summary of the responses provided, as a result of the consultation, is included at Appendix C.
- 4.2 The discussions provided a vision for how communities and agencies will work together in the future, identifying the following key success factors:
- Communities are empowered, informed, confident, resilient, and able to shape and influence their development and the way in which services are provided
 - People, communities and organisations are working together, as equals, with honesty, respect and understanding finding the best ideas and solutions for the future
 - Communities are developing positive solutions to issues being faced, whilst organisations are open and flexible to respond



- Agencies provide communities with the space to get involved
- Leadership, optimism and motivation is provided by agencies and communities to ensure inclusive and representative approaches, where those who are easy to ignore and those who do not appear interested, are encouraged to participate and the louder voices are diluted
- A shared vision of Shetland's future
- Individuals are motivated to get involved and support others
- Methods of communication and dialogue and clear

4.3 There is much strength on which to build:

- Shetland's strong sense of community spirit, and willing, motivated people with the experience and skills to participate and get involved
- A strong voluntary sector and Community Council network, with willing people, motivated about their community
- A network of Community Workers and Community Development Workers
- The contraction of the public sector provides opportunities to capitalise on these and re-find lost skills

4.4 But also challenges to overcome:

- Senior managers and politicians, collectively, have insufficient understanding and belief in a partnership approach with communities, and therefore commitment to the time and support required
- The Council's erosion of community involvement in recent decades
- Communities are at different starting points, in terms of their ability and willingness to be involved, with fragile remote and commuter communities being particularly vulnerable
- Positive outcomes often depend on individuals
- Mixed abilities and representations of Community Councils and a weak interface with agencies
- Reaching quiet voices
- A complexity of mechanisms with which to hold dialogue
- Unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy
- Poor communication and understanding about how to progress a partnership approach

4.0 Key Issues and Recommendations

Framework and Process

5.1 Key issues

- There is a lack of clarity, about how agencies and communities can and should work together, both in terms of process and structures to use
- This is particularly challenging where bottom-up meets top-down, at the level of Community Councils



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- There is an inconsistent approach, both across agencies and across Community Councils
 - There is a lack of trust in processes used
 - To achieve good quality and meaningful processes, will require a greater investment in time, at the outset
 - There is a lack of belief in the need to work in partnership
- 4.1.1 To use existing community structures to strengthen the role of community involvement, by asking Community Councils in a multi-member Ward to come together on a regular basis, alongside Elected Members, Parent Councils, and Community Development organisations. This would enable elected representatives to share issues within an area and allow communication with agencies to be streamlined. This would provide a clear framework within which community involvement in Shetland could function effectively. Consideration could also be given to the involvement of young people, and the wider public, in these meetings.
- 4.1.2 To set out a clear process for community involvement, building on the three tiers of involvement and meeting any requirements likely to be necessary as a result of the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill (CERB):
- Developing and sustaining two-way communication directly with communities: day-to-day discussions and information sharing within communities, where agency staff meet individuals and groups in their local areas. This includes visiting schools, working outside, meeting groups, which enables agencies to be able to key into what communities are thinking and facing.
 - More formal dialogue, such as at Community Council level, where elected representatives come together to raise issues and respond to agency requests.
 - Strategic decision-making bodies utilising structures for involvement and the views of communities to inform their work.
- 4.1.3 Develop guidelines to assist, clearly setting out the ethos and rationale for Shetland's approach to community involvement, the framework and process within which organisations and communities can operate and roles and responsibilities. This would meet any requirements, under the CERB, to publicise plans and build on the consultation responses provided in this report.
- 4.1.4 Establish a partnership, to replace the Community Engagement Network and Community Regeneration Partnership. This would oversee the development of these recommendations and ensure the successful implementation of all elements of this work. It would report directly to the Performance Group, at each meeting, providing an opportunity to resolve any issues regarding community involvement. It would also be able to provide a strategic link between communities and strategic partnership leads.



- 4.1.5 Any Community Profiles and Local Development Plans created by and with communities should clearly link to Shetland's Single Outcome Agreement. This will assist with linkages between strategy and communities.

Roles

5.2 Key issues

- Individuals, organisations, partnerships and groups are uncertain about their roles in relation to community involvement;
- There is, therefore, a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities and on authority to act.

- 5.2.1 To review the roles and responsibilities of various key players, within the framework and process established, above, and in consultation. This could be done in light of recent research into rights and responsibilities and must consider the CERB. Key stakeholders include:

- Shetland Partnership Board
- Performance Group
- Decision-making bodies within partner organisations
- Community Councillors
- Senior Managers within partner organisations
- Officers
- ASCC
- ASCC / SIC Liaison Group
- Community Development Organisations
- Parent Councils

- 5.2.2 For those with a Community Learning and Development (CLD) role within organisations, to provide support to develop these roles and responsibilities. This should include the development and provision of training, as appropriate.

Leadership

5.3 Key issues

- To date, there has been a lack of consensus across those with a leadership role in Shetland, about community involvement
- Different agencies have different approaches to consultation, and there has been little alignment and no partnership approach
- There has been insufficient demonstration of a belief in relinquishing control to communities
- There has been a lack of buy-in to the need to put the time and resources into developing partnerships with communities
- There continues to be a lack of understanding about community planning processes, including the involvement of communities within it.



-
- 5.3.1 If the above recommendations can be implemented successfully, it will require the Shetland Partnership Board, politicians and officers, as well as community representatives at a local level to believe in the need for change, and therefore provide leadership, time and resources.
- 5.3.2 A senior manager within each organisation to be allocated a multi-member ward to attend and represent the Shetland Partnership Board at meetings where Community Councils in an area come together with others. They would provide leadership, within that area, and strengthen the link between communities and the partnership – champions for community involvement.

Support

5.4 Key issues

- To date, support for community involvement has been patchy and inconsistent.
- The successful implementation of the level and extent of change required will require considerable, skilled support.

5.4.1 For those with a Community Learning and Development (CLD) role within organisations, to provide support. The support required includes:

- To build understanding and capacity of the key stakeholders
- To ensure the framework and processes for community involvement are in place and robust
- To provide a liaison role between organisations and communities
- To facilitate and support consultation
- To support champions, should they be put in place
- In addition support is required to develop roles and responsibilities and training, highlighted above.

6.0 Implications

Strategic

- 5.5 Delivery on Single Outcome Agreement Priorities – The Statement of Ambition makes it clear that community planning partnership must be able to engage closely with the needs and aspirations of their communities. Strengthening community engagement and participation in delivering better outcomes is a key principle of the National Review of Community Planning.
- 5.6 Community / Stakeholder issues – Community Councils and other stakeholders were invited to participate in the consultation phase of this project. The implementation plan for this project will include ongoing engagement with key stakeholders. Successful implementation of the level and extent of change required will be dependent on securing buy-in from all stakeholders and the community.



-
- 5.7 Risk Management – Current risks in relation to community engagement include communities disengaging from the process and consultation fatigue. The successful implementation of the recommendations from this project could reduce these risks.
 - 5.8 Equalities, Health and Human Rights – None
 - 5.9 Environmental - None

Resources

- 5.10 Financial – None
- 5.11 Legal – None
- 5.12 Human Resources - Staff time will be required to develop and implement the recommendations, along with providing support and capacity building to key stakeholders.
- 5.13 Assets and Property - None

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 This report has sought to present the key findings and issues from the ‘Strengthening Community Involvement’ project carried out on behalf of the Partnership Board. A number of recommendations have been made as a result of the project, which has enabled a vision of how community involvement could work in Shetland in the future to be developed.

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09/05/2013

List of Appendices:

Appendix A – National Context

Appendix B – Learning from Others

Appendix C - Findings

Background Documents:

Consultation on the Proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill

Renewing Scotland’s Public Services, Scottish Government, 2011

National Community Planning Review and the Statement of Ambition

Appendix A: National Context

This appendix summarises, chronologically, the key national processes driving forward Community Planning in Scotland, highlighting, in bold, the relevance to community engagement and community planning in Shetland.

Christie Commission¹

The Christie Commission was tasked with making proposals to the Scottish Government on how Scotland needed to approach the 12.8% real reduction in spend to 2014/15, against a backdrop of substantial growth in demand (such as ageing population and welfare reform) and a track record of failure to deliver to remove negative outcomes. The public sector had made some efficiencies and changes, such as workforce reduction and outsourcing, but a large gap remained, that was seen to require a different approach.

The key findings were around the need to improve outcomes and address issues of sustainability, with recommendations around:

- Acceptance of the need to address 'failure' demand - a whole system and outcome based approach;
- Local integration of public services - their funding, common powers and duties for all public services;
- Preventative action and tackling inequalities;
- Ensure **citizen and community participation in the design and delivery of services**; and
- Ensure greater transparency of costs and performance of public services.

The Scottish Government's response to the report has been to focus on the following:

- Prevention – tackle persistent inequalities (what matters, what works, what stops, thinking about impact on key groups)
- Partnership – place based integration of services (shared design, delivery, resourcing)
- People – workforce development & leadership (middle managers to work in partnership and focus on outcomes and for staff to enable community participation)
- Performance – improvement & transparency (shared accountability, local priorities).

This work, therefore, made clear that **many of the answers to the challenges faced across Scotland can be found when public agencies focus on communities and working more effectively together to reduce demand pressures through a significant shift to prevention, early intervention and a stronger and much more integrated focus on 'place'**².

Joint Review of Community Planning and Single Outcome Agreements³

The aims of this review recognised the importance of having in place effective Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) to respond to the conclusions of Christie (prevention, early intervention, integration and 'place') and the objectives of the Public Service Reform programme, such as the establishment of single police and fire services and the integration of adult health and social care services. The review recognised the importance of an outcome based approach and partnership working in order to address the challenges facing the public sector and the need to reduce **inequalities in our communities**.

The review has produced a Statement of Ambition, which sets out what is expected of the Community Planning process in terms of partner involvement, identification of priorities, and the achievement of **better outcomes for communities**.

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Review/publicservicescommission>

² Community Planning Review Newsletter 1: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/Local-government/CP/communityplanningreview/newsletter1>

³ Initiated by Scottish Government and COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) in February 2012.

Statement of Ambition⁴

This document sets out expectations of how CPPs will achieve better outcomes and reduced inequalities for local communities in Scotland through the delivery of high quality public services. It requires CPPs to build on successes by removing barriers to effective partnership working and to ensure that leadership and cultures, systems and structures, and accountability arrangements across public services **fully enable the delivery of better outcomes for communities.**

It highlights **the role of coproduction between communities and the public sector** to help shape and achieve better outcomes within their communities. But that **this can only be achieved with a strong understanding of their communities, and provide genuine opportunities to consult, engage and involve them.** It states that **CPPs must be able to engage closely with the needs and aspirations of their communities, within the context of local and national democratic control,** with strategic oversight of other specific arrangements and accountabilities for key aspects of public service delivery.

The statement goes on to highlight the need for CPPs to understand their local needs and opportunities ('Understanding place') through robust and relevant data, which recognises the particular needs and circumstances of different communities.

It concludes with a set of principles to shape the further work of the review. One of these is:

- To strengthening **community engagement and participation** in delivering better outcomes.

COSLA's Three Mutually Reinforcing 'Locks'

The Scottish Government and COSLA agreed proposals to address the findings of the review:

1. Strengthening duties on individual partners through a new statutory duty on all relevant partners, (whether acting nationally, regionally or locally), to **work together to improve outcomes for local communities** through participation in community planning partnerships and the provision of resources to deliver the SOA.
2. Placing formal requirements on Community Planning Partnerships by augmenting the existing statutory framework to ensure that collaboration in the delivery of local priority outcomes via Community Planning and the SOA is not optional and is made as effective as possible. This includes recognition of the flexibility they afford local partners to **assess local needs, engage with communities and build relationships is fundamental to the success of community planning.**
3. Establishment of a joint group at national level to provide strategic leadership and guidance to CPPs.

As part of implementation of proposals a work-stream focuses on the **need to deepen and extend community engagement.**

The legislative change required to complete two of the three 'locks' outlined above is being taken forward under the Community Renewal and Empowerment Bill.

⁴ Statement of Ambition <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/CP/soa>
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/CP/communityplanningreview>

Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill⁵

This new legislation is currently being developed, and is designed to significantly improve **community participation in the design and delivery of public services and build community capacity**, recognising the particular needs of communities facing multiple social and economic challenges.

The proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill is designed to:

- strengthen community participation
- unlock enterprising community development; and
- renew our communities.

Single Outcome Agreement Guidance⁶

The Scottish Government sees the development and implementation of a new SOA, as a shared, explicit and binding 'plan for place' in each CPP area, as a key element in the delivery of public service reform. The Guidance states that, through new SOAs, CPPs will mobilise public sector assets, activities and resources, together with those of the voluntary and private sectors **and local communities to** deliver a shared 'plan for place'.

Amongst other requirements, the new SOAs **should demonstrate how communities are being involved in the development and delivery of outcomes**. This is to ensure delivery on the Statement of Ambition, which set out that **effective CPPs have strong engagement with communities** and the third and business sectors.

'CPPs and partners should be engaging with their communities in identifying and prioritising the outcomes that are to be delivered, and working with communities to develop their capacity to contribute to community planning and to their achievement of their better outcomes.'

Each new SOA should therefore demonstrate that:

- Activity on community engagement is properly planned, resourced and integrated across partners;
- The quality and impact of community engagement is measured and reported on;
- Building the capacity of communities to engage and deliver for themselves is properly planned, resourced and integrated across partners; and
- Workforce development within and across partners ensures that key staff have the skills and knowledge required to engage effectively with communities.

Strategic Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships: Community Learning and Development (CLD)⁷

This was developed by the Scottish Government to help promote a more integrated approach to supporting active community participation in the planning and delivery of services, within the broad framework of public service reform, and in line with the Review of Community Planning and Single Outcome Agreements.

The Scottish Government see CLD approaches as integral to the achievement of their vision for how Scotland's public services need to change and that in order to achieve agreed national and local outcomes, community planning partners and national stakeholders need to integrate CLD into their activities:

⁵ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/engage/cer>

⁶ <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/library/577-single-outcome-agreements/668-guidance/view-category/>

⁷ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/06/2208>

‘We will empower **local communities and local service providers to work together to develop practical solutions that make best use of all the resources available**. The focus of public spending and action must build on the assets and potential of the individual, the family and the community rather than being dictated by organisational structures and boundaries. Public services must work harder to involve people everywhere in the redesign and reshaping of their activities.’

The implementation of the guidance should form an integral part of public service reform, **ensuring that Community Planning provides the vehicle to deliver better outcomes in partnership with communities**:

‘Using an evidence-based approach; reducing outcome gaps between areas; jointly prioritising outcomes; and **strengthening community engagement and participation** are the principles which will shape work on community planning and SOAs. This will, in turn, improve partnership working, including CLD partners, in delivering SOAs.’

The principles that underpin practice are:

- empowerment - increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence matters affecting them and their communities;
- participation - supporting people to take part in decision-making;
- inclusion, equality of opportunity and anti-discrimination - recognising some people need additional support to overcome the barriers they face;
- self-determination - supporting the right of people to make their own choices; and
- partnership - ensuring resources, varied skills and capabilities are used effectively.

Community Engagement⁸

Effective engagement with communities is at the heart of Community Planning. There is no restriction on the type of community to be consulted, they can be linked to a place or can be a community of interest, for example young people. Information from engagement should feed into the planning and delivery of public services, making them more responsive to the needs of users and communities. Partnerships should, therefore, work together to coordinate community engagement activity and the information gathered. They can draw information on community views from a number of sources for example, the experience of service users, specific consultations, visioning exercises etc. Many Partnerships use the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) to inform their work.

CPPs are also **obliged to report on progress to communities**, giving information on how they have implemented their duties and how services have improved as a result.

Local Context

2012 saw a review and implementation of new governance arrangements for Community Planning in Shetland, with the Shetland Partnership now responsible for Community Planning in Shetland. Included within the Community Planning Structures are a Community Engagement Network and Local Area Forums. The Shetland Partnership guide states that the purpose of Local Area Forums needs to be explored, setting out a number of options.

⁸ http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006693.hcsp

Appendix B: Learning from Others

This section highlights interesting, relevant approaches from elsewhere in Scotland, which demonstrate a good track record for impacting positively on community involvement.

It should be noted that none of the smaller CPPs (Clackmannanshire, Orkney, Western Isles) have local community planning structures in place. Other areas, such as Glasgow, have a population of over 100,000 within each Local Community Planning Partnership.

Aberdeenshire:

- Six Community Ward Forums, which bring together Community Councillors and representatives of constituted groups on a regular basis.
- Forums are linked in to Local Community Planning Groups, which involve Councillors and partners, and have responsibility for establishing the needs of communities in an area and addressing them.
- Both are supported by Community Work staff.
- Services are now more responsive.

Argyll and Bute:

- Four Area Community Planning Groups, with membership from statutory Community Planning Partners and local communities (as a resulting of a broadening of Council Area Committees).
- Responsible for ensuring that relevant partners and community representatives in their area have the opportunity to attend each meeting and that steps are taken to report on progress of the Local Community Planning Group to the area's residents.
- Involvement in development of SOA, and development in the area, as well as to resolve service issues.
- Supported by Committee Services and Community Work.

Fife:

- Seven Area Committees, broadened from Council Committees, to include all Community Planning partners. There is no formal link with Community Councils.
- Their role is to plan for the future, resolve issues and scrutinise the delivery of Local Plans.
- Supported by:
 - An Area Manager, who has a role in co-ordinating services to address issues in an area.
 - Locality Service Team Leader, who works closely with communities and community groups, to encourage engagement. Work closely with CLD (community capacity building staff) and individual Councillors.
 - Committees are supported by a Clerk from Democratic Services.
- There is a Local Community Planning Framework for Fife which sets out principles, structures and process for ensuring local areas are involved in community planning.

Highland:

- 22 Ward Forums, established in 2007. Meet in public, led by Councillors and including representatives of community councils and partner agencies. The meetings last for up to 2 hours, with a 20-minute slot allocated at the end of the meeting for questions from the public.
- Elected Representatives (Councillors, Community Councillors, Parent Councils) sit on the Forum, officers are in attendance.
- Supported by Ward Manager, who is responsible for leading the process of community planning at a local level, with responsibility for involving communities, bringing together relevant elected representatives, ensuring efficient delivery of services in a Ward and working with other agencies and communities, as required. This includes supporting CHPs.
- Ward Managers are managed directly by the Director of Corporate Services.

Highland Community Challenge Fund¹

In June 2012 the Council agreed to work with Community Councils and other community organisations to encourage community empowerment, by introducing a community challenge fund of £1m of recurring expenditure to support community projects which explore new ways of delivering services at a local level.

The prime objective of the fund is to help deliver the Council's Programme.

Community groups include:

- Community Councils
- New community groups, or groups coming together for the first time because of the Fund
- Established community groups (your group does not need to be registered as a charity)
- Established social enterprises

They are required to fill out a short form, and are provided with a named contact to keep in touch with.

Any area of Council business is considered, with no limit available for each project, examples include:

- Deliver the same level of Council service at a lower cost and be sustainable going forward,
- Provide a higher level of Council service for the same cost and be sustainable going forward,
- Help to reduce the Council's costs for maintaining premises, by taking on the maintenance and running costs going forward with a one-off fund contribution.

Groups will need to show:

- how the community would benefit,
- that there is support for the project in the community and
- that the project would not be achievable without a one-off contribution.

The Council has a Panel of elected members that will consider all expressions of interest. Some ideas may need to be considered by other elected members at a committee or Council meeting.

There has been strong interest in this, from across Highland, and the Council is currently working through applications. There has been a range of applications, from the very ambitious to small scale local level services.

Moray:

- Six Area Forums set up to cover secondary school catchment areas (two areas choose not to). Each Area Forum brings together representatives from local community organisations and local residents to tackle issues which have been identified through local consultation and influence the planning and delivery of services in their area and across Moray.
- Membership is open to anyone in the area and all community groups and voluntary organisations active in the local area. Elected members are able to attend.
- Funding is provided to cover administrative costs.
- Workers Groups were established in each area, bringing together 20-30 service providers at regular intervals to discuss common themes. Relevant members are expected to attend Forum meetings, when invited, to inform discussion around specific agenda items. These have largely faded away.
- Community Work Team and Community Council Liaison Officer provide support to Community Councils, Area Forums, Moray Forum and Hall Committees. They also facilitate consultation for Council and partners, which is appreciated by services and developing confidence in other staff.

¹ <http://www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/communitiesandorganisations/communitychallengefund.htm>

Stirling:

- 6 area community planning forums made up of representatives from community councils, regeneration groups, development trusts and other local groups, chaired by local people. Councillors can choose to attend.
- Officers will attend to consult on issues and if asked to attend.
- Process of establishment was led by the communities: they were asked whether they needed something to improve dialogue with Council and partner organisations.
- Communities have the opportunity to develop a plan. These local plans form the foundation of the Community Planning process. The plan is owned, developed and updated by the community.

- Issues identified in Local Community Plans inform the Area Community Planning Forum priorities.
- They have improved communication, enabled issues between areas to be resolved and assist with the development of community-led infrastructure projects.
- Supported by CLD staff, with senior managers of partners providing a champion role for the process and being able to unblock barriers.
- Impacts around building good relationships, more responsive services, solution-focused and asset building approaches.

Learning:

- The size of Shetland means that it is not necessary to have additional structures, as in other areas;
- Although there is a need to have clear structures in place, particularly at Ward level, it is important to recognise and build on a multi-layered approach, reflecting the need for mixed engagement and targeting involvement to the relevant group or groups.
- Communication and understanding is enhanced in areas where Community Councils and other constituted groups in an area have been supported to come together in order to raise issues, and, if possible plan for the future;
- Local groups have responsibility for broadening engagement and providing information about issues in the area;
- Links have been made in other areas between existing Community Development Plans and Community Plans;
- Some areas have in place a framework for setting out principles, structures and methods of ensure improved linkages between local communities and strategic partnerships;
- Structured meetings, with opportunity for the public to ask questions / raise issues;
- Dedicated support in place provided by the Council (even if part of additional roles) to ensure effective operation of mechanisms; maximising community involvement and understanding; and ensuring services work effectively at a local level.
- Direct link between areas and the strategic partnership and partner organisations, for example, in the form of champions, to ensure accountability and to be able to easily remove any barriers being faced.

Appendix C: Findings

This appendix sets out a summary of the responses provided locally, as a result of the consultation.

The Conditions for Communities and Agencies to Work Well Together

When communities and agencies work well together, an environment has been created where there can be open and honest discussion. This enables the development of mutual respect and understanding about the issues being addressed and any constraints. The result may not be of mutual benefit, but there is understanding and respect for the outcome.

1. The community and agency have a desire to achieve a common purpose, often resulting from both being able to understand there is a need for change.

At times, this can be when a community or community facility is at risk, such as the Bigton Shop, Foula Airstrip and Scalloway Hall. The challenge is to ensure that both communities and agencies see a common end and the need to work together to achieve this.

Resolving Issues at Rudda Court and Areas of Sandveien & Nederdale, Lerwick

Three or four years ago there were examples of threatening behaviour from some residents, resulting in older people being frightened to go out and concerns over the safety of young children.

There was a common desire by Councillors, Residents Associations, the Police and the Community Council to improve the area. They were able to come together to discuss and listen to the issues and work together to resolve. The Neighbourhood Support Workers and Police spent more time in the community and responded directly to complaints; the community began to feel listened to and were able to work directly with staff.

There have been significant improvements in the area and people are no longer concerned for their safety, and that of others.

2. There is a partnership approach, based on cooperation. Decisions can be made together. This has been described as a shift of existing power from agencies to communities; it is about agencies relinquishing some control and communities taking on more responsibilities, creating a better balance and more equal relationship.

For this to be able to happen, it is essential to have clarity on what can and cannot be discussed. For example, public agencies have certain statutory requirements, which have to be fulfilled, but they may be able to discuss with communities, how these can be delivered. Or an organisation may have decided to remove a service, so the discussion with communities becomes about what needs to be done as a result of that decision.

Yell Ferry Consultation, 2012/13

The first stage of this consultation was led by the Council and involved a drop-in, making information available to communities. This information was not easily understood and it felt like a tick-box exercise; it was not something that communities would want or could easily get involved in.

The second stage involved Senior Councillors and Officers in a meeting with the community.

Through this process the community realised that changes to the service were inevitable, possibly resulting in a step change which would be very detrimental to their community. At the same time, officers were aware that they did not have the answers, but that the community, through the Yell Community Council, did. This resulted in a shift in power, towards communities, who were then able to take on to provide solutions. The process became meaningful, with good communication, the development of shared understanding and a mutual desire to find the best practical solution.

The community felt there was room within the process for them to get involved and for their contributions to be listened to, understood and incorporated. Previous consultations felt like decisions had already been made and that their contributions wouldn't result in any change.

3. There is clarity about who the community or communities and service or services that need to be involved are, and clearly defined ways in which they can be involved.

This is easier with small, defined, usually geographic communities, where there are clear boundaries and mechanisms for involving them. It is more challenging to resolve in larger communities or when communities of interest are involved. In these circumstances there are many more voices, some who are easy to ignore and others who choose to sit on the side lines.

The Development of Health Centres on Fair Isle and Foula

There was a clear understanding of the communities' and agency's (NHS) needs and a clearly defined aim. The process was made easier because of the geographic boundary of each Outer Isle, with a community-led mechanism providing a route into the community (for example, the Fair Isle Community Association). The community nurses, who are part of each community, also had local knowledge on how best to work together. The result was the establishment of Health Centres on each island, to mutual satisfaction.

4. Senior Managers and Politicians are involved in face-to-face dialogue and are able to provide leadership to processes.

This ensures that decision-makers within organisations have a thorough understanding of the context and issues, and understand the view point of communities.

Fetlar Working Group

Support from staff within organisations had been provided to Fetlar for a period of time, but progress was slow. The establishment of the Fetlar Working Group was when 'things really got done'. Senior officers of the Council and Councillors were on the group, attending meetings in Fetlar on a regular basis. This enabled:

- Senior representatives to understand and discuss the issues the community faced, first hand, and together develop solutions;
- Actions to be progressed which were able to cut through normal processes; and
- Gave the community confidence, shifting their outlook, as they felt listened to.

5. Organisations are prepared to alter their processes to fit with the ways in which communities wish and can be involved.

This requires an organisation's top-down approaches and hierarchy to be able to support and accommodate bottom-up approaches, driven by the community themselves.

Wir Community, Wir Choice & Sound Choices

These examples of Participatory Budgeting, in Shetland, have resulted in considerable community involvement in the process of establishing the needs of the area, the allocation of funding and the use of the funding to deliver meaningful projects in the community.

Although supported by Council staff, these were developed in such a way as to enable the communities and community groups to shape the processes to meet their needs. A relatively large number of people became involved; this has helped more people to get enthusiastic about improving their local area.

Key factors contributing to the successes were:

- Community ownership of the process and projects;
- Officers related to people as equals, encouraging voluntary groups and individuals to contribute to their community; and
- A well organised and practical approach, with enjoyable voting events, which the community felt were theirs.

The positive impact on the community continues to be seen, e.g. the Sound Primary visiting Eric Gray and Taing, and the coming together of different groups within the community for events.

Unst Response Team

As well as having other key conditions in place, such as clear leadership, a defined community and resources, the partnership leading the response made efforts to ensure that the community was able to develop and take ownership of progress. This required behind the scenes Community Learning and Development support to build relationships between the team and individuals and groups within the community. A framework was put in place which enabled the community to be involved on their terms.

6. Those with responsibility for the processes ensure it is well-planned and co-ordinated, with practical support to organise, realistic time-scales and clear communication about how communities can be involved. The most successful processes are those where members of the community have been involved in planning how best to involve others.

Local Housing Strategy

The recent consultation on Shetland's Local Housing Strategy (LHS), led by the Council's Housing Service, on behalf of the LHS Group, was set up to provide a number of different ways in which people could receive information and respond, including dedicated phone lines, online surveys and web pages.

7. Communities lead the process.

Northmavine Community Development Company (NCDC)

Since Initiative at the Edge status was awarded to Northmavine, there has been considerable community and economic development within the area, as a result of the work of NCDC. The company has developed a good relationship with communities and businesses in the area, and been proactive and clear on what it wished to achieve. Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and other organisations have provided support, but throughout, NCDC have led developments and have taken responsibility for their activities and the future. This includes ensuring anything they are involved in has to generate income.

One example is the reopening of the Hillswick Shop. NCDC were able to provide the framework within in which the shop could be purchased, refurbished and opened to become a viable shop now providing services to the community and local employment.

8. Organisations tap into communities, and the issues they are facing, by listening to information provided to staff working on the ground.

This is an ongoing process, and requires systems in place within organisations to gather this intelligence.

Police

In recent years the police have placed greater emphasis on being out and about in the community. This has enabled them to be able to pick up information from local people, to be used to tailor resources to certain areas and to provide intelligence for their work. It has helped develop trust between themselves and the communities they are supporting.

When Agencies and Communities Don't Work Well

When communities and agencies do not work well together, it is often because of their different cultures, processes and structures.

1. Organisations operate in a complex strategic environment, which includes delivering to national and European requirements. There can be a failure to translate the importance and language of this in a way that communities can value getting involved.

Local Service Delivery Groups (LSDGs)

These were an attempt, by agencies in Shetland, to efficiently draw together strands of work required by national government, including the establishment of Community Health Partnerships and local community planning. However, the approach failed to communicate to communities their added value within existing local structures. There was also a lack of leadership and misunderstanding within communities that funding was being removed from Community Councils and channelled into LSDGs.

2. Organisations may be required to consult, or believe it is something that they have to do, but those responsible do not value or understand the process. This can lead to a number of problems, including:

- Informing dressed up as consultation;
- The community not feeling listened to;
- Confusion for communities and agencies and inappropriate methods of involvement as a result of poor planning; and
- A failure to report back on how the consultation responses have been used.

Not only does this impact on the piece of work being undertaken, but the impact can be felt for years to come as the community become disaffected and disengaged with other processes.

SIC's Consultation with Community Councils around Budget Cuts

In recent years the Council has cut the budget to Community Councils with little or no discussion or communication. This was frustrating to Community Councils.

Early in 2013 there was a Conference with Community Councils, organised by the ASCC / SIC Liaison group. The Community Councils had been expecting a discussion about the allocation of funding across Community Councils, but instead it was about what sort of services Community Councils could take on, with the opportunity for proposals from the event being put forward to the Council.

There is an impression that these suggestions have been ignored and that the Council went ahead with changes. Respondents felt this was due to poor communication and that the Council wasn't clear on what it wanted to achieve through the process.

NB: due to the relevance of this, to being able to move forward as a partnership between agencies and Community Councils, a summary of the outputs from the Conference is provided at Appendix D.

3. At the current time, many consultations are resulting from a reduction or termination of a service provided by an organisation. The immediate result, from communities, is a feeling of being threatened.

Blueprint for Education

The greatest challenge to this piece of work has been around the threats communities have felt about their schools being closed; no community is going to want their school to be shut.

There have been issues flagged up about the process, such as incorrect information and statements communities felt were inflammatory. This led to a feeling of distrust in the process and set communities up against each other.

However, no one service is responsible for a community, and in the future it is important to ensure that other services and support workers are involved at an early stage, with community representatives, such as Community Councils, to work through these changes together.

4. Communities do not always understand how to seek assistance or what they need to do. This may be because agencies do not set out how they operate and how people can seek assistance. This may be particularly difficult at the moment, due to the speed of change within agencies, such as the Council. It is important that staff are able to provide the right support, at the right time (either directly or by sign-posting).

Vodafone Trial in Walls

The Community Council responded to a request from the MSP to become a pilot area for improved mobile phone coverage. The Community Council progressed with the project, without knowing that they had to inform the Council, to obtain permissions, at an early stage. When this was discovered, the Council did not respond in a way which assisted the project, nearly causing it to grind to a halt.

5. Strong voices within a community can lobby hard and use their influence to develop projects which may not have a deep-rooted need. In other words, the partnership between agencies and communities is heavily weighted in favour of the latter, which can lead to unnecessary use of resources.

The importance of different personalities, and the skills and experiences they have, whether in communities or agencies, cannot be underestimated, to the benefit or detriment of change.

Building on Shetland's Strengths

Responses highlighted a considerable number of Shetland's characteristics which already ensure strong community participation and which can readily be built on. These include:

- Shetland is a relatively small place, with a clearly defined geographic boundary.
- The small population means that many people understand different roles and responsibilities within communities, and who represents them at a political level. This assists individuals and communities to have a voice.
- Its isolation means the community and communities within it are resilient and interdependent.
- Strong community networks, social cohesion and social support mechanisms.
- A strong sense of community and identity within local and Shetland communities, with a willingness to participate.
- Communities are dedicated to their future, and can be particularly motivated around a topical issue.
- Many committed and motivated individuals able to drive communities forward.
- Many people, within communities, understand how to participate: Shetland has a strong heritage of people coming together, within communities, to get what needs doing, done; giving of their time, and money, if necessary. Pre-oil, this is the way communities survived.
- Geographic communities are a mix of people, many who have considerable ability and expertise. People are willing to use their professional expertise within their communities, as volunteers.
- There is an untapped group of potential volunteers in Shetland's young people, returning from being away: doing so would assist them to find their feet again, at a time when family responsibilities are probably at a minimum.
- A vibrant third sector, with a willingness and commitment to do more. Hall Committees are a good example of the volunteering effort.
- A strong, organised and active Community Council Network, with individuals involved who are keen to do the right thing for their communities. It enables good communication with Councillors, particularly through the Clerks.
- Support staff, such as Community Workers and Development Workers, are known within communities, and are able to enable the voices of communities to be heard. A wider group of staff, too, such as Neighbourhood Support Workers, are able to assist directly with flow of information between communities and agencies.
- As a result of the above, there are opportunities to identify needs within local communities.

- The significant reduction in Council funding, and withdrawal from delivery of non-statutory services provides an opportunity to build on community networks.
- Small communities, know each other therefore willingness to do things and be involved
- Opportunities to maximise benefits from the knowledge we have
- Community Councils knowledge of local priorities and ability to respond quickly and flexibly to support local projects / groups.
- People have a sense of identity and pride in their community e.g. the folk festival, Unst fest, Shetland wool week, fundraising events. There is hardly a week that there's not an event or festival - all done by volunteers, with a positive knock on effect on local businesses.

Overcoming Shetland's Weaknesses

Conversely, a number of weaknesses were highlighted:

- Policy makers have not demonstrated a belief in the participation of communities and being able to relinquish power to communities.
- A lack of understanding about the needs of different communities and how communities operate and thrive.
- A tendency to think 'we already know', with agencies deciding what communities want.
- Organisational systems restrict the way in which communities are able to participate, preventing bottom-up approaches.
- In recent times the Council has become invasive, even suffocating to communities. The Council has been able to take on the responsibility and delivery of certain activities that individuals and communities used to do for themselves, and, at times, started delivering services that communities did not ask for.
- This has led to a change in people's attitudes about getting involved, placing high expectations on the Council and eroding a historically strong level of community responsibility and skills.
- To a certain degree communities have become complacent and dependent on the Council, and a sense that problems within communities should be sorted by agencies.
- The level of resources meant that money, rather than creativity, could solve any problems.
- The Council employs a high proportion of the working population, which can make it difficult for them to think independently about the future. And a large number of people have only lived in Shetland, so do not have other reference points about the level of standards elsewhere.
- There is burnout amongst volunteers, as those who are capable get asked to take on too much.
- Succession planning within communities has been weak; the 25-50 year old generation tend not to have been nurtured to the level of volunteering required in the future – the lifeskills required by individuals to support Shetland's communities.
- There is an expectation on the voluntary sector to do more, for less.
- Some communities do not have sufficient individuals with the skills, experience or willingness required to engage.
- Other communities have become commuter areas, so the residents do not have the same sense of community identity.
- There is a mix of abilities and representations, amongst Community Councils.
- Community Councillors are mainly co-opted. This can mean that their views are the same as those of the existing members, preventing a broadening of representation.
- There is a lack of clarity about the role of Community Councils, the Association of Community Councils and the SIC/ASCC Liaison Group.
- Community Councils can feel sidelined from decision-making.
- The Shetland character means some are not willing to put themselves forward to take on responsibilities and express their views.

- People’s history with their communities can lead to a high level of vested interests and emotional ties. And cliques can exist within communities.
- People can keep their heads down, for fear of reprisal.
- Communities can be risk adverse, some of which can be attributed to red tape.
- Shetland has created a higher level of bureaucracy around health and safety than is necessary.
- Communication between agencies and communities has been poor, but this is improving.
- An absence of information can lead communities to draw conclusions that may not be correct.
- Despite a large number of consultations, there is little evidence of these having an impact on the outcome. This is resulting in communities disengaging from consultation, and cynicism developing.
- Reasons for poor consultation include:
 - a lack of understanding at a senior level,
 - a lack of skills within services to consult,
 - a lack of creativity to involve the smaller voices,
 - confusion over whether an exercise is to inform, consult or involve,
 - queries over the representation of political structures, and
 - a failure to feedback on how information has been used.
- There are a myriad of community groups, which can make it complex and easy to get bogged down in spending time talking to tiny groups, who often have the greatest lobbying power, and fail to ensure the smallest voices get heard.
- Seldom has ongoing dialogue been established and consultations have been divisive for communities.
- Young folk are working and brining up families, so volunteers tend to be older people
- More and more is being asked of volunteers
- Lack of confidence to get involved – people don’t want to push themselves forward, but are usually willing to join in once supported to participate. Volunteers need support and nurturing as so much hangs on volunteers – both social and economic outcomes
- Overreliance on individuals, which means that if one cog is taken out of the wheel things can break down

Effective Community Involvement and Participation in the Future – A Culture Change

Respondents described the need for a step change in the way communities are involved in Shetland life in the future: from involvement in discussions about their future needs, to delivering services within their communities.

One of the key drivers for this is that the Council and other public services are no longer able to do what they used to do. However, other drivers included the positive outcomes and experiences achieved when working in genuine partnership. This step change is seen to provide opportunities for the private, voluntary and community sectors.

The responses have a strong correlation with the outputs from the Scenario Planning process of 2011, informing the development of Shetland’s Community Plan. This highlighted the desire and need for the Spirit of Shetland to be capitalised on whilst the dominance of the public sector and adversarial positions become a thing of the past.

Characteristics of this culture change include:

- For communities to understand the need for change, expressed in ways that mean something to communities: to galvanise communities around, ‘how can you help us’ and to see the opportunities this provides (as opposed to complaining);

- A culture of reduced dependence on agencies, in particular the Council, where communities and individuals are doing more for themselves, and agencies are able to support rather than do (with a developed sense of pride within communities, as they take on more responsibility – ‘we do this now’);
- For people, communities and organisations to accept a need to work together with honesty, integrity and trust, moving away from the existing adversarial positions. No one person or organisation has all the answers, so the challenges ahead can only be met by a coming together with respect and understanding for different views and constraints, in order to find the best ideas and solutions;
- Agencies and communities working together and across normal geographic and organisational boundaries, recognising that everyone has an equal contribution and part to play in the future;
- Leadership, optimism and motivation within agencies and communities to develop partnerships and ensure inclusive approaches, where those who are easy to ignore and those who do not appear interested, are encouraged to participate;
- Communities are empowered, informed, confident, resilient, and able to shape and influence their development and the way in which services are provided, recognising that agencies do not have all of the answers: ‘an evolution of power’;
- Building on past skills and ways of working, when individuals and communities did more for themselves. This can involve asking people to get involved, and /or exploring co-production models where there is currently no exchange between neighbours;
- Determining needs from wants;
- Developing a shared vision of what Shetland is trying to achieve, where top-down and bottom-up processes can come together; communities need to be able to develop positive solutions to issues being faced, whilst at the same time organisations need to be open and flexible to respond to the issues and solutions provided;
- Clear methods of communication; and
- Representative methods of consultation and participation.

Comments on ‘Services’

‘Service’ implies something that is statutory, and needs to be delivered by ‘professionals’. Therefore communities have a feeling that ‘it’s not my job’. The culture change required needs to alter this perception with communities taking on more day-to-day activities that they would have done in the past.

More ‘services’ tend to be delivered in Lerwick, for example grass-cutting, which rural communities undertake to do themselves.

‘Services’ don’t have to be rewarded with money or Terms and Conditions. For example the Fire Auxiliary feel rewarded because of the uniform they receive.

De-Jargonising Community Planning

This is a term which is confusing. It could be translated into ‘something needs done in this community, who is going to do it?’ Or ‘I have a project, how do I make it happen’.

NB: this could be at a local, community level, or Shetland wide level.

How Can This Be Achieved?

This section highlights thoughts on process, roles and support, to achieve the culture change, and summarises suggestions provided to assist.

Process

Respondents felt it was important to have a simple, clearly defined structure on how the interface between communities and agencies can work. But that this framework has to be flexible to the needs of both communities and agencies and operate so that agencies and communities can understand each others' points of view and share problems.

Any process involved needs to recognise different tiers of involvement:

- 1) Developing and sustaining two-way communication directly with communities: day-to-day discussions and information sharing within communities, where agency staff meet individuals and groups in their local areas. This includes visiting schools, working outside, meeting groups, which enables agencies to be able to key into what communities are thinking and facing.
- 2) More formal dialogue, such as at Community Council level, where elected representatives come together to raise issues and respond to agency requests.
- 3) Strategic decision-making bodies utilising structures for involvement and the views of communities to inform their work.

Process, therefore, needs to be able to achieve the following:

- Capture people's views, where they are; recognising and utilising informal ways of exchanging views;
- Develop a strong evidence base; building on Community Profiles (e.g. Scalloway) to drive forward change within communities and inform;
- Effective top-down approaches:
 - Agencies seek views only if there is seen to be a value to communities in doing so, providing clarity on the purpose and targeting those for whom it is most relevant;
 - Recognising ways in which communities operate rather than service specific silos (e.g. review of rural service delivery or transport);
 - Staff with the necessary skills;
 - Effective planning, realistic timescales, inclusive approaches reaching those who are easy to ignore and the small voices;
 - Feeding back and evaluating impact.
- Clear means of communication, including consideration of a gateway to information for Shetland and communities;
- To be able to 'join the dots' of silo service delivery, in a way that is meaningful to communities;
- Careful use of language: 'these are the problems we need to solve...'. and
- To be able to encourage volunteering at the community level, including exploring co-production.

Ring-Fenced Community Funding

In February 2013, the Council agreed to ring-fence £69,000 of previously Community Council funding, to enable Community Councils and Community Development Companies to use it creatively. Any comments provided during this consultation that relate to this fund are being considered by Community Planning & Development, SIC, as part of the scheme development.

Roles

This section begins to examine the different roles of key stakeholders. Although organisations and representative bodies will have different roles, there is a need for everyone to take on ownership of this culture change.

Strategic: The Shetland Partnership Board and Individual Agencies

With a leadership role, across Shetland, individuals, partnerships and agencies have a key role to play in developing a culture change.

This requires:

- Political and strategic buy-in to genuine partnership working with communities; valuing the opinion of communities and that communities have solutions;
- Devolving power to communities, stepping back to provide them with space;
- Commitment to assist communities to understand the need for this culture change and to encourage everyone to think positively and speak positively about the future (building on Scenario Planning outputs).

Suggestions to achieve this included:

- Provide leadership to be able to stand back and ask communities what they can do for themselves;
- Identify champions at a senior level for engagement and community activism;
- Attend training and development in this area;
- Ensure officers are able to work with communities and facilitate the change and value the contribution of Community Development Plans;
- Ensure agencies get it right every time; ten successes will be forgotten by one failure.

Community: Community Councils

Community Councils provide a key interface between Council, Councillors, partner agencies and the community. As highlighted in the Community Empowerment Bill consultation, they 'exist between representative and participatory democracy: members are not formally part of representative democracy with a structure that reinforces that they are a lower tier of elected representatives. Yet, at this time they could play a key role as facilitators of participatory democracy, as it should be developing.'

Therefore the development of their role is an essential part of this change.

Statutory Responsibility of Community Councils

"In addition to any other purpose which a community council may pursue, the general purpose of a community council shall be to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the local authorities for its area, and to public authorities, the views of the community which it represents, in relation to matters for which those authorities are responsible, and to take such action in the interests of that community as appears to it to be expedient and practicable."

- A duty to 'ascertain', as above, and a statutory consultee on planning applications and other representations, such as licensing.
- Discretion to 'any other purpose' and to 'take such action', such as to grant fund other projects, pursue other external funding; act as facilitator, co-ordinate voluntary activity.

This requires:

- The disconnect between Community Councils and Community Planning to be addressed, enabling top-down to meet bottom-up approaches;
- Clarity on their role, with resources aligned to Shetland Partnership priorities;
- The status of Community Councils to be improved, to provide a more meaningful means of strengthening community involvement, which is valued by communities and agencies;
- Broadening the representation of Community Councils, with increased accountability resting with members;
- The often adversarial relationship between Community Councils and agencies to be overcome with the creation of dialogue to resolve issues; and
- Community Councils to become leaders in their community, for the development of projects and delivery of services.

Suggestions to achieve this include:

- Reducing the burden of letter writing, by ensuring agencies attending meetings are able to take concerns back to their agencies to respond;
- Ensure strong links are in place between Community Councils, Community Development organisations and other local organisations;
- Developing and implementing a plan for supporting, communicating and engaging with Community Councils;
- To ask Community Councils whether they would be willing to come together in an area (e.g. Multi-member Wards) on a regular basis, with Councillors and other elected representatives, such as Parent Councillors and representatives of Community Development organisations. This would be to discuss common issues, have direct contact with agencies, be a forum for discussing top-down strategy, and a means of developing dialogue between communities and agencies.

Community: Community Development Organisations

Organisations such as NCDC, Fetlar Developments Ltd and Sandwick Community Development Company are proving the benefits of communities taking on greater responsibility.

Suggestions were made about encouraging community activists in areas and rolling out these models.

Support

Many respondents recognised the need for support to the process and support for the development of roles. This support was seen to include:

- To have an understanding of communities (geographic and of interest);
- To develop the strength of communities to participate and develop their own future;
- To build and strengthen existing community mechanisms (Shetland is too small to add any more);
- To be aware of what is going on, within communities, to be able to assist and support, as necessary, when a community identifies an issue or need;
- To be aware of what is going on, within agencies, to be able to act as a link between agencies and communities;
- To provide a smooth channel of communication between communities and agencies, sifting out relevant information and removing the disconnect between communities and agencies;
- Assist in finding external funding; and

- To have an officer allocated to each Ward (or number of Wards), as part of existing role, to be able to support Councillors and provide liaison to bring different parts of the Council together around an issue.

A number of respondents highlighted the role of Community Workers in providing this.

In addition, support also included:

- Removing unnecessary bureaucracy; and
- Upskilling everyone involved in broadening participation (agency staff and communities)
- ICT support and skills development e.g. social media, webpage development



REPORT

To: Shetland Partnership Board

16th May 2013

From: Policy Manager - Poverty and Social Inclusion; Executive Manager – Housing; Revenues and Benefits Team Leader; SIC; and Consultant in Public Health, NHS Shetland

Item 06: Welfare Reform

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on Welfare Reform, on both implementation at a national level, and ongoing work at a local level to minimise the negative impacts.

2.0 Decision required

- 2.1 This report is for noting. However, input into local implementation is welcome.

3.0 Details

National

- 3.1 Changes being introduced to the UK benefit system as a result of the Welfare Reform Act of 2012 include the introduction of Universal Credit to replace existing benefits, such as Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and Tax Credits; the introduction of Personal Independence Payment, replacing Disability Working Allowance; changes to Occupancy Rules for Social Housing; and other amendments. The proposed changes are primarily being introduced during 2013, with two systems running until 2017.
- 3.2 Changes to Housing Benefit receipts for those living in Social Housing, known through the media as the Bedroom Tax, were introduced across the UK on the 1st April.
- 3.3 Universal Credit is currently being introduced to four pilot areas in the North of England, for new claimants only. There has been publicity around the Government's decision to scale down the number and scope of these pilots, at this time.
- 3.4 Other areas have been piloting the payment of housing benefit direct to claimants on a monthly basis. In Torfaen, South Wales, a local Housing Association of 950 households has seen total arrears rise from around £20,000 to approaching



£140,000 in the seven months from July to January. Many of these tenants had previously had a good track record of payment.

- 3.5 Personal Independence Payment will be the new way to claim for benefits for those with a disability, as of June 2013. Regular assessment and reassessment will become the norm. Current concerns are being expressed about the use of ATOS, the firm also responsible for Employment Support Allowance (ESA) assessments.
- 3.6 The Scottish Welfare Fund has been introduced in Scotland, as of 1st April, administered by Local Authorities. This replaces two schemes previously administered nationally by Job CentrePlus (JCP).

Local

- 3.7 The Council's Housing Service and Hjatland Housing Association were proactive in providing support to approaching 200 households impacted upon by changes to Housing Benefit, as of 1st April 2013. These households now need to pay their social landlord additional money if they are deemed to have too many bedrooms. All households were informed of the likely changes, at Christmas, and this has been followed up by phone calls. Options for tenants affected are to either pay the additional cost from their own resources; seek to move to a suitable sized property or possibly take in a lodger. To date approximately 30 of the 150 Council Tenants affected have asked to submit an application to move. A lettings plan has been approved that will prioritise 50% of the new Burnbank development to those seeking to downsize as a result of Welfare Reform changes.
- 3.8 The Council's Revenue and Benefits Section, based at 8 North Ness, is administering the Scottish Welfare Fund. This fund is to support those in crisis, and so is being carefully monitored to ensure it is those who are most in need who are accessing the funding. It is important to ensure that the funding can be spread throughout the financial year.
- 3.9 During March a series of Briefing Sessions were held. These covered the main changes resulting from Welfare Reform; local work to support the changes; and clear information on how to support households and signpost them to additional support. In total, 270 staff attended, representing a variety of services and organisations. It is felt that there is now good baseline knowledge and awareness levels have been raised. A number of people were unaware that the changes related to Scotland, whilst others had thought that the Council was responsible for introducing some of the changes.
- 3.10 A section of the Council's website has been developed to provide information. There is a direct link from the Council's front page and it can be found at http://www.shetland.gov.uk/Welfare_Reform_Employability/default.asp. This also



includes information about support to access employment. In addition, NHS staff have been kept informed using 'Message of the Day'.

- 3.11 It is essential that those who are most vulnerable are able to access banking facilities and affordable credit. Partner agencies are working closely with Shetland Islands Credit Union to support them to be able to provide these products, as an option to individuals. At the current time the CAB is submitting a bid to the Big Lottery Support and Connect Fund to be able to provide funding for a Project Manager to assist in the development of the Credit Union and its financial products. This will include providing access in more remote areas. The Credit Union intend to investigate partnership working with Post Offices, for example.
- 3.12 Last month, the Council's Executive Committee met with Alistair Carmichael, MP, to discuss changes. Council staff have agreed to provide evidence of the issues faced as a result of the rural nature of Shetland, which he can use to inform implementation by the UK Government.
- 3.20 Work, locally, continues to be co-ordinated by the Welfare Reform and Financial Resilience sub-group of the Fairer Shetland Partnership.

4.0 Implications

Strategic

- 4.1 Delivery on SOA Priorities: this work directly contributes to the SOA Outcome: "We have tackled inequalities to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are identified and met" and is highlighted as a key area of activity over the next few years.
- 4.2 Community / Stakeholder Issues: households in Shetland are already feeling the impact of reducing household income, in real terms. Changes being introduced to the benefit system are exacerbating these issues, making the impacts greater for those already vulnerable and those currently on the edges of vulnerability.
- 4.3 Risk Management: the impacts are wide ranging and will influence various policy areas and service delivery issues in the future. Good planning and an early intervention approach by acting now will minimise these negative impacts and reduce the increased demand on public services. The Council's Risk Register is being used to ensure proper analysis of the risks in order to ensure that all impacts are minimised to the optimum level.
- 4.4 Equalities, Health and Human Rights: preparing for the changes in Welfare Reform assists the Partnership in meeting its responsibilities for equalities, health improvement and human rights.
- 4.5 Environmental: there are no environmental issues arising from this report.



Resources

- 4.6 Financial: there are no financial impacts as a direct result of this report. However, the impact of Welfare Reform is seeing an increase in support required by public services, which is being addressed within existing resources.
- 4.7 Human Resources: there are no implications to staffing arising from the content of this report. However, the introduction of Universal Credit will directly impact on the work of staff within the Council's Revenues and Benefits Section and indirectly impact on those staff involved in supporting those on benefits.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The challenges being brought about by the UK Government's Welfare Reforms are now beginning to be experienced in Shetland – both by households and by the services involved in providing services. Organisations are taking a proactive approach and working together as much as possible. The impacts of Welfare Reform will be closely monitored and reported.

For further information, please contact:

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30th April 2013
