

MINUTE

A&B - Public

Environment and Transport Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Tuesday 26 November 2013 at 10.00am

Present:

R Henderson	D Ratter
G Robinson	D Sandison
G Smith	T Smith
M Stout	A Wishart

Apologies:

M Bell

In Attendance (Officers):

M Sandison, Interim Director of Infrastructure Services
C Symons Acting Executive Manager – Buildings and Transport Operations
L Gair, Committee Officer

Also In Attendance (Members):

G Cleaver

Chair:

Mr A Wishart, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular:

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interests

None.

34/13 **Minutes**

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2013 on the motion of Mr Robinson seconded by Mr Henderson.

35/13 **6-Month Performance Overview – Infrastructure Department**

The Committee noted a report by the Director of Infrastructure Services (ISD-13-13-F), which summarised the activity and performance of the Infrastructure Department for Quarter 2 of 2013/14, the 6 months up to September 2013.

The Director of Infrastructure Services introduced the report and advised that the key priority for all departments in the development plan is to come in on budget. She advised that Infrastructure Services Department are expected to come in under budget. The Director of Infrastructure Services took Members through the appendices and provided brief explanations on the graphs provided.

In response to a question the Director of Infrastructure Services explained that the review of Fixed Links had not been completed due to staffing workload and resource issues within the Development Services Department. The Chair advised that at the last meeting of the committee a recommendation was made to the Executive Committee that a full review of infrastructure assets be reported to the Executive

Committee, including fixed links. This would allow the development of a long-term strategy for the replacement of infrastructure assets.

In regard to the energy efficiency action, a Member asked whether a case was being made for there to be a local Shetland budget. The Director of Infrastructure Services advised that work had gone into setting up an energy unit to be a local centre for energy efficiency but more information on the energy efficiency programme was contained in a report, later on this agenda.

A Member asked what type of construction waste had been sent to landfill from the Petrofac project. The Director of Infrastructure Services confirmed that a lot of the waste was wood, however it had not been possible to burn it in the waste to energy plant as the amount of wood would have caused overheating. She said that staff explored options of mixing in with waste but to do this would create a lot of extra handling. A Member asked whether the wood could be reconstituted and used as biomass fuel. Members were advised that depending where on the site the wood was used it may be considered contaminated and has to be dealt with appropriately.

In response to a question on whether there is a long term strategy to improve road infrastructure in the future, the Director of Infrastructure Services advised that she and the Executive Manager – Finance were working on an asset management plan that would look ahead 30 years on all infrastructure assets.

Members commented on a number of indicators and the Director of Infrastructure Services provided a progress report on the Viking Bus Station and agreed that communication with the public was important to ensure that there is time for them to adjust to the changes being implemented. The Director of Infrastructure Services also confirmed that she had been in discussions with the community about the Bigton toilets and a solution may be put forward in regard to supporting seasonal opening without employing some to maintain the toilets.

A Member questioned what was being done to deal with the recent breakdown of gritters. The Director of Infrastructure Services advised that the capital investment plan allowance is higher next year for capital for fleet replacement and work was being done to establish what would be a suitable replacement for a number of the older vehicles. The Fleet Review would be complete by April and would identify the next set of replacements.

The Director of Infrastructure Services also advised that the ferry fare review was progressing with a model and options being drawn up. She said that this would be discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chairs of Development and Environment and Transport Committees and Member seminars would be held early in the New Year, before it is circulated wider. She said that it was important to establish any impacts before implementation. It was agreed that the discussions with the Chair and Vice-Chair would also include a North Isles Member. The Director of Infrastructure Services also confirmed that discount rates and online bookings would also be considered but this had to be done in such a way as not to reduce income to a point that it impacts on the service levels currently offered. A Member asked if it would be possible to allow the Council's staff to travel free in order to remove the amount paperwork involved. The Director of Infrastructure Services explained that recharging other departments was a much larger issue across the Council but she would ensure that Ferries are included when recharges are considered.

In terms of staffing numbers, the Director of Infrastructure Services explained that there had been a substantial reduction in staff stating that in August 2012 there were 520 staff and this year there are 460 staff. She said that staff were being lost to the private sector and these vacancies will impact on services across the board. There was also a reduction of FTE Temporary staff on temporary contracts who supported the services but a conscious decision had been made to reduce temporary staff numbers and that has now been delivered.

(Mr Cleaver left the meeting)

The Director of Infrastructure Services also reported an improving picture on the key performance indicators including sickness and overtime costs. There is a consistent picture in terms of vehicle costs and mileage allowances and more partnership working in sharing skills and consolidating remote working was working well. She also explained that incident reporting had improved and that a safety culture was emerging especially now there was more pressure following to loss of staff.

Decision:

The Environment and Transport Committee **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

36/13 Tingwall Airport – Outcome of Audit

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Infrastructure Services (ISD-14-13-F), which advised of the outcome of the recent audit at Tingwall Airport by providing the Tingwall Aerodrome Audit Report issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

The Director of Infrastructure Services indicated that the Tingwall Airport had made excellent progress since the last audit. She confirmed that the actions would be tracked and would be carried out to a set timetable.

The Chair commented on the previous negative feedback received from the public and said that this was a positive outcome from the CAA's report. The Committee were advised that the CAA had attended Tingwall Airport again yesterday to carry out an audit of the fire safety procedures, flight information services and communication with the aircraft. The Director of Infrastructure Services said that the CAA representative commented that this was the best they had ever seen the Tingwall Airport and that this second audit report would be presented to Members in due course.

In response to a query regarding recent work to the runway the Director of Infrastructure Services explained that some repairs are carried out during the winter and on a recent occasion work was being done to the hard edges. She added that during the year some improvement works are carried out from the audit but repainting the runway lines is done every year.

A Member asked what would happen if there was non compliance with licensing requirements referred to in paragraph 4.4 of the report. The Director of Infrastructure Services advised that if the aerodrome license was suspended or removed it would mean the airport would close. She said that if the CAA believed that the Council was not meeting its regulatory requirements under EU Legislation as well as aerodrome licence conditions the Council would lose its licence. She assured Members however that the Council is complying generally with both.

Decision:

The Environment and Transport Committee **RESOLVED** to note:

- the contents of the audit as an indicator of performance; and
- the actions implemented to close out the audit non-compliance and comments.

37/13

Domestic Energy Efficiency Grant Programmes Update

The Committee considered a report by the Acting Executive Manager – Buildings and Transport Operations (BTO-09-13-F), which provided an update on progress regarding the delivery of domestic energy efficiency grant works under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Home Energy Scotland Area Based Schemes (HESABS).

The Executive Manager – Building and Transport Operations introduced the report and explained that the £440,000 committed by the Scottish Government this year is to be match funded with a similar sum of eco funding by one of the utility companies. He also advised on the number of applications received so far and on the number of local contractors that had undertaken the PAS20:30 training.

During discussion the Executive Manager – Building and Transport Operations advised that there is no conclusion with any energy provider on eco funding with the latest negotiations ceasing last Friday. He commented that larger housing schemes on the mainland have been more successful in attracting eco funding due to the numbers of houses involved adding that there had only been 12 people taking up the green deal in the UK so far.

The Executive Manager – Building and Transport Operations went on to advise that he has since spoken with the Scottish Government and informed them that this national scheme was not working for rural areas and that the same message was being heard from Orkney, Western Isles and other rural areas of Scotland.

The Executive Manager – Building and Transport Operations advised that the Scottish Government have agreed to release £200,000, disconnected from the scheme. He said that £6,500 can be spent on average on each house but he has spoken to Scottish Government representatives where he explained that the generic position does not suit the variety of house types in Shetland. He said that he has agreed to provide a comparison analysis of systems and a technical review to support the Council's local view in order that the Scottish Government can take it to the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

The Chair said that there was some degree of local expectation and hope for help and asked how the public were being informed of the current position. The Executive Manager – Building and Transport Operations explained that the Council had already received 250-400 expressions of interest that had been added to a waiting list. He said that information had been sent out to these interested parties so that officers could identify where the funding was most needed.

Members discussed the possibility of contacting both Scottish and Westminster Government Ministers to get agreement in principle on a solution for remote areas.

In response to a question the Executive Manager – Building and Transport Operations confirmed that there are penalties imposed on energy companies but

they appear to be willing to accept these penalties as it is less onerous than allocating the funding.

The Executive Manager – Building and Transport Operations confirmed that the £200,000 expected from the Scottish Government was likely to help a maximum of 30 properties. He said that this initiative would be discussed by a project board and directors to form a way forward which is both defensible and robust. The Director of Infrastructure Services explained that a previous scheme focused on people that were in fuel poverty and gave examples of when a household was considered fuel poor. She stressed the importance of reaching the most vulnerable and that is done in partnership with CAB and GP's and Health Visitors. She said that energy efficiency would be included as a standard item in the performance report to ensure that progress on this subject is monitored quarterly.

Members again discussed the need to take this opportunity to proactively comment on the position and inform the public that this is not secure money and not just rely on the media to report on this matter. The Director of Infrastructure Services agreed expressing her disappointment that what had been seen as an effective solution had been handled badly by both Central government and the utility companies. .

A Member said that it was important to get access to the Government to put across the extent of the technical problems we have in rural areas. He commented on the Shetland housing stock and building in the 1970's during the oil boom, adding that it was fashionable to bring up inferior kit houses from mainland suburbia designs that were poorly insulated. These houses were built in good faith but leak energy severely and this is a huge problem that gets glossed over by bureaucracy. The Member concluded that the HES:ABS Allowance of £6,500 per house would do little to improve one home.

Mr Robinson suggested as a way forward that the Chair of the Development Committee, who would be attending a CoSLA meeting this week, could bring clearly set out solutions for Shetland which, if CoSLA were to adopt as their policy, would help the Council's position. He also advised that he would soon be attending the Scottish Office where he would be prepared to raise the matter. It was agreed that the Executive Manager – Building and Transport Operations would prepare a briefing, in principle, for both Mr Robinson and the Chair or Development Services to take to their respective meetings.

The Executive Manager – Building and Transport Operations advised that the message he would like to put forward is that the eco funding needs to be made more accessible and if received directly the Council should apply its own solution, whilst still using the PAS20:30 accreditation scheme. He said that the eco scheme does not address fuel poverty and is more focused on carbon reduction.

There was also general agreement that targeting severe fuel poverty should be done first which would see initial work being done but further work would be carried out if more funding were to be released.

A Member said that should a defined Shetland solution be agreed it would take a lot of staff time to implement and asked who would pay for that. The Executive Manager – Building and Transport Operations explained that a lot of work had been done already and a good database was in place. He reiterated that a comparative analysis of insulation systems which work in Shetland was needed, and his intention was to commission a piece of work to investigate this. The Scottish Government

agreed yesterday that they would, in principle, pay for this study as it is seen as beneficial to other local authorities who are in a similar situation.

Decision:

The Environment and Transport Committee **RESOLVED** to instruct Officers to provide a briefing in principle, to the Chair of Development and the Leader to raise at their meetings with CoSLA, the Scottish Office that they are due to attend within the next week.

The meeting concluded at 11.30am.

.....
Chair