

# MINUTE

## B - Public

**Development Committee**  
**Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick**  
**Monday 23 February 2015 at 2pm**

**Present:**

T Smith	M Burgess
B Fox	R Henderson
F Robertson	M Stout
A Westlake	

**Apologies**

A Cooper	A Manson
G Robinson	

**In Attendance (Officers):**

N Grant, Director of Development Services  
J Belford, Executive Manager - Finance  
D Irvine, Executive Manager – Economic Development  
I McDiarmid, Executive Manager – Planning  
W Grant, Project Manager  
S Keith, Project Manager  
P Sutherland, Solicitor  
L Adamson, Committee Officer

**Also in Attendance:**

G Smith

**Chair:**

In the absence of the Chair, Mr T Smith, Vice-Chair of the Committee presided.

**Circular:**

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

**Declarations of Interest**

Mr Burgess declared a financial interest in Item 3 “Development Services Directorate Performance Report: 9 month/3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014/15”, as a provider of services for Shetland College, where he would leave the Chamber should there be any discussion of a financial nature. Also in Item 3, Mr Burgess declared a non-financial interest as a Board Member of the Shetland Fisheries Training Centre Trust.

07/15      **Management Accounts for Development Committee: 2014/15 – Projected Outturn at Quarter 3**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Finance (F-008-F), which enabled monitoring of the financial performance of services within its remit to ensure that Members were aware of the forecast income and expenditure and the impact that this will have with regard to delivering the approved budget.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report, and advised on the projected outturn position on revenue and capital as set out in the appendices. The Executive Manager – Finance commented that this was an important point in the year in terms of the budgets and carry forward scheme

already approved by Council, and officers in the Finance service are liaising with Directors to provide the information required before the end of the Financial Year.

In referring to the underspend reported on grant schemes of £219k, which is due to delays with European funding schemes, the Director of Development Services advised that this budget would be utilised in future years.

On the motion of Mr Stout, seconded by Mr Fox, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

**Decision:**

The Development Committee **RESOLVED** to review the Management Accounts showing the projected outturn position at Quarter 3.

08/15 **Planning Performance Framework 2013-14**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Planning (DV-13-15-F), which informed on the Ministerial response to the Planning Service's Planning Performance Framework, and the results of the assessment which were received in December 2014.

The Executive Manager – Planning summarised the main terms of the report.

The Executive Manager - Planning advised Members on the recent publication of the Scottish Government's annual report on Planning Performance 2013/14, which provides an assessment of the performance of all Local Authorities in Scotland. He also advised that a spreadsheet has been prepared to illustrate how Shetland has compared with the other Local Authorities. In response to a suggestion, it was agreed for these documents would be circulated to all Members. The Executive Manager – Planning went on to report that the Service is now working on the next performance planning framework to be submitted in June this year.

The Director of Development Services made comment on the improvements made within the Planning Service, which he said have been achieved while dealing with a number of larger projects which take up a significant amount of time and resources.

In response to questions, the Executive Manager – Planning advised that the Planning Service in Shetland deals with a higher than average number of larger scale developments and a wide range of projects, where he confirmed that the income received falls far short of what it costs to process applications. He added that in Shetland, the current income from planning applications would cover 70% of the cost of processing applications nationally.

The Executive Manager – Planning informed on the pre-application service provided by the Planning Service, at no fee to the applicant. During the discussion, Members advised that the pre-application service was an invaluable to applicants at the early stages of a project, and to put a fee on the service could discourage that important discussion.

The Chair commended the Executive Manager – Planning on the improvements and achievements that have been made in the Planning Service over recent years, which he hoped would continue.

During the debate, Mr Robertson reported from his attendance at the Planning Convener's Conference over recent years, where he advised that the issue of planning fees is a regular topic for discussion. He said that it is evident that until such time as the performance of all Local Authorities has been brought up to an improved standard, planning fees will not increase. He advised that the Planning Service in Shetland, with only limited resources, deals with more complex, varied and interesting projects than anywhere else in Scotland, which includes the biggest national project of the Total gas plant. Mr Robertson concluded by stating that the pre-application advice provided by the Planning Service is of huge benefit to applicants and that this service should continue to be provided free of charge.

During the discussion, and in response to a comment from a Member, the Director of Development Services undertook to continue to lobby for planning application fees to more accurately reflect the scale and types of developments being dealt with by the Planning Service in Shetland.

#### **Decision:**

The Development Committee **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the Scottish Government's assessment of the Council's Planning Service performance.

09/15

#### **Development Services Directorate Performance Report: 9 Month/3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2014/15**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (DV-07-15-F), which summarised the activity and performance of the Development Services Directorate for the reporting period above.

The Director of Development Services introduced the report, and advised that the Directorate in general has made good progress to Quarter 3 against priorities set at the start of the year and in line with the Corporate Plan. He provided Members with a summary of the key projects and priorities which included progress with the review of the Economic Development Service, and he confirmed that the Shetland Telecom project would be reported to Committee in April.

In response to a question, the Director of Development Services provided an update on the Community Transport projects, where he advised that the proposal regarding the Skerries Ferry was still being worked on by HIE. He added that it was hoped that further community transport solutions will come forward which could help the overall bus network in Shetland.

In response to a question, the Director of Development Services undertook to inform Members of the Committee on the reporting from the Fuel Poverty Sub-Group.

In response to questions, the Director of Development Services advised that the remit of the ferry fares review includes fare collection, where he confirmed that the chip and pin system will form part of the project. Mr Stout advised that there are no proposals at this time to withdraw the fare for multi-journey discounts or the principle of discount cards however the procedures need to adhere to audit requirements. The Director of Development Services went on to advise that the ferry fares review will be discussed at a Members Seminar, prior to reporting to Environment and Transport Committee on 22 April 2015.

A Member made reference to the two areas ranked as Amber at CP Ref 7.1, concerning partnership working on Welfare Reform and the delivery of the Fairer Shetland framework, where it was reported that progress has been delayed due to staff shortages. The Director of Development Services advised the Community Planning and Development Service has confirmed that both areas are being dealt with and progress is being made.

In referring to Performance Indicator COR1, a Member enquired whether there were any proposals for the 19.5FTE staff currently on temporary contracts to move to permanent posts. The Director of Development Services said that ideally all staff would be on full-time contracts, but by their nature there are some posts that will continue to be temporary due, for example, to fixed-term funding. He added that keeping staff numbers as low as possible is a priority.

Reference was made to Performance Indicator PLN1, which highlighted the marked increase in the average length of time to obtain a building warrant. It was reported that the increase was a consequence of difficulties encountered to recruit and retain staff in the Building Standards Service and an increased workload within the Service. The Executive Manager – Planning advised that following a long standing vacancy and an unsuccessful recruitment exercise, the nature of the vacant post has since been altered to focus more on inspections. He added that the post could now be more suited at graduate level with scope to progress to the grade of building standards officer in the future. Mr T Smith advised that the majority of complaints from his constituents relate to the Building Standards Service, and he said that the delays in processing building warrants and verifying completion certificates must be affecting developments in Shetland. During the discussion, the Director of Development Services and Executive Manager – Planning advised on the changes that have been made in the Service, where it was anticipated that an improvement in performance will be achieved moving forward. During further discussion, and at the request of Mr T Smith, it was agreed that a briefing paper would be circulated to Members to inform on the issues within the Building Standards Service, and proposals to improve the situation. Information was also requested on how the Building Standards Service in Shetland compares with some other Local Authorities, to include Orkney and the Western Isles.

In referring to Performance Indicator TS1, Ms Westlake commented that she welcomed the increase in the number of modern apprentices recruited by Train Shetland, although she noted the slight decrease in the achievement rate of modern apprentices as recorded by Skills Development Scotland. The Director of Development Service advised that Shetland is ahead in the number of apprenticeship placements offered and ranks high against Scottish Government targets. He acknowledged however that recruitment of apprentices was an area where the Council could give more focus.

#### **Decision:**

The Development Committee **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

10/15

#### **Development Committee Business Programme 2015-16**

The Committee considered a report by the Team Leader - Administration (GL-05-15-F), which informed of the planned business to be presented to Committee for the financial year to 31 March 2016 and sought discussion with Officers regarding any changes or additions required to that programme.

**Decision:**

The Development Committee noted the business planned for the financial year to 31 March 2016.

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**Shetland Islands Council as Trustee of Shetland Development Trust**

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In order to avoid the disclosure of exempt information, Mr T Smith moved, Mr Robinson seconded, and the Committee agreed to exclude the public in terms of the relevant legislation during consideration of the following item of business.

11/15     **Economic Development Investment Update**

The Committee considered a report by the Project Manager, which provided an update on recent activities concerning specific investments and initiatives which are of a confidential nature.

The Project Manager (W Grant) introduced the report, and responded to questions from Members.

On the motion of Mr Robertson, seconded by Mr Fox, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

**Decision:**

The Development Committee, as sole Trustee of the Shetland Development Trust, **RESOLVED** that the Executive Manager – Economic Development and the staff of the Economic Development Service continue to act on behalf of the Council accordingly regarding current and future business activities.

The meeting concluded at 3.15pm.

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Chair