

Services Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Wednesday 2 May 2001 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

P Malcolmson	J M Ritch
R J Anderson	L Angus
Dr C M Begg	A J Cluness
M U Colligan	C B Eunson
F B Grains	I J Hawkins
J C Irvine	W H Manson
Capt G G Mitchell	W A Ratter
T W Stove	W N Stove

Apologies:

R I Black	J P Nicolson
F A Robertson	W Tait

In Attendance (Officers):

J Watt, Executive Director, Community Services
C Medley, Head of Housing Services
F Robertson, Divisional Manager, Management Services
M Miller, Head of Social Care Services
K Gabb, Service Manager, Looked-After Children
M Payton, Head of Education Services
S Gray, Education Adviser (Pre-School/Nursery)
G Smith, Head of Community Development Services
T Watt, Museum Curator
N Watt, Section Leader, Sport and Recreation Services
M Duncan, Grants Officer
R Lovell, Leisure Facilities Officer
S Hughes, Financial Support Services Manager
B C Hill, Acting Divisional Manager, Legal Services
D Williamson, Divisional Manager, Building Services
L Bissett, Projects Co-ordinator
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Also

E Robertson, Chairman, Shetland Childcare Partnership

Chairman:

Mr P Malcolmson, Chairman of the Committee, presided.

Circular:

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Minutes:

The minute of the meeting held on 21 March 2001, having been circulated, was confirmed.

Due to special circumstances, namely that this was the first meeting at which this matter could be considered within the timescale available, the following item of business was considered as a matter of urgency in terms of subsection 4 of Section 50B of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973: - Lease of Properties in Firth.

Members' Attendance at External Meetings – Update

There was nothing to report on this item.

69/01 **Pre-School Education/Childcare Strategy 2001/2002**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Education Services (Appendix 1).

The Head of Education Services referred to the reduction in numbers of children at Bells Brae and said that this was largely because pre-school provision was now available elsewhere which had not existed when Bells Brae had opened. He went on to say that the proposed reduction in staff maintained the appropriate adult/child ratio.

Mr L Angus said that he had received a number of comments from parents who had stated that the nursery did not meet their needs adequately, and that he had also had discussions with the Head Teacher at Bells Brae. He felt that these issues could be resolved by holding a public meeting at which parents could express their views regarding the nursery. He accordingly moved the recommendations on condition that 9.2.4 was deferred until a public meeting, to be chaired by Mr P Malcolmson, was held.

Mr P Malcolmson confirmed that he would be happy to chair a public meeting, and said that it would be useful to meet with people who were unsure about the proposals.

A Member stated that he had also received representations from parents of children at Sound School nursery who were critical of the hours that it operated. The Chairman pointed out that this issue was not contained in the report but could be addressed at a public meeting.

In seconding Mr Angus' motion, Mr W N Stove added that he had also received a number of phone calls from parents over the last few months which, he felt, could be discussed at a public meeting.

In response to a query from a Member, the Education Adviser confirmed that the 2½ hourly sessions were to fit in with teachers' hours of employment, and she pointed out that the timing of sessions at Bells Brae had been altered in the past to assist with the requirements of working parents.

A Member referred to the situation at Bells Brae, and said that it was important to aim for equality of provision.

In response to a question from a Member, the Education Adviser explained the differences between the statistics presented in Table 2, and said that it was difficult to get accurate figures, particularly in the Lerwick area. She added that some people choose to keep their children at home rather than send them to a nursery, and this would also contribute to the final figure.

(Mr W H Manson attended the meeting)

The Head of Education Services referred to the recommendation in paragraph 9.2.13 and said that a decision could not be made about the General Fund until a decision was made about Bells Brae.

With the consent of his seconder, Mr L Angus agreed to include within his motion that 9.2.13 should also be deferred until the outcome of the situation at Bells Brae had been resolved. The Committee concurred.

70/01

Integrating the New Community Services Department

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director, Community Services (Appendix 2).

The Executive Director introduced the report to the Committee and summarised the main points. She advised that the Service Heads had been discussing this and it was hoped to bring forward a draft Service Plan in the next few weeks. In response to a query from a Member, she confirmed that the McCrone Agreement had been included in recognition that it was a financial package that was not funded at the moment and because it was part of a review of the fundamental management of schools. She went on to say that she understood around £740,000 had to be budgeted for, and that the Scottish Executive classified this as a zero sum gain in that money received from the Scottish Executive should cover the costs. She added that the Head of Education Services would be reporting to the full Council in order to get the 'negotiating machinery' set up.

(Mr W A Ratter attended the meeting)

A Member referred to decentralisation of services in paragraph 3.7 and said it was an area that had had 'lip service' paid to it over the years. She enquired what was behind the statement.

The Executive Director replied that there had been discussions in a number of areas as to what decentralisation actually means, and that it would also be referred to in the draft Service Plan. She went on to say that there were a number of ways to deal with decentralisation and she highlighted the role that Area Community

Workers and Community Learning Plans would have to play in this in the future.

A Member referred to the role of new technology and said that this may help achieve a degree of decentralisation, although he felt that it was a very wide subject. He added that he felt that it was overdue in Shetland, and he looked forward to seeing it being carried on.

A Member said that councillors had concerns about the three major services within the Council, and would like the opportunity to discuss them. He requested that some means of doing this was set up so that councillors would have the opportunity to discuss this with officers at an early stage.

The Chairman said that this was taken into account in paragraph 4.2, and gave assurances that these points would be taken up and councillors would be able to have input at an early stage.

The Executive Director said that there would be a meeting regarding the Service Plan development process in the afternoon which would be looking at how to involve stakeholders, and she confirmed that councillors would be consulted before a final report was done.

On the motion of Mr C B Eunson, seconded by Mrs I J Hawkins, the Committee approved the recommendations contained in the report.

71/01

Shetland Childcare Partnership – Early Education and Childcare Plan 2000-2004

The Committee considered a report by the Heads of Education and Social Care Services (Appendix 3).

Ms E Robertson, Chairman of Shetland Childcare Partnership (SCP), introduced the report to the Committee and highlighted some of the work which had been carried out over the past year.

(Mr W A Ratter left the meeting)

A Member congratulated SCP on the work they had carried out over the short period of time and highlighted the valuable role played by the voluntary sector. He added that it could be seen that the best use was being made of the money that had been contributed.

A Member said that he had received comments from parents regarding the cost of Out of School Clubs which could be prohibitive, particularly if parents had more than one child

attending. He enquired if there was any way in which costs could be absorbed.

(Mr W A Ratter returned to the meeting)

The Chairman referred to social inclusion and said that this had been raised, in relation to transport issues, at the Joint Forum Meeting. He said that it may be worthwhile considering these two issues together in relation to social inclusion. He went on to speak about connections between this report and the Pre-School Education/Childcare Strategy discussed earlier and said there appeared to be a very healthy pre-school strategy in Shetland, which was also a good example of joining up that had been referred to by the Executive Director.

Members congratulated SCP on the good work that had been carried out over the past year.

On the motion of Mr A J Cluness, seconded by Dr C M Begg, the Committee approved the recommendation contained in the report.

(Mrs F B Grains left the meeting)

72/01

Shetland Islands Council Charitable Trust – Christian Action on Addiction (CAOA) – ‘Da Dry Dock’

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Social Care Services (Appendix 4).

The Committee approved the recommendations contained in the report on the motion of Mrs I J Hawkins, seconded by Mr W H Manson.

A Member referred to a meeting of the Community Planning Board at which discussion had taken place regarding the amount of money that went into the voluntary sector through the Council and the Charitable Trust. He went on to say that it was important to be aware of, and for the need to think about, the percentage of this money used for small administration units and the percentage that needy people would actually gain from. He added that he would like to ensure that money was used effectively. A Member added that it had been shown that considerable savings could be made from the use of combined premises.

The Executive Director pointed out that a voluntary sector group, including three Members, had been set up in February and were looking at total investment and ways of achieving best value in relation to the voluntary sector, so these issues were currently being addressed.

A Member asked for clarification on a number of issues relating to rent of the premises, expenditure and income from bar and kitchen stock, criteria for identifying disadvantaged users and numbers of disadvantaged users.

The Head of Social Care Services said that she did not have specific statistics available, but she believed that services available were provided free of charge to certain disadvantaged people. She went on to say that she assumed the rental would be a contribution to the overall costs of the operation of the Havly Centre. She continued that there were no formal criteria for deciding who was disadvantaged, but that it relied upon the judgement of the people who operated 'Da Dry Dock'. The Financial Services Support Manager added that he believed that 'Da Dry Dock' did not own the premises, but that the rental would be a contribution towards the overall Havly Centre costs.

The Chairman added that, in some ways, 'Da Dry Dock' had become a victim of its own success, but that the people using it were people who would benefit most from using it.

(Dr C M Begg left the meeting)

73/01 **Request to Make the Crofthouse Museum and Böd of Gremista Free Admission for All**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Community Development Services (Appendix 5).

Mr J M Ritch pointed out that a Development Committee Working Group and Shetland Islands Tourism were currently developing an admissions policy, which was also being driven by national trends. He went on to speak about the low level of exploitation of the tourism industry in Shetland and the need for a strategic framework in the future to deal with this.

The Head of Community Development Services said that he took these points on board, and pointed out that the report recommended suspension of charges for this season with a further review at a later date, by which time there may be some overall guidance which would contribute to the debate.

On the motion of Mr R J Anderson, seconded by Captain G G Mitchell, the Committee approved the recommendations contained in the report.

A Member pointed out that, due to the Foot and Mouth crisis, figures for this year may not be as representative as usual.

74/01 **Disability Shetland Recreation Club – Running Costs**

The Committee considered a report by the Section Leader, Sport and Recreation Services (Appendix 6).

In response to a query from a Member, the Head of Community Development Services said that he did not have actual user figures available at the moment, but added that he had recently attended a presentation for the bowling competition and there had been around 40 people taking part, with an equal number of helpers in attendance.

A Member enquired why the running costs were being tabled separately from the main funding for Disability Shetland. In response the Head of Community Development Services said that a working group looking at partnership with the voluntary sector were addressing a number of issues such as this.

The Committee approved the recommendations contained therein on the motion of Mr C B Eunson, seconded by Mr A J Cluness.

75/01 **Capital Grants to Voluntary Organisations – North Roe and Lochend Play Park Association – New Play Area**

The Committee considered a report by the Leisure Facilities Officer (Appendix 7) and, on the motion of Mr W H Manson, seconded by Mr A J Cluness, approved the recommendations contained therein.

76/01 **Capital Grant to Voluntary Organisations – 2001/2002 – Pitch Remedial Works – Burra Isle Football Association**

The Committee considered a report by the Grants Officer (Appendix 8) and on the motion of Mr J C Irvine, seconded by Mr R J Anderson, approved the recommendations contained therein.

77/01 **Capital Grant to Voluntary Organisation: Hayfield Community Development Association – Hayfield Play Area**

The Committee considered a report by the Leisure Facilities Officer (Appendix 9) and, on the motion of Mr L Angus, seconded by Mr W N Stove, approved the recommendations contained therein.

78/01 **Capital Rolling Programme – Prioritisation of Schemes and Purchases**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director, Community Services (Appendix 10).

A Member referred to paragraph 3.1(a) and asked if Members would see proof that the savings from the energy saving measures discussed would outweigh the costs.

The Projects Co-ordinator said that it would be possible to provide an out-turn report to the Committee at this time next year.

In response to a query from a Member, the Head of Community Development Services confirmed that the figure indicated in 3.2 (b)

referred to the Bressay Multicourt only, and it was the anticipated cost of providing a refurbished multicourt.

A Member referred to 3.1(d) and enquired how much had been spent on works at the Anderson High School. The Projects Co-ordinator confirmed that it was just under £100,000 this financial year.

On the motion of Captain G G Mitchell, seconded by Mr W N Stove, the Committee approved the recommendation contained in the report.

79/01 **Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme – Provisional Outturn 2000/2001 and Review of Programme 2001/2005**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services (Appendix 11).

The Head of Housing Services introduced the report to the Committee and pointed out that the majority of work referred to in Appendix A would be completed in this financial year.

A Member commented that she had been in touch with Housing Services on a number of occasions regarding problems with refurbishments in her area, but since the properties had been revisited she had heard nothing but praise and she was pleased that things appeared to be moving forward.

A Member referred to a number of schemes in the Staney Hill and North Road area, and said that work needed to be carried out in some schemes before the anticipated dates referred to in Appendix C, and he was disappointed that this was scheduled so far in the future. He added that he would get in touch with the Head of Housing Services regarding his concerns.

On the motion of Mr A J Cluness, seconded by Captain G G Mitchell, the Committee approved the recommendations contained in the report.

80/01 **Capital Programme – South Nesting Primary School**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Education Services (Appendix 12).

Mr J C Irvine pointed out that, at the previous meeting of the Services Committee, he had asked for a report on this matter. He quoted the minute of the previous meeting which said that a report should be presented which provided information on the availability of funding or otherwise, and progress on the acquisition of the ground for the new school build and multicourt. He had expected this report to indicate how this project was to be accommodated, but it did not do so. He therefore moved that this item be carried

forward to the next cycle and a further report be presented to the Committee. Mr P Malcolmson seconded.

Mr W A Ratter pointed out that the land would have to be de-crofted and that this may take some time.

81/01 **Note of Education Forum – 6 April 2001**

The Committee noted the record of the aforementioned meeting (Appendix 13).

82/01 **Note of Community Care Forum – 9 April 2001**

The Committee noted the record of the aforementioned meeting (Appendix 14).

A Member referred to item 13/01 'Care Services Delivered at Home' and said that this was one of the issues that had been awaiting the Executive Director of Community Services to be appointed, and he hoped that it would now be dealt with as a priority area.

A Member referred to item 16/01 'Items for Future Discussion' and said she felt that the impact of water and sewerage charges on some individuals and charities was an area which should be discussed. She went on to say that representations could be made to the Scottish Executive and it was important not to sit back and assume that nothing could be done.

The Chairman agreed that a report should come back to the Services Committee to look at the issues and clarify the position.

83/01 **Note of Housing Forum – 11 April 2001**

The Committee noted the record of the aforementioned meeting (Appendix 15).

84/01 **Note of Special Joint Education and Children and Young People's Services Forum – 25 April 2001**

The Committee noted the record of the aforementioned meeting (Appendix 15a).

A Member referred to the discussion that had taken place at the Forum regarding the Pre-School Education/Childcare Strategy, and pointed out that parents may have wished to attend the meeting but there would not have been enough room for them in the Council Chamber. He went on to speak about issues of social inclusion and said that the Council Chamber was unsuitable for what it had been intended, and he was of the opinion that something should be done about this.

In order to avoid the disclosure of exempt information, the Committee resolved, on the motion of Mr P Malcolmson,

seconded by Captain G G Mitchell, to exclude the public in terms of the relevant legislation during consideration of Appendix B of item 85/01 and item 87/01.

(Representatives of the media left the meeting)

85/01 **Community Services Department – Integration of Building and Design Staff into Housing Services**

The Committee considered a report by the Heads of Housing and Central Services.

A Member said that he had been approached about this issue and had subsequently discussed it with the Executive Director, Community Services. He went on to say that there were general concerns regarding length of service rights in the event of a transfer to a housing trust, and employees sought assurances that their rights would not be affected.

The Head of Housing Services advised that these rights would be protected if a new housing trust agreed to sign up to the SIC pension scheme, but they would not be protected if the new housing trust did not.

Mr W A Ratter moved the recommendations contained in the report with an additional recommendation that it was recommended to a new housing trust that they should join the SIC pension scheme. Mr A J Cluness seconded.

86/01 **Transport for Pupils with Special Needs**

The Chairman advised that this report had been withdrawn from the Agenda.

87/01 **Lease of Properties in Firth**

The Committee considered a report by the Divisional Manager, Housing Management Services.

On the motion of Mr W A Ratter, seconded by Mr L Angus, the Committee approved the recommendations contained in the report.

Mrs M U Colligan moved, as an amendment, that the following additional recommendations be added to the report: -

6.1 - the words 'as indicated in this report' be inserted at the end of the first sentence;

6.2 - that the same set of stringent conditions, as per the previous report on this item, are attached;

6.3 - that the local councillor be kept informed of developments.

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With the consent of his seconder, Mr W A Ratter agreed to incorporate these recommendations into his motion.