

MINUTE

B – PUBLIC

Development Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 23 May 2016 at 11.30 am

Present:

A Cooper	M Burgess
B Fox	R Henderson
F Robertson	G Robinson
A Manson	T Smith
M Stout	A Westlake

Apologies

None

In Attendance (Officers):

N Grant, Director of Development Services
J Belford, Executive Manager - Finance
D Irvine, Executive Manager – Economic Development
A Jamieson, Executive Manager – Housing
C McIntyre, Executive Manager – Audit, Risk and Improvement
I McDiarmid, Executive Manager – Planning
S Keith, Project Manager
W Grant, Project Manager
S Brunton, Team Leader - Legal
L Adamson, Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

G Smith, SIC
V Wishart, SIC

Chair:

Mr A Cooper, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular:

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

None

21/16

Allocation Policy Annual Performance Review

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Housing (HS-02-16-F), which detailed the annual performance review information on the housing allocation quota targets contained in the Council's Allocation Policy for the year 2015/16 and recommendations for the year 2016/17.

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

In response to questions from Members, the Executive Manager – Housing advised that the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for temporary tenancies, which would only be considered as a last resort due to the considerable costs. She advised on the reduction in homeless applicants attributable to the early

intervention and prevention approach, where all options are considered before a situation reaches crises point which can prevent many homeless situations arising.

In terms of the proposed amendment to the Allocation Policy for 2016/17 in terms of the allocations to sheltered properties within a sheltered scheme where there is no demand for sheltered accommodation, the Executive Manager – Housing advised that these would be permanent allocations. She explained that the demand for sheltered housing has changed dramatically as general properties are now much more accessible, and it is better to allocate properties in sheltered housing schemes rather than to have long-term voids, as this makes best use of the housing stock.

In response to a question, the Executive Manager – Housing advised that the Housing Service and Hjaltsland Housing Association actively assist with requests for mutual exchange of properties. She advised however that many successful house exchanges are a result of advertising through social media.

During the discussion, the Executive Manager – Housing agreed to provide in future reporting the number of instances where early intervention has prevented a homeless situation; cases where following assessment of homeless presentations it is concluded that the Council is longer obliged, nor has a duty, to provide accommodation, and on the average length of time taken to re-let properties in low demand areas.

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

Decision:

The Development Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the allocation performance and targets for 2016-17 as detailed in paragraphs 3.11 – 3.14 of the report and approve amendments to the Allocation Policy, as detailed in paragraph 3.15 of the report.

22/16

Development Services Directorate Performance Report: 12 Month/4th Quarter 2015/16

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (DV-29-16-F) which summarised the activity and performance of the Development Service Directorate for the reporting period above.

In introducing the report, the Director of Development Services provided updates on a number of the Projects in Appendix 1, which included the recent announcement of European funding which will allow the Employability Services plan to be delivered. In referring to progress on delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP), currently ranked as Red, he advised on the work being undertaken by the Executive Manager – Planning to resolve the issues in terms of resourcing the Service and for focus on specific areas of work.

In reporting on the Directorate Indicators at Appendix 3, the Director of Development Services referred Members to “GH-05 Average length of time in temporary or emergency accommodation”. He advised that while the numbers are still high, the average length of time in temporary accommodation has reduced. He said that the issue is the availability of housing stock which will be the focus of ongoing work on the Housing Needs and Demands Assessment.

The Director of Development Services advised that the previous quarterly reporting on indicator “GP-01 Average days taken to obtain a building warrant” had been incorrect, and that the correct figure was reported this quarter, which was noted to be slightly higher than that previously reported. In that regard, he advised on the current reorganisation of the Buildings Standards Section, which it is hoped will result in improved reporting going forward.

In response to a question, the Executive Manager – Planning advised that the sites that require a development brief and master plan are already in the LDP. He reported that part of the remit and responsibility of the Planning Service is to deliver on the sites in the LDP, and in that regard the development brief for the Knab Site will be presented to Development Committee in June. A Member commented on the importance to get areas detailed on the master plan included in the LDP, however he said that should these be delayed Supplementary Guidance would cover many aspects of policy in the LDP. A Member questioned the impacts from the delay to progress the LDP, and sought clarity in terms of the completion date. The Director of Development Services gave assurance that the Executive Manager – Planning has a programme of work to ensure the necessary progress is made, and he undertook to advise Members on the proposed completion date of the LDP.

In response to a question, the Executive Manager – Planning advised that any site in the LDP where the landowner has expressed reluctance for a particular site to be developed would be removed from the list of sites in the next LDP. A Member commented on the need for that information to be relayed to the community.

Reference was made to the 30% progress as reported on the project “Working with community partners to establish a network of Community Forums”, where it was questioned whether there was a lack of appetite within the community to establish such a network. The Director of Development Services reported on the work that will take place during the summer in terms of engagement with communities, and while he acknowledged that the limited resources could slow the rate of progress he said that the focus for community engagement was the right approach going forward. In response to a question, the Director of Development Services confirmed that he would advise Members on the completion date for this project.

During the discussion, a suggestion was made to group together Community Councils in the locality areas as a means to achieve the network of Community Forums. The Director of Development Services advised on the difficulties to achieve forums that can work for each area, however he reported that there are a number of pilot projects making meaningful steps where the focus will continue to demonstrate whether that structure works. In response to a further comment, the Director of Development Services undertook to have dialogue with the Community Planning and Development Service in terms of the suggestion made to group together Community Councils in locality areas. A Member referred to recent community engagement where he reported on the lack of responses and that the ability and willingness from within communities to contribute towards community initiatives had been minimal, which he said is confirmation on the need for a change in culture and attitudes in terms of engagement. He stated that the Community Planning and Development Service have a significant task to develop a different means of community engagement while working with limited resources. A Member advised from feedback from some Community Councils that they are being dictated to, rather than listened to, and therefore as the focus is to engage with communities there is a need for their views to be taken onboard.

In referring to the delayed progress on a business case for Shetland Telecom, a Member sought clarification in terms of the risk of failure to meet the target and expressed concern that opportunities could be missed. The Director of Development Services advised that appropriate resources were now in place for Shetland Telecom. He acknowledged the significant delay of the overall plan which will set out the Council's position, however he assured Members that proposals are being developed and a report will be presented to Committees in June. The Director of Development Services advised on SSE's proposals for connections to Yell and Unst and fibre to Unst would be a huge step forward, and he advised that the Shetland Telecom team are in dialogue with SSE. The Leader provided with an update on the recent UK Government announcement on the universal service obligation, and on the lack of progress with the BDUK project where it was noted that there had been no announcement in terms of State Aid compliance, and he advised on the need for the Council to remain focused on superfast broadband. In response to a question, the Director of Development Services gave assurance that the detail in the report in June will be sufficient to agree a position to allow the Council to move forward.

In response to a comment from the Chair, the Director of Development Services acknowledged that the staffing resources for Shetland Telecom may have to be reviewed pending future business opportunities for Shetland Telecom.

During the discussion, reference was made to the priority in the Corporate Plan in terms of improved high speed broadband throughout Shetland, where the Director of Development Services suggested a more focused policy target for the Strategic Business Case for superfast broadband to 100% of public buildings.

In referring to Risk C00026 "Economic Climate – One or more communities fail to be sustainable", the Chair reported on the recent issues relating to the proposals for superfast broadband connectivity to Fair Isle. The Director of Development Services advised on the involvement of Shetland Telecom to enable a solution however he said that procurement and state aid issues had delayed progress. During further discussion, the need for political lobbying on this matter was recognised, and a request was made for a report to Committee in June on the provision of broadband to Fair Isle.

A Member referred to Risk C0027 "Central Government Funding Issues – Provision of Air and Ferry Services.....", where he questioned the "target severity" ranking as 'insignificant' when the issue was a relatively high risk. The Director of Development Services said that he took on board the comment and would review the ranking criteria.

Decision:

The Committee discussed the contents of the report as appropriate to their remit and made relevant comments on progress against priorities to inform further activity within the remainder of this year, and the planning process for next and future years.

In introducing the report, the Executive Manager – Finance reported on the draft outturn position of underspends on revenue and capital and highlighted the main variances as presented in the Appendices to the report. He advised on the carry forward request of £210k, which will be considered by Policy and Resources Committee. The Executive Manager – Finance said that while this was the draft outturn position for the services in this Committee, he did not anticipate any material changes to what will be presented in the draft accounts at the end of June 2016.

In response to a question, Members were provided with further explanation on the variance reported in the Economic Development Service relating to the annual cost of lending to Mareel.

Decision:

The Committee:

- Noted the Management Accounts showing the draft outturn position; and
- Noted the proposed budget carry forwards which will be included in the overall Draft Outturn Report to be presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 24 May 2016.

24/16

Development Committee Business Programme 2016/17

The Committee noted a report by the Team Leader – Administration (GL-22-16-F) which informed of the planned business to be presented to Committee for the remaining quarters of the financial year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 and sought discussion with Officers regarding any changes or additions required to that programme.

Decision:

The Committee noted the planned business for the remaining quarters of the financial year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

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

(Ms Manson declared a non-pecuniary interest as a family member is referred to in the report. Ms Manson remained in the meeting).

25/16

Shetland Investment Portfolio Update

The Committee noted a report by the Project Manager – Economic Development which provided information on the portfolio of local investments and provide noteworthy updates on specific investments.

The Project Manager (S Keith) introduced the report and responded to questions.

Decision:

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

The meeting concluded at 13.05pm.

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Chair