



Shetland Islands Council

Services Committee
04 February 2004 Public Minutes
MINUTE

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**Services Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Wednesday 4 February 2004 at 10.30am**

Present:

F B Grains	L Angus
A J Cluness	C B Eunson
R G Feather	B P Gregson
I J Hawkins	J H Henry
E J Knight	W H Manson
Captain G G Mitchell	J P Nicolson
W A Ratter	F A Robertson
J G Simpson	W N Stove
W Tait	

Apologies:

B J Cheyne	J A Inkster
J C Irvine	

In Attendance (Officers):

J Watt, Executive Director – Community Services
G Smith, Head of Community Development
N Watt, Sport & Leisure Services Manager
N Heubeck, Adult Literacy Development Officer
C Medley, Head of Housing
A Jamieson, Service Manager, Housing Business Support
V Simpson, Senior Housing Officer
R Sim, Education Development Officer
H Tait, Management Accountant
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Chairman:

Mrs F B Grains, Chairperson of the Committee, presided.

Circular:

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Minutes:

The minute of the meeting held on 4 December 2003, having been circulated, was confirmed.

87/03 – Additional Support Needs Base in Anderson High School

A Member drew attention to the above and said that he had recently visited some of the facilities available for those additional support needs, along with the Chairperson and the Convener.

Whilst the new base was welcomed, it would not address the needs of all those in the community who had complex care needs. He went on to say that he hoped that officers would translate the concerns being expressed into action as soon as possible, so that Members could then discuss the situation.

Other Members expressed their support, and reiterated that an early report should be produced.

The Chairperson said that she could assure Members that the issue was being looked at and attended to as quickly as possible. Issues that could be addressed in the short-term were also being considered.

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91/03 – Best Value Service Review Update

A Member requested that officers ensure that the minutes of the MOWG should continue to be circulated to Members, and the Chairperson confirmed that the minutes of the meeting held last week would be circulated to Members shortly.

Attendance at External Meetings:

There was nothing to report.

01/04 **Housing Revenue Estimates (HRA) and Charge Setting – 2004/05**

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

The Head of Housing summarised the main terms of the report and advised that the amount needed to balance the HRA budget, without further raising rent levels, could be met from the Housing Repairs and Renewals (R & R) Fund.

Captain G G Mitchell commented that it was important to note that whilst the amount required this year could be taken from the R & R Fund, this could not be used as a long-term strategy. New legislation would soon be introduced requiring the Council to meet housing standards. It was likely that the Council would be forced back down the road to stock transfer, as they could not borrow money due to the housing debt. If stock transfer did not proceed, it was likely that the Council would be forced to raise rents by a level far beyond inflation. He added that there would be a meeting regarding stock transfer soon.

Captain Mitchell went on to move that the recommendations in the report be approved, and Mr W N Stove seconded.

A Member referred to the figures in Appendix A of the report, and said that he noted that the estimates for income received from rents now exceeded the housing debt charges.

The Head of Housing explained that the figures were a reflection of the current interest rates. The prevalent interest rate could have a dramatic effect on the debt charges.

(Mr W H Manson attended the meeting)

02/04 **Housing Strategies Update**

The Committee considered a report by the Service Manager, Housing Business Support (Appendix 2).

The Head of Housing summarised the main terms of the report, and pointed out that the strategies referred to had attracted £1.3 million of external funding, with a further £800,000 for Supporting People.

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A Member referred to the huge amount of housing legislation that had recently been introduced, and congratulated staff for their work in dealing with this.

In response to a query regarding the funding arrangements for the four Neighbourhood Support Workers, the Head of Housing explained that the Scottish Executive would be funding these posts for a period of two years. After that it would be up to the Council as to whether the posts should continue, and from where the costs should be met.

Some Members expressed concern at the short term funding arrangements for these types of initiatives, and said that it was important that the Council were not committed to funding after the initial funding period had expired.

A Member enquired about the provision of units at Phase 2, Quoys, Lerwick.

The Head of Housing explained that discussions were taking place with Hjaltsland Housing Association regarding the provision of disabled housing units. As this was still at an early stage, there were no figures yet regarding how many would be built.

Some discussion took place as to the appropriate Service within the Council with responsibility for the Neighbourhood Support Workers. Some Members felt that Housing should not be wholly responsible for the provision of Neighbourhood Support Workers, as they would undertake a wide range of roles which were relevant to other Services.

The Head of Housing explained that the Housing Service had been invited to apply for funding on behalf of the Community Planning Board. Whilst Housing had ended up taking the lead, it was intended to be a partnership which the Council and other agencies would develop.

A Member added as a Housing Strategy Group which was composed of various agencies was already in place, it would be easier for this Group to extend its interest to this particular area.

In expressing his concern at the situation regarding longer term funding that may be required from the Housing Service, Mr L Angus moved that the recommendations in the report should be approved subject to the condition that any future funding should be reviewed at an appropriate time. Captain G G Mitchell seconded and the Committee agreed.

03/04

Recommendations Following the Lerwick Town Centre Problem Solving Workshop

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director – Community Services (Appendix 3).

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The Executive Director summarised the main terms of the report and explained that the Committee were being asked to give guidance as to which issues should be raised further. In the meantime, a number of issues raised would be followed up through the Community Safety Partnership.

A Member referred to CCTV trials in Commercial Street, and said that there appeared to be a lot of support for a feasibility study.

Another Member referred to the introduction of an alcohol byelaw, and said that he would like to see the Council taking the lead on resurrecting this issue.

It was pointed out that during earlier discussions on an alcohol byelaw, a number of difficulties had become apparent particularly in relation to the areas involved, the relaxing of the byelaw for specific events, and complications relating to the law for the licensing of street traders. It was also noted that the Licensing Board had powers to refuse licences to licensed premises that were not serving alcohol in a responsible manner.

Another Member commented that he would like to see the Northern Constabulary taking the lead on some of the issues raised following the Workshop. He referred particularly to the presence of more policemen in "trouble" areas.

(Mr W A Ratter left the meeting)

The Chairperson confirmed that these views and comments would be raised at the Community Safety Partnership. It was also pointed out that, following a recent recruitment exercise, the Northern Constabulary hoped to be able to employ up to 17 Special Constables in the near future.

Following on from a suggestion that the Chief Inspector be invited to the next Services Committee meeting to give his views on any points arising, Mr W Tait accordingly moved that the recommendations in the report be approved, with the addition that the Chief Inspector be invited to the next meeting of the Services Committee to give his view on matters that had been raised.

Mr J P Nicolson seconded and the Committee agreed.

(Mr W A Ratter returned to the meeting)

04/04

Zetland Educational Trust

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Education (Appendix 4), and approved the recommendation contained therein on the motion of Mr W A Ratter, seconded by Mr A J Cluness.

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In response to a query, the Executive Director said that she understood that the application of the current funds was very limited. Amendment of the Trust would allow the revenue generated from the fund annually to be spent on general educational purposes.

(Mr L Angus left the meeting)

05/04 **Education Service – Service Improvement Plan**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Education (Appendix 5), and approved the recommendation contained therein on the motion of Mr W H Manson, seconded by Mr J P Nicolson.

In response to a suggestion that the Plan should only be adopted once HM Inspectors had published their comments, it was noted that the draft Plan would only be part of the evidence submitted to them. Therefore they would not be commenting individually on the Service Improvement Plan.

(Mr L Angus returned to the meeting)

Mr L Angus declared a non-financial interest in the following two items.

06/04 **Shetland Council of Social Service – Support Grant**

The Committee considered a report by the Grants Officer (Appendix 6) and approved the recommendations contained therein on the motion of Mr F A Robertson, seconded by Mr B P Gregson.

07/04 **New Shetlander Support Grant**

The Committee considered a report by the Grants Officer (Appendix 7) and approved the recommendations contained therein on the motion of Mr W Tait, seconded by Mr J H Henry.

08/04 **Shetland Adult Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Community Development (Appendix 8).

The Head of Community Development summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting the achievements of the 2001-2004 Action Plan which had consistently been rated “good” or “very good” by the Scottish Executive.

Some discussion took place as to how the Plan could address the needs of young adults with additional support needs.

The Adult Literacy Development Officer explained that the Plan was contributing to the learning needs at the Eric Gray Resource Centre. Resource workers had been funded to undertake training programmes, 12 adults with learning needs were being supported and two volunteer tutors were providing one-to-one support. Due to the complex needs of

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some individuals, the Plan would only be able to address some of these needs. However others were being considered in the context of the disability strategy. In response to a query, she confirmed that it should be possible to meet the anticipated increase in need as new volunteers were being trained and two part-time posts had recently been created.

A Member said that whilst he appreciated the work being carried out, there was still a gap in addressing the needs of young adults once they were beyond the age of 18 as there was no statutory requirement to provide for them. He questioned whether it would be possible to expand the service in order to get extra funding from the Scottish Executive.

It was suggested that funding for these services should come from the Shetland Charitable Trust.

The Committee agreed to a suggestion from the Executive Director that a report on sources for funding for the whole Community Services Department should be presented to the Committee for information.

On the motion of Mr C B Eunson, seconded by Mr L Angus, the Committee approved the recommendations contained therein.

09/04

Design Grant for Community Projects – Shetland Skatepark Association – Development of Skatepark

The Committee considered a report by the Community Learning and Development Officer, Lerwick/Bressay (Appendix 9).

Mr J P Nicolson referred to the temporary site which had not been well used, and said that he felt that this was largely due to the exposed location of the site on the outskirts of Lerwick. He went on to move that the recommendations in the report be approved.

In seconding Mr Nicolson, Mr L Angus commented that the cost of the project appeared to be very high and he requested that every effort was made to keep costs down.

In referring to the poor usage of the temporary site, some Members said that whilst they felt this was largely due to its location, it should be borne in mind that the sport may no longer be regarded as “fashionable” in the future.

Some discussion took place regarding the similar facility in Orkney, and the Head of Community Development said that he should be able to obtain figures on cost and usage. He went on to say that play equipment was very expensive, so this project was not excessive compared to the cost of other play areas. It was hoped to put a range of equipment in to suit all skills, so a wider range of young people should be able to use it.

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Mr J P Nicolson said that, with the consent of his seconder, he wished to amend his motion so that the recommendations were approved, subject to a report regarding cost and usage levels of the similar facility in Orkney.

A Member questioned whether lighting costs had been included in the estimate. He felt that it was important to consider lighting, otherwise usage of the facility would be reduced during the winter.

Another Member pointed out that it was the policy of the Council not to install lighting for play areas.

The Head of Community Development said that he understood that lighting costs were not included in the cost of the project. In response to a query, he also advised that the project was being considered under the guidelines and criteria for New Play Areas, and that there was no separate scheme for Skate Parks. The Skate Park project would not take precedence over other play areas, as it was included in the list of projects that would be dealt with during the current financial year.

10/04 **Shetland Golf Club – Support Grant**

The Committee considered a report by the Sport and Leisure Services Manager (Appendix 10).

The Head of Community Development advised that work was continuing with the Shetland Golf Club to reduce its dependence on grant assistance and to improve their income. If the report were approved, it would be subject to a Service Level Agreement.

Captain G G Mitchell moved that the recommendations be approved, providing that a Service Level Agreement was brought in at an early stage. Mr W N Stove seconded and the Committee agreed.

11/04 **Capital Grant to Voluntary Organisations – Aith Public Hall – Upgrade of Hall**

The Committee considered a report by the Grants Officer (Appendix 11) and on the motion of Mrs F B Grains, seconded by Mr F A Robertson, approved the recommendations contained therein.

12/04 **Capital Grant to Voluntary Organisations – Sandwich Youth and Community Centre – Pitch Remedial Works**

The Committee considered a report by the Grants Officer (Appendix 12) and on the motion of Mr W Tait, seconded by Captain G G Mitchell, approved the recommendations contained therein.

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13/04 **Publication of Information on Complaints: Social Care**

The Committee noted a report by the Chief Social Work Officer (Appendix 13).

In response to a query, the Executive Director explained that it was the responsibility of the Chief Social Work Officer to follow up all complaints.

Members commented that the level of complaints seemed to be low in relation to the large range of services provided.

It was suggested that similar reports for all Council departments should be presented to the Council for information.