

**Special Infrastructure Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Tuesday 3 August 2004 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

J C Irvine L Angus
B J Cheyne A J Cluness
C B Eunson R G Feather
F B Grains L G Groat
I J Hawkins J H Henry
E J Knight W H Manson
Capt G G Mitchell J P Nicolson
W A Ratter J G Simpson
W N Stove T W Stove
W Tait

Apologies:

B P Gregson J A Inkster
F A Robertson

In Attendance (Officers):

M H Goodlad, Chief Executive
G Spall, Executive Director, Infrastructure Services
A J Cooper, Head of Development Resources
G Johnston, Head of Finance
D Haswell, Committee Officer

Chairperson:

Mr J C Irvine, Chairperson of the Committee, presided.

Circular:

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Apologies:

B P Gregson J A Inkster
F A Robertson

46/04 Transport White Paper

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director, Infrastructure Services (Appendix 1).

(Mrs I J Hawkins left the meeting).

In introducing the report, the Chairperson advised that the Council had not received any information regarding the CoSLA Transport Bill Task Group that was being established to consider the Transport Bill. However, both Shetland Islands Council and Orkney Islands Council had requested representation on the Task Group. The Chairperson said that he had received acknowledgements from Mr Tavish Scott, MSP and Mr

Nicol Stephen, Minister for Transport in relation to the issues raised in his correspondence to them.

The Executive Director said that Council Members and Officers had had a meeting with Members and Officers from Orkney Islands Council last week. Orkney Islands Council largely shared the Council's concerns regarding the voting arrangements and requisitioning powers proposed for Regional Transport Partnerships. Shetland Islands Council were taking a more robust stance to the proposals than Orkney Islands Council. However, both Shetland and Orkney Islands Councils had agreed to submit a joint paper (prepared by Orkney Islands Council) to the next meeting of HITRANS on 13 August outlining their concerns.

In response to a question from a Member, Capt G G Mitchell, Transport Spokesperson, provided clarification as to the Council's main concerns regarding the proposals by the Scottish Executive. He said that, at the moment, decisions are made by consensus on HITRANS but if Regional Transport Partnerships were established, the Council could be forced into voting arrangements whereby it was possible that the Council could be outvoted resulting in others being able to impose actions on Shetland. Another area of concern was the financial arrangements. Currently, the Council contributed approximately £10k per annum towards the costs of the administration of HITRANS. If Regional Transport Partnerships were established, it was possible that the Council would have to contribute substantially more. Further, with the possibility for requisitioning, this could result in partnerships being able to draw on Council funds.

(Mrs I J Hawkins returned to the meeting).

A majority of Members felt that the proposals did nothing to mitigate in favour of local island communities and comparison was made to similar previous proposals that had resulted in local authorities losing local control of police, fire and water and sewage services.

In response to questions from a Member, the Executive Director said that obviously, there were costs involved in the establishment of Regional Transport Partnerships but local authorities had not been provided with detailed costs of what they may be expected to contribute. However, a paper setting out indicative costs prepared by the HITRANS Co-ordinator had suggested that the operating costs of a Regional Transport Partnership could be in the region of £2M. The Executive Director continued to say that, as indicated in the report, participation in HITRANS at present was voluntary but the White Paper proposed that participation in formal groups should be mandatory.

With regard to the financial arrangements, the Head of Finance said that there was no doubt that in the past, the Council's experience of being forced into such groups was that this had worked against the Council with

the Council losing local distinction and control. In his view, the proposals caused a very real concern to the Council.

A Member said that the Council should make it clear to the Scottish Executive that there were other more pressing issues that the Executive could be doing to solve the problems on Scotland's transport systems rather than establishing Regional Transport Partnerships.

Capt G G Mitchell moved that the Committee approve recommendations 8.1 (a) – (e) in the report. Mr W Tait seconded.

In response to a comment from a Member that the Council should reinforce its case against the proposals, the Executive Director advised that matters were beyond the consultation stage. However, he confirmed that the Council's position would be reinforced. The Chairperson agreed and advised that the Council would not give up its position.

Mr A J Cluness reminded Members of the Council's policy prior to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament that more powers should be devolved to local authorities. In his view, this policy should be reiterated.

Accordingly, Mr Cluness moved as an amendment that the Committee approve recommendations 8.1 (a) – (c) in the report but that recommendations (d) and (e) be deleted. Mr W A Ratter seconded.

In receiving the consent of his seconder, Capt G G Mitchell agreed to amend his motion in terms of the amendment by Mr Cluness.

CHAIRPERSON