

MINUTE

B - Public

Development Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 21 May 2018 at 2.00pm

Present:

A Cooper	M Burgess
P Campbell	S Coutts
A Duncan	J Fraser
S Leask	A Manson
T Smith	

Apologies

None

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
K Nicolson, Project Manager
W Grant, Project Manager
J Macleod, Performance and Improvement Adviser
P Sutherland, Solicitor
B Kerr, Communications Officer
L Adamson, Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

R McGregor, SIC

Chair:

Mr A Cooper, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular:

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

The Chair ruled, that in accordance with Section 43 (2) of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the attendance of Councillor Mark Burgess during the proceedings be permitted by telephone link.

Declarations of Interest

None

15/18 Development Directorate Performance Report 2017/18

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (DV-17-18-F), which enabled Members to analyse the Development Directorate performance against the Directorate's Service objectives and the Corporate Plan outcomes.

In introducing the report, the Director of Development Services highlighted a number of achievements, work in progress and key areas of risk, as detailed in Section 4. In reporting on the Performance Indicators at Appendix 2, his update included the noted increase in the average number of days in temporary/emergency accommodation. He said that while housing completions have continued to increase this was an area that required to be addressed though increased house builds going forward. In that regard, he referred to the statistic in the Infographic at Appendix D, that there were 103 new house builds during 2017/18, including 63 private and 40 affordable, which he said were quite widespread across Shetland.

In referring to the final bullet point of Section 4.2 “influence changes to our external transport systems that meet our economic growth needs”, concern was expressed in regard to the Government’s proposal, as part of the Brexit plans, to ban the shipment of livestock for slaughter and on the serious impact this could have on Shetland’s agricultural industry. The Director of Development Services confirmed that he would follow up on this matter.

In response to a question, the Director of Development Services advised on proposals to progress the College Integration through the business case methodology with funding from external funding partners, which he confirmed is a priority area for the Council.

Reference was made to Section 6.7 of the report, namely, “limitations of the Shetland wide Broadband and Mobile networks impact on delivery of services”, where comment was made that improvements in this area, and in particular to rural communities, could bring about massive savings to the IJB budgets. The Director of Development Services reported on the proposals to connect to Yell and Unst, with a further application being submitted to the UK Government Challenge Fund, and for pressure to be kept on the Scottish Government in terms of their R100 Programme. During the discussion, comment was made on the need for the Council to respond to the commercial aspects to achieve high speed broadband coverage.

In referring to the Council wide indicator on sickness absence, at Appendix B, it was noted that most Directorates show an increase in absence rates during 2017/2018. While it was acknowledged that the Council takes sickness absence seriously, it was questioned what more could be done to alter the trend. The Director of Development Services said that while sickness absence within the Development Directorate has improved over the last four years, he said that long-term absences can have a significant impact on the figures. He went on to say that as long-term absences were often not easy to manage, work to prevent absences and working to resolve any issues were important areas of focus.

In responding to a question relating to the replacement of the inter-island ferries, the Director of Development Services advised that an outline business case was being developed for each of the 9 inter-island routes, and discussions are taking place with Transport Scotland and with the Scottish Government in terms of commitment for revenue and capital funding. The Director of Development Services confirmed that Fair Isle and Whalsay were the two priority routes.

In referring to the recent revision to the bus transport network, the Committee were advised that the updated timetables no longer fit the existing timetable holders in the bus shelters. The Director of Development Services said that he would follow up with the Executive Manager – Transport Planning to ensure timetables are appropriately displayed within the bus shelters.

Decision:

The Committee NOTED the report.

16/18 Management Accounts for Development Committee 2017/18 - Draft Outturn at Quarter 4

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Finance (F-36-18-F), which enabled the Committee to review the Management Accounts showing the projected outturn at Quarter 4.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report and the appendices.

In responding to a question, the Executive Manager – Finance undertook to circulate to Members information on the costs to the Council to repair Council houses that have deliberately been damaged by tenants.

The Committee NOTED the report.

Decision:

The Committee:

- NOTED the Management Accounts showing the draft outturn position for 2017/18; and
- NOTED proposed budget carry-forwards, which will be included in the overall Draft Outturn report to be presented for approval at Policy & Resources Committee on 18 June 2018.

17/18 Shetland Space Centre - Update

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (DV-22-18-F), which provided an update on the activity and progress of the Shetland Space Centre project.

The Director of Development Services summarised the main terms of the report. He reported that the economic opportunities were quite significant and said that while the timescales are tight the Council needs to consider how to engage in the project.

During the discussion, it was reported that while Caithness and the Western Isles were also being considered as possible locations for the satellite launch facility, Shetland, and Unst in particular, would offer the cleanest launch capacity into orbit and for tracking data on satellites, and was at this time the preferred location. In that regard, the Committee were advised that the announcement on the preferred site was expected on 12 June.

In response to comments that good broadband connectivity was vital for the project in Unst, the Executive Manager – Economic Development advised that there were clear plans to implement a fibre optic link to the north isles, with various options to be considered and decisions to be made. It was however acknowledged that two distinct

resilient fibre routes would be required for the project, where R100, Shetland Telecom and a commercial approach could be involved.

During the discussion, reference was made to Section 4.8 of the report, where it was questioned whether the Satellite Launch project could meet the challenging launch date of early 2020. The Director of Development Services acknowledged that the whole programme was tight in terms of getting various legislation and policies in place and decisions made. He advised however that the business case was sound, and he was optimistic that the Council would be successful on the second round of bids for external funding for fibre to Unst and Yell.

In response to questions, the Chair confirmed that officers would act quickly in responding to any approach from commercial interests in broadband provision to Unst and Yell. In terms of the tight timescale should Unst be selected as the preferred location, the Chair advised that should any factor of the project require a decision of Committee in early course a special Development Committee could be called.

On the motion of Mr Coutts, seconded by Mr Leask, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

Decision:

The Committee:

- NOTED the report; and
- INSTRUCTED the Director of Development Services (or his nominee) to provide a report to a future Committee which details how the Council should engage with the Shetland Space Centre (SSC) in its planned delivery of satellite launch and satellite tracking facilities in Unst.

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

(Mrs Manson declared an interest in the following item).

18/18 Shetland Investment Fund - Investment Activity 2017/18

The Committee considered a report by the Business Development Project Managers, which presented a summary of Council investments in local businesses over the reporting period from 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018.

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

Reference was made to the low uptake of economic development grant schemes and whether the existing schemes and policy meets the needs of industry. The Executive Manager – Economic Development advised that a report on the Economic Development Policy Strategy to Committee in June 2018 would include proposals for economic development grant schemes going forward.

Decision:

The Committee NOTED the report and appendix.

The meeting concluded at 3pm.

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Chair