



Council

**Shetland
Islands**

MINUTE & 'B'

'A'

**Services Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Thursday 31 August 2006 at 10.30am**

Present:

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

Apologies:

L Angus	B J Cheyne
E J Knight	W A Ratter
F A Robertson	

In Attendance:

B Doughty, Executive Director, Education and Social Care
H Budge, Head of School Service
S Crook, Library and Information Services Manager
G Smith, Head of Community Services
E Patt, Capital Projects Manager
M Duncan, Grants Co-ordinator
N Watt, Sport and Leisure Services Manager
I Millar, Projects Manager, Finance
A Cogle, Service Manager - Administration
L Gair, Committee Officer

Chairperson

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 15 June 2006, having been circulated, was confirmed.

Members' Attendance at External Meetings

There was nothing to report.

The Committee considered a report by the Library and Information Services Manager (Appendix 1).

The Library and Information Services Manager introduced the report explaining that it revisits the feasibility study carried out 5 years ago. The new study has been carried out under 2 significant climate changes which are: access to a wider range of management information; and a less favourable financial climate. With concerns in local uptake set against the revenue costs, the Library and Information Service Manager recommended that the project should not proceed.

Mrs I J Hawkins said that this is an ongoing debate and she questioned the level of support that the Scalloway Community had received from the Shetland Islands Council in contrast to the support received from the Private Sector, in recent years. She explained that most of the public questioned preferred a local branch under Option B with 22.5 opening hours and a £36,000 revenue spend. Of the 800 residents, 350 users benefit from the current facilities and there were 340 respondents to the questionnaires. Mrs Hawkins was of the opinion that it proved her point that the number going to Lerwick would like to see a Library in Scalloway. She added that consideration had been given to the public using the educational facilities in the school and the North Atlantic Fisheries college, however there were problems with security and safety of pupils due to the location of the libraries within the buildings. Mrs Hawkins said that the preferred site is next to the Youth Centre and the new crèche opening across the road would also benefit from this facility, and others to benefit are the residents of the new and ongoing Hjaltland developments. Mrs Hawkins moved that the Committee recommend to the Council that the Scalloway Library retain its position in the Capital Programme, and that it be planned as part of an extension to the Scalloway Youth Centre. This motion was seconded by Mr L G Groat.

Mr J P Nicolson disputed the comment made with regard to the Council's support of Scalloway and its residents, considering the works carried out on the Pier, the North Atlantic Fisheries College, the School and Swimming pool. Mr W Tait agreed with this and was of the opinion that a library would be an over provision in light of the possibility of a new library in Lerwick, which is to be considered in terms of providing a facility for the whole of Shetland.

Mr W H Manson was of the opinion that it is always difficult to argue against something that people want and any decision puts pressure on the revenue budget. He acknowledged that this project had been on the Capital Programme for some time however it now calls for an increase on a programme which is already under pressure from projects that are statutory requirements. Mr Manson was also of the opinion that expending a fraction of the Capital Programme on relocating the libraries within the educational buildings, in order to make them suitable for public use, would be a possible alternative. Mr

Manson moved as an amendment that the Committee accept the recommendations in the report. Mr W N Stove seconded.

Mr J A Inkster was of the opinion that this was a thorough report and doubted the demand for a library in Scalloway. He went on to say that when Saga Seafoods closed, Mrs Hawkins worked to regenerate Scalloway and said that Burra and Trondra were also affected but he did not find that Mrs Hawkins took a corporate view at that time. In his opinion he saw no demand for this facility based on Scalloway's needs alone.

Mr J C Irvine was of the opinion that this provision was not necessary and was in favour of the recommendations of the report.

After summing up, voting took place by a show of hands and the result was as follows:

Amendment (Mr W H Manson)	13
Motion (Mrs I J Hawkins)	4

53/06

School Estate Management

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 2).

The Head of Schools introduced the report and asked that the members recommend to the Council that the Examination of the Shetland Islands Council's Best Value Education Service Review be used as a framework for the evaluation of the School Estate Management.

Mr B P Gregson drew attention to paragraph 1.6, where capital projects such as AHS and Mid Yell may be impacted upon, and asked if the recommendations by Dr N Galbraith (former Interim Head of Education) in October-December were no longer the case, he wondered what else was wrong with his report. He went on to say that there were major events in recent years for Unst and with the proposal to take the heart out of the community, by removing the secondary school and combining the primary schools, had put the community into chaos. He said that Unst's population has dropped by 50% with the most of that happening in the last 12 months. Mr Gregson was of the opinion that the whole review of best value was flawed and that the "Value" is on nothing but money. He felt that there were no demonstrable educational grounds to remove the Mid Yell Junior High School from the Capital programme. Mr Gregson said that what makes Shetland an attractive place for new families and therefore regenerates communities is firstly low unemployment and high earnings and secondly small schools, small classes, and high performance and not the closing of schools.

In response, the Executive Director, Education and Social Care explained that Appendix A sets out what areas the School Service will be evaluating and said that there will be ongoing evaluations of the whole estate. What is being proposed is a comprehensive framework

and building on Dr Galbraith's report. The Committee will be consulted and informed.

Mr W N Stove followed up on Mr Gregson concerns and asked that the Committee be provided with timescales for evaluations to take place, as agreed in the report presented to this Committee on 15 June 2006. The Head of Schools agreed to provide these timescales. It was also mentioned that the HMI consider that a school with less than 60% occupancy has to be reviewed.

Mr J P Nicolson agreed with Mr Gregson and asked that paragraph 1.6 on page 2 be elaborated upon, there had been vague discussion so far on cost and it was time to come clean on what is meant by "value" and whether that is cost or educational value.

Mrs F B Grains made the point that Dr Galbraith's report noted it was feasible to look at Baltasound Secondary moving to Mid Yell if there was a fixed link in place, but there is no fixed link. She also said that this was for a well-rounded review which was not based on cost or education alone.

Mr W H Manson said that as Dr Galbraith was not here to speak for his report, it was unfair to say that it was wrong. On Mr Gregson's point that there were no clear demonstrable educational grounds, Mr Manson's opinion was that even with school amalgamations, the classes are still small by national standards. Mr Manson said he would like to see timescales submitted to Council on 13 September 2006. He said that this report is talking of reviews and is not a predetermination of closures.

Mr J G Simpson said that he had been in the same situation in Skerries which was an anxious time for the community, but they stayed and worked hard to get the factory working again.

Mrs I J Hawkins also backed Mr Gregson stating that she couldn't believe that it was only 2 years on and this was in front of the communities again.

Mr L G Groat explained that last time he had changed his view following consultation with the people of Skerries. He was of the opinion that Members should not leave it solely to the Member for the area to put forward the arguments but that Members should go and see for themselves. He believed in Mr Gregson and Mr Simpson's support of the communities. Mr Groat explained that he had been convinced that Skerries School would be closed and felt that a final decision could not be made without seeing for themselves at the same time as carrying on the process.

Mr A J Cluness was of the opinion that a framework of some kind is necessary, stating that it is inevitable that schools close when the population goes down. He was also of the opinion that the Shetland

Islands Council is the only body doing anything, whilst the Scottish Executive stand by and do nothing. He said that the Council will be there for the people of Unst and agreed with Mr Gregson with regard to the need to build up the population of Unst to ensure there are viable schools. Mr Cluness also took up Mr Groat's point on visiting the areas, and recalled two visits when Haroldswick and Quarff were threatened, and these schools were saved only to have the parents seek closure at a later date.

Mr Nicolson acknowledged that there is a consideration of cost and reminded Members of the review by Head of Finance which showed that there were significant growth in the Education costs, but single teacher primary school costs remained static. He went on to the point made by Mr Cluness regarding Quarff and Haroldswick, stating that parents will look at all the points and make decisions for themselves, stating that when Members deal with the issues it hardens opinion rather than decisions happening naturally.

Mr W Tait hoped that this report would be backed stating that no one had anything to fear. He was of the opinion that there is not a need for 2 primary schools in Unst suggesting that it would be better for a community to have one school where all the children can be together.

Mr Manson moved the recommendations in the report with the inclusion of timescales to be presented to the Council on 13 September 2006, and accepted that there should be Member involvement as requested by Mr Groat. Mr Stove seconded.

Mr Simpson asked for clarification on whether the same points system is to be used; if the second last paragraph in Appendix A be amended to read "the local Councillor for the area involved"; and that Skerries is the only school that had a closing date and he asked if it was still to close in August 2007.

Mrs Grains pointed out to the Committee that the recommendations of this report was to agree a framework to give the Head of Schools a way forward and that this was not a consultation on closing schools.

The Head of Schools confirmed firstly that there was no points system being used and the schools would be looked at individually. Secondly the amendment would be made to change the word "informed" to "involved" and lastly explained that a report would be presented to the next full Council on all timescales.

Captain G G Mitchell sympathised and stated that the public are extremely worried at the huge cost of the Education service and was of the opinion that the Education Service should look at the budget and spend, which wouldn't be possible without a framework.

Mr Gregson asked what the cost of the Best Value Review was in time and real money and what the costs of the next review are expected to

be. Mr Gregson acknowledged the work being done in the regeneration of Unst. He explained that local agencies were working hard on the regeneration of Saxa Vord and asked what message was being given by putting pressure on communities to close schools. Mrs Grains confirmed that the former Head of Education provided figures for the cost of the Best Value Review. Mr Gregson asked what the next review would cost and the amount of hours and paper would be and asked if it was necessary to go through it all again. Mr Gregson moved as an amendment that the Committee approve the recommendations with the inclusion of a paragraph 6.5 stating that the timetable proposed for the alterations in Unst be delayed for 5 years. He requested it be put at the back of the timetable in order to see what the population of Unst is at that time. This, however, received no seconder.

Mr Simpson moved as an amendment, that the Committee throw the report out. Mrs Hawkins seconded.

After summing up, voting took place by a show of hands, and the result was as follows:

Amendment (Mr J G Simpson)	5
Motion (Mr W H Manson)	11

54/06 **Extension and Refurbishment of Cunningsburgh Public Hall**

The Committee considered a report by the Grants Co-ordinator (Appendix 3) and on the motion of Mr T W Stove and seconded by Mr W Tait, approved the recommendations contained therein.

Mr T W Stove asked that members note a change under 5.1 of the report stating that reference to "Sandwick and Cunningsburgh Community Council" should read "Gulberwick, Quarff and Cunningsburgh Community Council".

55/06 **Shetland Golf Club – Service Level Agreement**

The Committee noted a report by the Sport and Leisure Manager (Appendix 4) and commended the work that had been done and the increase in memberships, particularly at Junior level.

56/06 **Publication of Information on Complaints: Social Work**

The Committee noted a report by the Chief Social Work Officer (Appendix 5) and the Executive Director, Education and Social Care explained that it is now a statutory requirement for Social Work to produce a report on Complaints received.

57/06 **Note of Social Forum – 12 June 2006**

The Committee noted the aforementioned minutes (Appendix 6).

58/06 **Note of Social Forum – 10 August 2006**

The Committee noted the aforementioned minutes (Appendix 7).

Services Committee
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F B Grains
Chairperson