

## **MINUTE**

**‘A’ & ‘B’**

**Services Committee**  
**Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick**  
**Thursday 21 June 2007 at 10.00am**

**Present:**

L Angus	L F Baisley
J Budge	A J Cluness
A T J Cooper	A G L Duncan
C B Eunson	E J Fullerton
F B Grains	I J Hawkins
R S Henderson	J H Henry
A J Hughson	W H Manson
C H J Miller	R C Nickerson
F A Robertson	G Robinson
J G Simpson	C L Smith
A S Wishart	

**Apologies:**

A J Cluness

**In Attendance:**

H Sutherland, Executive Director – Education & Social Care  
H Budge, Head of Schools  
B Doughty, Chief Social Work Officer  
C Ferguson, Head of Community Care  
M Finnie, Capital Programme Service Manager  
C Medley, Head of Housing & Capital Programmes  
C Nicolson, Senior Capital Projects Manager  
J Thomason, Senior Assistant Accountant  
H Watkins, Child Protection Co-ordinator  
L Geddes, Committee Officer

**Chairperson**

Mr L Angus, Chairperson of the Committee, presided.

**Circular**

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

**Minutes**

The minute of the meeting held on 14 March 2007, having been circulated, was confirmed.

**Members' Attendance at External Meetings**

There was nothing to report.

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The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director - Education and Social Care (Appendix 1).

The Chairperson advised that Appendix 2 of the report contained a first draft of a proposed four-year plan for the Services Committee. He proposed that Members firstly consider this draft plan and add any amendments in order that an action plan could be drawn up to feed into the service planning and budgeting processes. He went on to emphasise that it was important that all papers on today's agenda were taken in the context of this report, as it would be helping to establish future policy.

Discussion then took place in relation to each of the headings in Appendix 2, as follows:

### Community Care

The Chairperson highlighted the compelling case for service design in the face of increasing needs-led demand and population projections, and said that it was important that the agenda was driven by the needs of Shetland. He added that consideration was currently being given to the transfer of sheltered housing to the Social Care service, as Members had felt that this was an asset that was currently underused.

In response to comments from Members, the Chairperson confirmed that supported housing would be included in the review, and the different rates of pay for social care and domestic duties would also further examined. It was also emphasised that there was a need for a staffing strategy for community care, given the existing problems with recruitment and retention and the potential for the situation to be exacerbated in the future.

Some Members advised that they had recently received representations regarding a letter sent to care at home clients advising that the Service was currently unable to meet demand and therefore having to prioritise its workload. The Executive Director confirmed that, in this particular instance, the problem related to human resources rather than financial resources, as the Service had been unable to recruit and retain sufficient staff.

### Education

The Chairperson referred to the anticipated reduction in the school population, and said that it was important to determine what this would mean for the Service. Maintenance of the excellent education standards was vital, and development of centres of excellence would build on the existing high quality facilities.

It was suggested that a strategy should also be considered in relation to continuing education in more rural areas, and that this would also relate to developing centres of excellence.

### Housing

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The Chairperson referred to the two main challenges facing housing – the increasing waiting list and the outstanding housing debt – and said that he had had some discussions with the Heads of Housing and Finance as to how to address these issues. He had also advised he had asked the Vice-Chairperson to take the lead on means of addressing the outstanding housing debt.

Members commented on the large number of representations received from their constituents relating to housing matters, and said that they would appreciate guidance from officials as to how to deal with these queries. The Chairperson agreed that the Head of Housing should be asked to make arrangements for his staff to carry out a briefing for Members.

It was pointed out that it was important to bear in mind there were a range of ways to help people help themselves to access housing. It was also noted that housing should not be looked at in isolation. As well as forming an important part of community care, housing availability contributed to the economic development of rural areas, and it was felt that it was vital consider wider distribution of planned social housing.

### Children's Services

The Chairperson said that it was hoped to further develop children's services, and he advised that Shetland Childcare Partnership were currently addressing issues relating to accessing day nursery care.

Some Members commented that whilst it stated that Shetland Childcare Partnership was well placed to co-ordinate the development of affordable models of childcare, they felt that this was not necessarily that case, and that Members were not always well placed regarding what was going on in their areas. It was felt that Shetland Childcare Partnership could only push childcare ahead if more finance was made available and they agreed to the Chairperson's suggestion that this paragraph should be amended to read "The Shetland Childcare Partnership is well place, *properly resourced*, to co-ordinate the essential redesign...."

### Community Learning and Development

The Chairperson advised that work had already commenced on the redesign of this Service, and that Members had already passed on a number of suggestions including that there should be more synergy with Shetland Recreational Trust and the voluntary sector. It was also suggested that reference should be made to the synergies with the Shetland Economic Development Trust and the local enterprise company.

It was pointed out that local learning centres were potentially in a vulnerable position, but that they provided a vital service to the communities. Including the local learning centres in the review would also provide an opportunity to look at job dispersal to more rural areas.

### Shetland College and Train Shetland

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The Chairperson said that he was reassured that both were now in a more stable position than in the past.

Members felt that reference should also be made to links with local industries, and the possibility of considering a new college building as a long-term aspiration was also suggested.

It was pointed out that the North Atlantic Marine Centre did not come under the remit of the Services Committee, but that there were some synergies, and that it was important that everything was taken into consideration when developing Centres of Excellence.

### Deprivation

The Chairperson referred to the recent study that had taken place and said that it was important to identify the levels and extent of deprivation and determine an appropriate response.

Members pointed out that it was important to consider wider factors, such as those relating to infrastructure and fuel poverty, which could affect the ability of people to access services and employment.

Members commented that the current formulae used by the Scottish Executive to collect data on deprivation which ultimately triggered grant payments did not recognise pockets of deprivation such as those that occurred in rural areas. Therefore it was important to keep emphasising this in discussions with the Scottish Executive.

It was suggested that it would be useful to carry out a Shetland-wide survey, and it was agreed that it was also be useful for the previous study to be to be circulated to Members who did not have a copy.

(Mr W H Manson left the meeting)

### Community Safety

The Chairperson pointed out that alcohol and drug abuse in Shetland was an area of real concern. The Shetland Alcohol and Drugs Action Team (SADAT) was currently developing a strategy and service plan which included NHS Shetland, the SIC, the voluntary sector and the police and it was hoped this would give guidance as to how to proceed.

(Mr W H Manson returned to the meeting)

Mrs E J Fullerton advised Members noted that a new campaign – “Drink Better” – was being launched at the Johnsmas Foy. It was based on a successful Canadian model and she urged Members to support this campaign.

In response to queries, the Chief Social Work Officer advised that there were a number of funding streams attached to work on alcohol and drug abuse,

but that SADAT was the overarching strategic body guiding work within Shetland.

Members commented that it was also important to include anti-social behaviour under the banner of community safety, and it was also felt that there were links with road safety.

#### Research Based Decision Making

Members commented that they were pleased to see this included and that it should be extended to other areas as it was vital to get good quality intelligence to inform decision-making.

A Member commented that she would like to see a study done on how many students come back to Shetland to stay after completing their studies on the mainland.

#### Staff

The Chairperson said it was important to recognise that staff were the Council's principal asset. The difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in some areas had already been flagged up, and this would require to be looked at in some detail.

Members commented that it was sometimes difficult for people considering a career change to get a route into the caring profession. It was also felt that the statutory training for some posts could act as a disincentive, as could the hours involved.

The Chief Social Work Officer said many different avenues were being explored in relation to recruitment, but that the biggest challenge in relation to staffing was population change. He suggested that developing a comprehensive workforce strategy should be a key part of the work of the Committee. In response to a further query regarding recruiting workers from the EU, the Chief Social Work Officer said that some consideration was currently being given to recruiting domestic staff from the EU, and different models could be developed from that.

(Mr R C Nickerson left the meeting)

The Chairperson said that he felt that it was important to issue a statement of support to staff saying that Members recognised the pressures they faced and were intending to develop strategies to support them.

(Mr R C Nickerson returned to the meeting)

Members then went on to discuss the remainder of the report. The Chairperson referred to the recommendations and said that he did not think the Committee was yet in a position to make the suggested nominations. It was also important to determine exactly what was expected of Members and

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develop a proper role for them, and Members also needed time to consider who they wished to represent the various areas. He therefore proposed that the suggested nominations should be left to the next meeting of the Committee.

Members agreed and said that they felt it was important to define Members' roles on groups very clearly so that they were attached to groups but not always necessarily part of them.

In response to comments regarding the review of schools, the Chairperson reiterated that everything in the accompanying reports on today's agenda should be taken in the context of the strategy document being discussed; therefore it would be inappropriate to single out Scalloway School for a review commencing in September. However the work on Sandness and Skerries school had already been carried out so Members should be briefed on this.

A Member referred to paragraph 5.10 and pointed out that previously the Chairperson of the Services Committee and the Education Spokesperson were part of the review teams, not the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Services Committee.

The Chairperson went on to refer to the recommendations and moved that recommendations 9.1(a) and 9.1(b) be approved; that in respect of recommendation 9.1(c)iv, the Members for the areas including Skerries and Sandness should be included in the review groups; and that all the other nominations referred to in 9.1(c) should be deferred meantime.

Mrs I J Hawkins seconded and the Committee agreed.

22/07

### **Recruitment of Temporary Additional Staff**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Housing & Capital Programmes (Appendix 2) and approved the recommendations contained therein on the motion of Mrs E J Fullerton, seconded by Mrs I J Hawkins.

In response to a query, the Head of Housing & Capital Programmes advised that to an extent an exit strategy had been devised in that policies and procedures were currently being developed to assist with the staff workload, and this should be completed in the next year. However this was against a background of future further changes to legislation that may again influence workloads.

23/07

### **Joint Future Extended Local Partnership Agreement (ELPA) and Community Care Plan 2007-2010**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Community Care (Appendix 3) and approved the recommendation contained therein on the motion of Mr C B Eunson, seconded by Mr W H Manson.

(Mr A S Wishart left the meeting)

24/07      **Shetland Child Protection Committee Annual Report and Business Plan**

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Social Work Officer and the Chair of the Shetland Child Protection Committee (Appendix 4).

After hearing the Chief Social Work Officer summarise the main terms of the report, Mr W H Manson moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report, and Mr G Robinson seconded.

25/07      **Enabling Report – Proposed Transfer of Catering and Cleaning Service**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 5).

(Mr A S Wishart returned to the meeting)

The Head of Schools summarised the main terms of the report and advised that initial consultation demonstrated that key members of staff and the unions were generally in agreement with the proposals. In response to queries, she advised that the arrangement would be considered as part of devolved school management in that the finance would go directly to the school, however the report had not gone into any level of detail at this stage regarding the financial arrangements. She did not feel that there would be any significant burden on the workload of Head Teachers as, in most instances, they would just be responsible for directly line managing one additional member of staff. She also confirmed that currently most of the produce used in schools was ordered through a central service, however there could be benefits from using local produce. Some schools were also still responsible for producing food for the 'Meals on Wheels' service, and this would have to be explored as part of the wider consultation.

On the motion of Mr W H Manson, seconded by Mrs I J Hawkins, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

26/07      **Anderson High School – Design & Procurement Process Update**

The Committee noted a report by the Head of Housing & Capital Programmes (Appendix 6).

The Head of Housing and Capital Programmes summarised the main terms of the report, advising that six contractors had now been shortlisted. It was hoped to narrow this down to one and then the process of negotiation could begin with the contractor to see if savings could be made on the contract.

Members enquired at what stage it would no longer be possible to consider the Clickimin site as an option, and questioned why there had been such a massive increase in the cost projections.

The Head of Housing and Capital Programmes said that the Council had agreed the building should be sited at the Knab, and that was the basis on which the project was proceeding. However he did not want to arrive at a position where the construction phase was ready to commence, then another

site was chosen. As well as causing inevitable delays, this would incur costs to the Council. He confirmed that it would only be possible to arrive at a cost for the project when detailed negotiations had commenced with the contractor, and this would be reported to the Council. Whilst Members could consider a different site at any point, he cautioned that any time from now on would have a cost implication, and there was a risk that the Council would go through this process just to arrive at the same conclusion.

He also confirmed that the initial cost estimate had been based on a PFI school of a similar design that had been built on the mainland. As the design process had progressed, the cost implications for a building locally had become clearer. The design process was based on the concept of a horseshoe shaped building, and he felt that it would stand up to weather pressures and possibly lend itself to cheaper construction. However if the contractors came up with alternatives that would reduce the cost, this would be explored and presented to Members. He went on to say that proportionally the costs of a new Anderson High School were no higher than previous projects. For example, the new museum and archives building had cost £11million, and the new Anderson High School was five times the size of this building. However he agreed that the initial estimates had been flawed, and this had been reported to the Council earlier. He advised that he could make the relevant reports available for Members who had not seen them.

Members expressed concern that whilst a new Anderson High School had been a priority for the Council for many years, it had yet to commence. Some Members spoke in favour of the chosen site and design and said that the project should go ahead there, particularly as staff and pupils had been consulted during the design stage and were happy with the location and design. Other Members felt that they would want to be reassured that the building would stand up to the weather pressures, and that traffic management procedures had been considered. Some Members reiterated the importance of trying to reduce the costs, and pointed out that the Clickimin site had only been discounted at the time, as the costs were believed to be excessive whilst they were now actually less than the projected cost for the Knab site.

In response to a query, the Head of Schools advised that she could arrange for information regarding the annual maintenance costs for the Anderson High School to be distributed to Members.

The Chairman advised that Members would have the opportunity to have a full debate when the Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) stage had been completed and a further report would be presented to the Council.

**Vocational Pathways Programme – Partnership Agreement**

The Committee noted a report by the Director, Shetland College and the Head of Schools (Appendix 7).



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28/07 **Minutes of Shetland College Board of Management – 14 June 2007**

The Committee noted the minute of the above meeting (Appendix 8).

29/07 **Financial Aspects of the School Service**

The Committee noted a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 9).

Members expressed dissatisfaction at the late delivery of this report which had resulted in them having little time to absorb the information, and carry out any consultation. It was suggested that the Chief Executive should carry out a review of the whole agenda management system.

Mr J G Simpson queried the accuracy of the figures in relation to Skerries School, and said that he felt that the costs relating to the secondary department were inflated and had not taken a number of things into consideration. The Chairperson agreed to his request that the Head of Schools double-check the figures, and present them to the Committee again.

In response to a query, the Head of Schools confirmed that the Head Teachers of the schools had been involved in the preparation of the figures, and she also confirmed that the figures did not include transport.

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L Angus  
Chairperson