

Clerk's Handbook

Section 5 - Agenda Management

Agendas

Notices or agendas for meetings of the Community Council should be circulated and be made available to the public a minimum of 5 days before the day of the meeting.

Notices should be displayed in a prominent place within the Community Council area, such as shops, post offices, Council or community work offices. Websites should be used where possible, and BBC Radio Shetland should be advised.

The agenda may contain additional information as to refreshments, access arrangements, smoking and any other appropriate information about the meeting.

The content of agendas will need to reflect any requirements of the standing orders which may include specific items and the order of them. It is sensible to adopt a standard style, by use of different fonts, underlining and line breaks to improve the image and ease of reading of the document.

The agenda should have the name of the Community Council at the top, using the style that the Community Council has agreed. This may be in the form of a logo or include a pictorial logo or, where applicable, adopted emblem. It is a practical marketing and image tool for community councils to adopt a house style and format that is then used in all official and formal documents. If a colour version is chosen, it is sensible to have a black and white version for economy use.

It might be appropriate to include some notes prior to the agenda items, where this could be helpful to the public. Notes might include the fact that smoking is prohibited and that members of the public will only be permitted to speak at the discretion of the chair.

It is obviously important that copies of the agenda are available for the public attending meetings.

Agenda items should be numbered consecutively for ease of reference.

Constitution Section 6.4:

“Notices calling any meetings of the Community Council and of any committees of the Community Council, specifying the items of business to be discussed, will be sent to Shetland Islands Council and each member of the Community Council, not less than 5 (five) days (including weekend days) before the day of any such meeting. A copy will also be displayed in a prominent place in the Community Council area at least 5 (five) days (including weekend days) before the date of the meeting referred to in the notice. In the event of a meeting having to be called at shorter notice, the public notice shall be displayed as soon as practicable.”

Minutes - Content

The minutes are a public record of the decisions of the Community Council and considerable care should be taken in their format and production.

As with agendas, minutes should be produced in a clear house style with a clear heading containing the status of the meeting, the place and date. It is good practice to indicate the time of commencement and conclusion of the meeting and any adjournments.

The list of those present should be categorized into elected members, ex officio members, additional co-opted members, Clerk, and those invited to attend. Names of any members of the public should not be listed, nor should any media representatives, unless they are invited to take part in the meeting by the Chair.

Each topic considered by the Community Council should be numbered consecutively as a minute item for ease of reference.

Each minute item should contain a heading clearly indicating what the item is about, a narrative, where appropriate, that briefly summarises what took place, and the decision. For many routine items, for example, planning applications, a narrative will not be necessary.

The narrative should be in the past tense and should include reference to any written reports submitted. The narrative should be in plain English using full sentences and appropriate grammar. It is not necessary to refer to individual speakers unless this is significant. It may be appropriate to record the fact of an applicant and an objector addressing the Community Council or the clerk, or perhaps an officer of the local authority reporting on a matter. The narrative might summarise points raised in debate on a sensitive matter. This can be done by bullet points. Abbreviations should be avoided and acronyms only used after having put the title in full at the first mention. The decision should be separately highlighted for ease of identification. The wording of the decision should be included in full.

The order of minutes will normally follow the order of the agenda.

Declarations of interest must be carefully recorded in the minutes, naming the member, clearly indicating which item the interest referred to, giving the nature of the interest and, if appropriate, recording that the member left the meeting during discussion and decision of the item.

Decisions to exclude the press and public should be fully recorded in the minutes, making it clear which matter or part of it the exclusion applied to.

Minutes - Production

The Clerk should provide a draft of the minutes to the chair of the meeting. This is an opportunity for picking up any mistakes in the content of the minutes and is not to be used by the chair as a means of re-writing the minutes.

It is good practice to produce minutes as quickly as possible after the meeting in order to circulate them to members no later than 10 working days after the meeting.

Within 21 days of the meeting, copies of the minutes must be displayed in places accessible to the public and remain there for not less than 14 days. It is good practice to display minutes in the same location that the agenda was displayed.

A copy of the draft minutes must also be forwarded to the Shetland Islands Council as soon as practicable after the meeting.

In practice this means that once the chair, and any others you wish to consult with on the content of the draft minute, has commented and you have finalised the minute, you should publish it, and forward it to the Council.

It is acceptable for the minutes to be published (on the website or notice board, or by provision of copies to members of the public), but they do not become valid minutes until their acceptance as a correct record and signing by the chair at the next meeting.

Minutes in this form should therefore record, 'Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting.'

The signed minutes should be carefully retained by the clerk.

Confirmed minutes should include at the end the fact of being signed by the chair and the date.

If changes are made to the minutes by the Community Council before acceptance and signing, the wording changes should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting making the changes.

END

Constitution Section 6.5:

“A copy of the draft Minutes of Community Council meetings shall be forwarded to Shetland Islands Council as soon as practicable after the date of the meeting. Within 21 (twenty-one) days of the date of the meeting, further copies will be displayed at places accessible to the public and shall there remain available for public inspection for a period of not less than 14 (fourteen) days.”