



MINUTE

A & B

**Special Shetland Islands Council
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 27 March 2006 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

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

Apologies:

J H Henry	W A Ratter
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In attendance (Officers):

M Goodlad, Chief Executive
G Spall, Executive Director Infrastructure Services
S Cooper, Acting Head of Transport
B Doughty, Interim Head of Social Work
N Galbraith, Interim Head of Education
G Johnston, Head of Finance
W E Shannon, Head of Economic Development
D Bell, Personnel Manager
K Duerden, Ferry Services Manager
C Ferguson, Community Car Manager
B Hill, Acting Divisional Manager Legal Services
S Morgan, Service Manager – Looked After Children
E Weston, Service Manager – Adult Services
A Williamson, Service Manager – Community Care
M Barnett, Acting Service Manager – Community Care Resources
D Bell, Personnel Manager
A Cogle, Service Manager - Administration

Chairperson

Mr A J Cluness, Convener of the Council, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

In order to prevent the disclosure of exempt information, Mr A J Cluness moved, Mr J C Irvine seconded, and the Council resolved, in terms of the relevant legislation, to exclude the public during consideration of appendices B and C of the following item.

28/06 **Report of the Ferries Task Group**

The Council considered a report by the Acting Head of Transport (Appendix 1).

Mr J C Irvine said that it was important to note that, contrary to assumptions being made, in the event of an outside contractor operating the ferries, the SIC would remain responsible for the fares structure.

Mr Irvine said that the report set out clearly the recommendations, and that staffing issues would be reported to the Employees JCC for consultation. He said that if anything arose at the JCC that required a Council decision, it would come back to the next meeting of the Council. With regard to recommendation 8.1.3, Mr Irvine said that this should also include himself and Mr B P Gregson. With this amendment, Mr Irvine moved that the Council adopt the recommendations in the report. Mr A Inkster seconded.

With regard to the creation of separate ferry company, Mr E Knight referred to paragraph 5.1, bullet point 4, and questioned what the implications would be for seagoing staff, at present and at retirement.

The Head of Finance advised that there was a potential for savings in the employers national insurance contributions, as only two-thirds of staff would apply, as the saving would not apply to those in category A & D waters. He said that this projected a £200K per annum saving on those reduced contributions. The Head of Finance added that a couple of questions still required answers, and this would require work on detailed implementation, and further reports back to the Council. The first question was whether offshore registered staff would be admitted as members of the Local Government Pension Scheme. He said that it was not clear if this was possible, as admission of offshore staff was not envisaged. The Head of Finance said that the Council ~~could~~ would have to obtain specialist employment legal advice on that point if it wished to proceed. The other question was, if it was possible for staff to be admitted, the level of Employers' Contributions would have to be determined by Actuarial Review. In this regard, the projected £200k could reduce to £100k if it's possible for those employees to be admitted to the Local Government Pension Scheme. Mr Knight thanked the Head of Finance for the information. Mr J P Nicolson said that it was important that the Council minuted that, if agreed, progression of this matter would be subject to clarification and re-assurance with regard to the protection of staff, and to ensure no exclusion. The Council concurred.

Mr J P Nicolson went on to say that he commended very strongly the move towards the Head of Transport post being filled and, in relation to recommendation 8.1.3, he said it had been agreed by the Task Force

that Mr Irvine and Mr Gregson would be involved in the appointment process.

Mr B P Gregson congratulated the Chairperson and members of the Task Group for the work they had done. Mr Gregson said that his only concern was that Members needed to have more than a passing interest in this area, and suggested that an Implementation Working Group be formed to take matters forward. However, Mr Irvine said that there would be no more meetings of the Task Force, and it was anticipated that the Inter Islands Ferries Board would deal with the long term and operational issues, reporting to Council when appropriate. Mr Gregson agreed that was an acceptable alternative, and the Council concurred.

29/06 **Report of the Social Work Task Force**

The Council considered a report by the Interim Head of Social Work (Appendix 2).

Mr L Angus, Chairperson of the Social Work Task Force, gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the issues taken into consideration by the Task Force, the principal findings and recommendations. Mr Angus concluded by thanking everybody that had helped with the Task Force.

Mr Cluness thanked Mr Angus and the Task Force for an excellent report, and said that this justified the need for the Task Forces.

Mr L G Groat said that although the Task Force had done a sterling job, and he congratulated them for it, he said that nothing should have surprised Members, as these concerns had been ongoing for years. Mr Groat said that it would be desirable to return to having a dedicated Social Work Committee, particularly to take these matters forward.

Mr J P Nicolson said he agreed, and was grateful for the work done by the Task Force, as this had clarified and consolidated the issues that were very real. Mr Nicolson also referred to the contradictions relating to the budget – on the one hand there was underspend in some areas, but at the same time there were requirements for fresh money and adjustments being sought within the overall budget. Mr Nicolson concluded by suggesting that one more meeting of the Task Force was needed, along with the Management of Social Work, to consider how the recommendations would be implemented.

The Interim Head of Social Work said that the services provided by Social Work were of high quality, but there was a need to restructure the Social Work budget. He said that underspending was because of recruitment difficulties, but if the Department was to utilise all its resources, recruitment remained the major challenge. He said that whilst the Task Force was recommending new care homes, staff was required to operate and manage those services.

Mr J C Irvine referred to the suggestion for a dedicated Social Work Committee, and said that this matter should be addressed by the

Committee Structure Review Member/Officer Working Group, and he was aware that the Chairperson of that Group was trying to organise a meeting relatively soon.

Mr B P Gregson said that, again, this report demonstrated the worth of the Task Forces, and said that Members of the Task Force were now far better informed. He said that whilst the report was almost daunting in its size and comprehensiveness, and at the risk of overprioritising anything, Mr Gregson said that the formation of a proper Social Work Committee and the appointment of a permanent Head of Social Work was important. He went on to say that these matters all had to be considered further, as the Council would be remiss in not doing so before the new Council in 2007. In addition, Mr Gregson said that the work of local voluntary organisations had to be considered, particularly in terms of their availability to carry out services. In conclusion, Mr Gregson said that the important issues to carry forward were proper accommodation for Social Work staff, consideration of voluntary sector involvement, budget management, appointment of Head of Social Work and consideration of separate Social Work Committee.

Mr W H Manson said that it was important to point out that the proposal for Windybrae, was not as a replacement for Leog, but a replacement for the Bruce Family Centre. He said that a replacement for Leog should be included as a further recommendation. Regarding training, Mr Manson said that the Council's requirements needed to be communicated to Shetland College. He agreed that current training was inadequate and the problem of requiring all care workers to undergo SVQ Level 3 training would be a problem, particularly in meeting the requirements by 2008. Mr Manson said there had to be an acceptance that a long term solution to the training needs was required.

Mrs I J Hawkins said that whilst the Task Force had considered a wide variety of issues, it was accepted that the review was not entirely complete in that there was not enough time to go over the whole broad picture. Mrs Hawkins said that, whilst not taking away from the recommendations today, it was important for the Task Force to have another meeting with Social Work staff to discuss the issues.

Mr A Inkster said he thought the report today was very informative, and whilst other Members had been aware of the problems for some time, he did not know that the situation was as bad as it was. Mr Inkster said that although he knew that staff were trying to do the best they could, but the issues facing the service were quite overwhelming. He said that the issues would take a lot planning, finance and agreement to sort out, and would be a long term process. Mr Inkster said that it was clear that the issues should have been brought to Members by management a while ago, as it should not have been allowed to fester for so long. He said that the issues needed to be taken forward quickly, and asked that reports be brought forward as soon as possible.

Mrs F B Grains said she was in anticipation of the Chief Executive's report on organisation and structures, and hoped that there would be an

appointment process for a dedicated Head of Social Work and Head of Education, as the current Interim posts had shown benefits. Referring to the Task Forces' visit to Orkney, Mrs Grains said she was impressed with building design for the care home, and staff accommodation was all in one place. Mrs Grains went on to say that it was important to remember that older people were not necessarily vulnerable people, and services needed to cater towards both. Mrs Grains also referred to the need for savings, and her concern that there was little hope of Members accepting them.

The Chief Executive said that the Task Forces had been asked to bring forward savings, as at the moment services were being funded from reserves and additional funds. He said the Task Forces were also tasked with looking at structures, to ensure that these were giving value, efficiencies and savings. He said there had to be acceptance that the Council provided a high level of service and therefore the cost of the service was also high, and there was a need to look at savings and charges. The Task Force had reported that there were no savings to be made unless charges were increased in line with other local authorities. The Chief Executive said that his report would be presented to Members in two weeks time regarding structures, and there would be a report on 5% savings as well. He said, referring to the point made by Mrs Grains, that it was important for Members to understand that unless savings were made or the service made more efficient, for the foreseeable future the Council would have to take from its reserves, which would hit on the capital programme.

In response to Members, the Interim Head of Social Work said that social work services in Shetland were second to none, were of very high quality and were meeting the needs of the community. However, there were serious challenges for the future which Members would have to address. He added that if Members had any concerns regarding management issues, he would deal with them directly.

In conclusion, Mr L Angus moved that the Council adopt the recommendation in the report. Mr L G Groat seconded.

The meeting concluded at 1230 pm.

A J Cluness
CONVENER