

Environment and Transport Committee
Council Chamber, Lower Hillhead, Lerwick
Monday 27 November 2023 at 10am

Present:

A Armitage	C Hughson
D Leask	M Lyall
A Manson	R McGregor
M Robinson	R W Thomson
A Wenger	

Apologies:

D Anderson	E Macdonald
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In Attendance (Officers):

N Grant, Director of Development Services
J Smith, Director of Infrastructure Services
P Fraser, Executive Manager – Finance
N Hutcheson, Executive Manager - Roads
A Inkster, Executive Manager – Ferry and Air Operations and Port Infrastructure
C Symons, Executive Manager – Environment and Estate Operations
L Moar, Team Leader – Environmental Health
R Murchison, Team Leader – Fleet
H Burgess, Veterinary Advisor
C Jones, Solicitor
L Malcolmson, Animal Health Research Officer
B Kerr, Communications Officer
L Adamson, Committee Officer
L Malcolmson, Committee Officer

In Attendance (Officers)(Remotely):

M Craigie, Executive Manager – Transport Planning

Also in Attendance:

L Peterson

Chair:

Mrs Lyall, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular:

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interests

Mr Thomson declared an interest for transparency in item 3 “Proposed amendment to the Shetland Islands Council Sheep Scab Regulations (2003)” as part owner of a small holding.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2023 were confirmed on the motion of Mr McGregor, seconded by Mr Robinson.

22/23 Infrastructure Performance Report – Q2 2023/24 - Environment & Transport Committee Remit

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Infrastructure Services (ISD-16-23-F) that summarised the performance of the Infrastructure Directorate for areas in the remit of the Environment and Transport Committee, for Q2 2023/24.

The Director of Infrastructure Services introduced the report and highlighted that the Fleet Management Team had been successful in gaining an APSE Performance Network award for “Most Improved Performer - Transport Operations & Vehicle Maintenance”.

During questions, the Director of Infrastructure Services confirmed that the National Guidelines on fossil fuel targets had been followed in regard to the green fleet programme and that managers were taking that forward pragmatically. The Executive Manager – Environment and Estate Operations added that the green fleet target was 2030 and 2040 for the heavy vehicle fleet. He advised that the Council will not meet those deadlines as it would be costly to change the entire fleet and there are also supply chain challenges for electric cars. It was also confirmed that Officers were in early discussion with various parties and it would be 2027 before the Council could expect to see small scale hydrogen production in Shetland.

The Executive Manager – Roads could confirm that the removal of scaffolding on the Burra Bridge had been delayed and however the project would be completed soon. He said he would check to ensure that the boat channel was now clear.

In regard to project “A106 Linkspan repairs and lifecycle extension”, the Executive Manager – Ferry and Air Operations and Port Infrastructure advised that he was working with the contractors on reprogramming the works for next year and he would be able to provide an updated programme to share with Members soon. He added that would indicate when Fetlar works would be done.

Reference was made to the figures for ferry operations staff provided, and the Executive Manager – Ferry and Air Operations and Port Infrastructure advised that he would circulate the correct figures for both land based and sea staff following the meeting.

During debate, congratulations was extended to the management and staff for coming in near to the budget this year. It was also noted that the projects such as the Foula runway and Burra Bridge were coming to an end and it was good to see progress on other projects as well.

Decision

The Committee NOTED the updates on activity in Quarter 2, 2023/24 described in this report and appendices and DISCUSSED and COMMENTED on forward plans and priorities to help inform activity and associated Business Programming.

23/23 Development Directorate Performance Report – Q2 2023/24

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (DV-41-23-F) that summarised the activity and performance of the Development Directorate, as it relates to the remit of the Environment and Transport Committee, for Q2 2023/24.

The Director of Development Services introduced the report.

In response to a number of questions, the Committee was advised as follows:

- Bus contracts - The increase in bus contract costs are due to several of the contracts being handed back in that had to be retendered, and there continues to be an issue for operators recruiting drivers. Although fuel prices and inflation are indexed into contracts, when they are handed back those prices tend to rise. All public and school bus contracts are renewed in 2025 and resources will be put in place next year to focus on the next network and contracts, which are currently at a cost of £6m to the Council.
- Segregated cycle path network between settlements – A report was referred to that had been presented to ZetTrans and the Committee was advised of the delays on some projects that led to changes in the programme of works. The Committee was provided with an update on the Scalloway – Tingwall feasibility study and informed that from the 16 settlement audits completed there had been 300 interventions identified. It was noted that a report would be presented in February or March setting out the programme for next year. It was further advised that the wider schemes would include connections between Gulberwick and Cunningsburgh with an aim that core networks will join up major populations making routes accessible to Lerwick.
- Funding for active travel – It was noted that comments had been received that the funding should be used for other purposes. It was however confirmed that the Scottish Government had identified £320m funding to be directed towards active travel. It was further confirmed that money was not Council funding and it would not be available for any other purpose.

During debate, comment was made that there would be updates on the Fair Isle Ferry and Inter Islands ferries projects to be expected in the coming months. It was acknowledged that the 300 active travel interventions covered everything from dropped kerbs to shared cycle routes and pathways. In that regard, it was noted that there was a lot of work to be done with some money available for feasibility studies and less money available for construction. Capacity issues were highlighted and it was suggested that once the next feasibility study was done there should be a pause on the remaining studies in order that progress can be made on the ground.

Decision

The Committee NOTED the updates on activity in Quarter 2, 2023/24 and DISCUSSED and COMMENTED on forward plans and priorities to help inform the prioritisation of activity and associated Business Programming.

24/23 Proposed amendment to the Shetland Islands Council Sheep Scab Regulations (2003)

The Committee considered a report by the Team Leader – Environmental Health and Veterinary Officer (ES-02-23-F) that provided information on a proposed amendment to the Shetland Islands Council Sheep Scab Regulations (2003).

The Team Leader – Environmental Health introduced the report.

In responding to questions, the Team Leader – Environmental Health confirmed that training would be provided to ensure that everyone is suitably trained and competent in carrying out sheep dipping.

Reference was made to paragraph 4(2)b of Appendix 3, and clarification was sought in regard to whether there were sheep being brought into Shetland for slaughter. The Veterinary Advisor advised that that element had been introduced by the industry and confirmed that there were only a small number of instances, which had commenced when the slaughter house shut in Orkney. It was confirmed that the vet has to be satisfied that there is no sheep scab present.

Mr D Leask moved that the Committee approve the recommendations contained in the report. Mr Armitage seconded.

Decision

The Committee:

- CONSIDERED the changes to the Shetland Islands Council Sheep Scab Regulations (2003) (Appendix 3); and
- APPROVED the process moving forward to consultation on these changes (Appendix 4).

25/23 The Energy Company Obligation – ECO4 Flex

The Committee considered a report by the Director Infrastructure Services and the Executive Manager – Environment & Estate Operations (EO-03-23-F) that provided information on the delivery of current energy efficiency grant/loan schemes and the outline for a local Energy Company Obligation (ECO4 Flex) scheme.

The Executive Manager – Environment and Estate Operations introduced the report.

In responding to questions, it was confirmed that the statement of intent, which is valid for 1 year, would allow there to be more work carried out on the ground, but provided by mainland based contractors.

It was also confirmed that there is a need for individuals to qualify for the ECO4 Flex but that the Proxy 3 route listed those considered vulnerable groups. It was explained however if a GP had a genuine concern outwith that list they should contact the team so that they can provide assistance and advice on the best route forward.

During debate, the Energy Efficiency Team were commended on getting the ECO4 Flex scheme in place and that it was seen as a great benefit to Shetland and would ease the strain on local firms. It was acknowledged that it is important to have good modern facilities in place given that the cost of energy is so high, and that bringing in additional resources had to be welcomed.

There being no further debate the Committee noted the report.

Decision

The Committee

- NOTED the Statement of Intent (Sol) at Appendix 1
- CONSIDERED the issues surrounding delivery of current energy efficiency grant/loan schemes and the potential opportunities offered by operating a local Energy Company Obligation (ECO4 Flex) scheme.

26/23 **Setting of Local Speed Limits**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Roads (RD-06-23-F) that presented the outcome of a review of the policy and practice used for the setting of local speed limits.

The Executive Manager – Roads introduced the report.

There followed lengthy discussion around the guidance for speed limits and Quarff was raised as a road that had multiple junctions, children and adults have to cross the main road to access school and public bus services. The Executive Manager – Roads referred to the guidance and advised that this section of road had been considered in the past. He said that it would be possible to look at the road again and consider whether infrastructure at bus stops could be improved.

The overall approach to speed limits was questioned as was the definition of “a village”, and reference was made to the Norwegian comparison given whereby 50mph is the top national default limit. The Executive Manager – Roads provided context under the current UK National Guidelines to those questions and cautioned that it could also be detrimental to put in place speed limits that are unrealistic where they could be ignored.

Speed limits in a number of other parts of Shetland were highlighted as areas of concern in regard to proximity of pedestrians and vehicles. During further discussion the Director of Infrastructure Services said that there appeared to be a number of policy led questions and suggested that a seminar be arranged with a view to gaining a detailed understanding of this matter.

During debate, a request was made for constituents to be included in further considerations and it was agreed therefore that a seminar be arranged to allow discussion around speed limits; to consider “what is a village”; to provide understanding on how the highway code and national guidance work together and to seek current views of Community Councils to inform the seminar for the policy led discussion.

It was also agreed that the Roads Service should carry out speed checks in Cunningsburgh and Quarff to provide current data.

The Executive Manager – Roads and his team were thanked for the prompt and thorough report provided to Members.

Following further debate, the Chair commented on active travel on the main roads, and that the roads are not ideal for both bikes and vehicles. She said that all Members aspire to have separate cycle routes but that is a long way away. She welcomed the agreement of holding a seminar that would include the views of the Community Councils.

Mrs Lyall went on to advise however, that she wished to put forward an amendment for the benefit of drivers and she moved that the Committee approve the recommendations contained in the report, with the addition at 1.2 that the Director of Infrastructure Services take such action as is necessary to introduced a 50mph speed limit on the A970 Levenwick Road. Mr Armitage seconded.

With the support of her seconder, Mrs Lyall confirmed that her motion would be on a temporary basis until further road improvements are done.

Decision

The Committee NOTED the contents of the report and the conclusions of a review, that the current policy and practice of setting local speed limits in Shetland should continue to follow national guidance; and

INSTRUCTED the Director of Infrastructure Services to take such action as is necessary to introduce a 50mph speed limit on the A970 Levenwick Road, on a temporary basis, until further road improvements are done.

27/23 Strategic Roads Network Programme Update

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Roads (RD-07-23-F) that provided a progress update for the Strategic Roads Network Programme.

The Executive Manager – Roads introduced the report, and there was some discussion on the following matters:

- Cullivoe Road - In response to a question on inflationary increases incurred between the estimated cost of a project and the implementation of that project, the Director of Infrastructure Services commented that while that question would be better answered under the Asset Investment Plan (AIP) he advised that projects are progressed as quickly as they can be but how they fit into the AIP will impact on those costs. He confirmed that the Cullivoe Road timescale of 2027 was realistic.

It was questioned whether the Council's time management was responsible for the increase in costs on this project and the Director of Infrastructure Services advised that as the timetable shifted there are implications for the project. He said that attempts were made to push forward but there were some processes that proved difficult to move forward. He said that the updated timetable was the best estimate but acknowledged that timelines could change.

Reference was made to the road requirements for the business park caravan park and concern was expressed around the size of passing places needed when visibility is not an issue. It was confirmed that the business park was not an issue for what had been planned, but there were still ongoing matters to resolve with the caravan park.

In terms of restrictions on housing developments, the Executive Manager – Roads indicated that housing would be considered on an individual basis and that if the four houses planned are phased there would be less concern.

The Executive Manager – Roads agreed to prepare forecasting figures on the Cullivoe Road to circulate to Members.

- Levenwick Road – Reference was made to the use of modern safety crash barriers at Levenwick and the question was asked if the scheme could be removed from the programme if modern crash barriers were installed and the project limited to widening the blind summit. The Executive Manager – Roads advised that part of the process would involve revisiting the business case and that could be looked at as an option. He said that works could be done on the barriers and the summit and the widening of the road could be looked at later. He said that he would report on that during preparation of an updated business case. The Director of Infrastructure Services added that updates will be provided on the strategic network programme but there was more to be done around financial planning and where the project fits in the capital programme. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the option of road safety barriers would be considered in existing budgets but the summit would need to be addressed as major works through the AIP. The bigger scheme could remain or be removed depending on the outcome of those interim works. Consideration would also be given to the safety of pedestrians.
- Haggersta to Cova – The Executive Manager – Roads responded to a query and confirmed that road safety barriers could be considered on this road, however it was acknowledged the verges are very narrow.
- West Burrafirth to Walls – In response to a query in regard to the most expensive option being considered for this project, the Executive Manager – Roads advised that Officers would be looking at a less costly option and the outline business case would be presented in due course. He said however that it may not make the project less expensive or any easier to fit into the programme.

During debate a request was made that consideration be given to removing bureaucracy from the process in order to get projects off the ground more quickly. Comments were received in agreement and it was suggested that the size of the reports also need to be reduced to get the simplest things done. The stress on staff was highlighted and it was suggested that projects used to progress in a more timely manner.

The Chair took on board the Committee's comments but noted that the issues with Cullivoe Road related to environmental and land issues.

Reference was made to the proposals to simplify the Levenwick Road and that the decision on the extensive widening of the road was taken at a different time in different financial circumstances. The reduced measures approved would improve the safety of the road and allow the Council to look to more important matters such as the Cullivoe Road.

In regard to the Cullivoe Road it was suggested that given caravans had parked at the hall for years with passing buses and heavy goods vehicles it may be that the restrictions being put in place, until longer passing places are constructed, are not required. A request was made for the assessment of the sight lines for vehicles to be concluded, as soon as possible, to move the project on. It was hoped that the issue would be resolved before caravans start using the road in Easter 2024.

There being no further debate, the Committee noted the report.

Decision

The Committee NOTED the contents of this report which details the actions taken, and progress being made, in working toward the construction of the improvement schemes listed on the Council's Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for the strategic road network.

28/23 **Environment and Transport Committee Business Programme – 2023/24**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Infrastructure Services (ISD-17-23-F) that presented the Environment and Transport Committee Business Programme for the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The Director of Infrastructure Services introduced the report and advised that he would look for a date for a seminar to be arranged on speed limits as per the earlier agenda item, "Setting of Local Speed Limits", following contact with Community Councils for their views.

In response to an invitation that colleagues attend the Community Councils to seek their views it was decided that a briefing to Community Councils would be provided in order that they can feed into the process.

There were being no further questions, or debate, the Committee noted the report.

Decision

The Committee:

- CONSIDERED the business planned for Environment & Transport Committee for 2023/24; and
- ADVISED the Director of Infrastructure Services of any changes required and new items to be included on the Business Programme.

The meeting concluded at 11.55am

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Chair