

Sandness & Walls Community Council

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Draft minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Sandness and Walls Community Council held on Tuesday 6th May 2025 at 7 pm at the Walls Hall

Present: F Macbeath (Vice Chair)
M Forrest
E Johnston
J Laing
J Puckey
S Johnston
Cllr L Peterson

In attendance: D Forrest (Clerk), Vikki Parry (VoiceAbility)

1. Chair's Welcome

F Macbeath (Vice Chair) chaired the meeting and welcomed all those present.

2. Apologies:

I Walterson, C Venus, M Macgregor, J Haswell, M Duncan

3. Declarations of Interest

S Johnston declared an interest in item 16, Request to change project at Sandness Primary School.

4. Police Report

No Police report was available for this meeting.

5. Visit by Vikki Parry (VoiceAbility)

5.1 Presentation by Vikki Parry

The Vice Chair welcomed Ms Parry and invited her to provide a verbal presentation regarding the work of VoiceAbility.

Ms Parry began by explaining that the staff at VoiceAbility provide an advocacy service for people who find it difficult to communicate with the services they may need to access such as the NHS, the SIC as well as other services. She explained that the VoiceAbility personnel are contracted by Shetland Islands Council. The clients who use the VoiceAbility services can be of any age, ability and mental capability. Vikki made the telling point that many people do not claim their entitlements and VoiceAbility serves to help people access the funding and support to which they are entitled. She provided an example of where she and her colleague Tracy can be of particular assistance and that is in completing a specific disability allowance application form which is one hundred pages long and can take four hours to complete. Ms Parry described how it takes time to build up a rapport with potential clients and this can be done either in face-to-face meetings in a neutral space or remotely.

5.2 Q & A

The Vice Chair thanked Ms Parry for her presentation and invited questions from the Members.

Members asked if VoiceAbility staff would be willing to visit local regular meetings predominantly attended by senior citizens? Ms Parry indicated that this would be an excellent way to connect with potential clients. E Johnston stated he would be willing to advertise the VoiceAbility services on the Sandness and Walls Community Council's Facebook page.

There being no further questions or comments, the Vice Chair thanked Vikki for her input and attendance at the meeting.

Vikki Parry left the meeting,

6. Minutes from 1.4.25

The adoption of the minutes from 1st April 2025 was proposed by M Forrest and seconded by E Johnston.

7. Matters Arising

Re: 18.4 of 2/25 Electric Vessel Sea Trials between West Burrafirth and Papa Stour

In response to a question regarding the possible revised location for the sea trials of the electric ferry, J Puckey reiterated that this information had not been divulged to the SIC.

8. Housing

Cllr Peterson provided a brief account of the meeting that she and another councillor had had with Mr Neil Grant, Director of the SIC Development Services Department and two members of his department. Whilst it was acknowledged that the depopulation of rural areas of Shetland was an issue and that the lack of suitable housing was a contributory factor, Mr Grant felt that there was no immediate single solution to the problem. He offered to ask his colleagues to investigate the possibility of some solutions, but did not think there were any short-term fixes.

9. Roads

The condition of the verges on the Pier Road in Walls was raised given that they have been damaged by HGV's transporting salmon. Cllr Peterson offered to discuss this matter with Mr N Hutchison, SIC Roads Department, but felt that a permanent solution to the problem would be difficult to achieve given the narrowness of the road and the fact that it has the sea close to one side and people's gardens on the other. The possibility of getting something done through Sustrans was also discussed, but nothing can happen until a meeting is held with Ms Robina Barton.

Action: Cllr Peterson to discuss the condition of the Pier Road verges with Mr N Hutchison (Roads Department)

10. Shetland Community Benefit Fund

No applications have been received in time for this meeting.

11. Local Place Plan

No updates on Local Place Plans are available.

12. Planning Consultation Ref: 2025/101/PPF (to demolish existing buildings and erect a house on the site a Sunny Bank, Walls)

Members unanimously supported this application.

Action: The Clerk to inform the Planning Department of this decision and to state that Members welcome the construction of a new dwelling house in this area.

13. Marine Planning Consultation Ref 2025/008/MAR (to enlarge mussel farm at Quilse North, Grutting Voe)

After a brief discussion regarding the capacity of Grutting Voe for mussels, Cllr Peterson stated that the Marine Planning Department will have taken this into consideration before sending out the proposed development for consideration. With this in mind, the Members voiced no objections.

Action: The Clerk to inform the Marine Planning Department that the Community Council has no objections.

14. Facebook Page for S&WCC

E Johnston stated that the Facebook page is as popular as ever and being accessed frequently.

15. Financial Update

The Vice Chair acknowledged that the latest spreadsheet contained very little information, given that it is the start of the new financial year. The Clerk updated Members on the numbers of unadopted roads applications that have been submitted.

16. Request to change Project at Sandness Primary School

S Johnston stated that the proposed pond at Sandness Primary School had encountered unexpected delays. Given that he is due to retire at the end of this term, he felt it would not be fair to impose this project on his successor. He requested that the funding be used for other projects as outlined in his grant application. At this point, S Johnston and F Macbeath each declared an interest and left the room. After a brief discussion, Members unanimously approved the application. S Johnston and F Macbeath returned to the meeting.

17. Correspondence

No Correspondence other than that circulated by email has been received.

18. AOCB

18.1 Delivery of Parcels to Papa Stour

J Puckey informed the members that parcels either from the Royal Mail or that had been delivered by couriers were incurring a freight charge on the Papa Stour ferry. J Puckey stated she had attempted to meet with Elaine Park (SIC Transport Department) to discuss this matter, but Ms Park had not been available. Members agreed that it was unjust for Papa Stour residents to have to pay additional delivery charges.

Action: J Puckey to meet with Elaine Park in an attempt to find a solution to this problem.

18.2 Shetland Islands Council Community Council Scheme of Establishment

The above document was discussed. Given that most of its contents have already been debated by the Members in some detail, no additional comments were made. Members therefore approved its contents.

Actions:1. The Clerk to modify the pages that require the signature of the person who chaired this meeting and to get them signed.
2. The Clerk to submit the signed Constitution to the Executive Manager, Governance and Law, Shetland Islands Council.

18.3 Clerk's Retirement.

The Clerk indicated that he intends to step down from the role of Clerk at the time of the forthcoming Community Council elections.

19. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was set for Tuesday 3rd June 2025 and will be a hybrid meeting which is scheduled to commence at 7.00pm.

The Vice Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.