

**Skerries Community Council (SCC)**  
**Minute of meeting held at 2.00 pm on Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2025**  
**In Skerries Community Hall**

**Present:**

Janice Hughson (Chair)  
Frances Anderson  
Marina Anderson  
Marina Tait  
Jilly Ash  
Dianne Hughson

**In attendance:**

Matt Mason - Group Commander, Shetland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Alan Patrick - Police Sergeant, Lerwick Police Office  
Lynsey Hall – Community Support Worker – joined through Teams link  
Councillor Robert Thomson – joined through Teams link  
Violet McQuade - Clerk (notes)

**1) Apologies**

Michael Duncan, Kia James, and Paul James.

Janice welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2) Declaration of Interest to any agenda Item**

Chairperson asked for declaration of interests – there were no declarations of interest to any item on the agenda.

**3) Minutes of last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025, were approved.  
Proposed by Marina Anderson, seconded by Frances Anderson.

**4) Matters Arising/Actions from last meeting**

**4.1 Organise meeting with Scottish Seafarms**

Paul has been in touch with Anne at Scottish Seafarms, and has sent a list of suggested dates for holding a meeting. Anne is going to aim for a meeting to be held in early September. This is ongoing.

**4.2 Speak to the Head of Waste Management**

This is ongoing. Updates will be circulated as appropriate.

**5) Fire Service**

Matt gave an overview of the current situation with the fire stations throughout Shetland, and the work that has recently been done.

The main points noted were:

- The focus is on prevention work.
- The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is undertaking a Service Delivery Review to create a more modern and efficient service. Current risks include wildfires and flooding, not solely focusing on traditional fires.
- This review includes a public consultation on about two dozen proposed changes, which may involve closing, upgrading, or merging fire stations, addressing outdated facilities, and repositioning resources to better serve communities.
- In a few areas the service has been struggling to find crews to run some stations, and retain staff. Fitness standards must be met; it was also pointed out that perhaps the poor state of the stations may not be helping with recruitment. There is a possibility that the station in Fetlar may have to be closed, but the consultation process still needs to be completed. Many fire stations need significant

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investment to meet modern standards, including providing showers and other modern facilities.

- The SFRS is engaging the public through consultation, allowing communities to provide feedback on the future of the service.
- There has been a shift in incidents attended, with a 56% decrease in house fires but an increase in flooding and wildfire events. There has also been a significant rise in non-fire incidents.
- The service faces significant financial restraints, making it necessary to find innovative ways to address property issues and maximise funding. Temporary alternative arrangements have been made to help alleviate the situation in the meantime.
- The service has been under scrutiny from the Health & Safety Executive, as well as the Chair of the Resilience Board of Shetland Islands Council. An Improvement Notice, regarding three stations in particular has been placed on the service.
- Matt will share relevant information with Violet so that it can be circulated to the community.
- Peter Stevenson, from Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, will be coming over to Skerries, and happy to meet with anyone who has concerns or questions.

*2.25 pm - Alan Patrick, Lerwick Police, joined the meeting through the Teams link*

- A question was asked - regarding remote communities and getting advice, for example, if something were to happen in Skerries, what would be the best plan of action. Matt said that Peter would be able to provide advice. Matt will send Peter's contact details to Violet.
- A question was asked about house insurance – in the event of a house fire in Skerries, would there be a problem getting houses insured. Matt said this had been brought up in the consultation, but insurance is not something the Fire Service specifically deals with, so the SFRS would not have the answer. Matt encouraged people to speak to Peter.
- A table-top exercise is still to be organised, during which different scenarios can be looked at.

If anyone has any questions they can contact Matt or Peter, SFRS.

*2.35 pm - Matt Mason left the meeting*

**6) SCC Code of Conduct**

This item has now been incorporated into Item 8.

**7) Scheme of Establishment**

The final document was only circulated on Thursday afternoon, therefore it was decided to carry this forward to the next meeting, which is due to be held on Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> September. This will give members a chance to read the 47 page document.

**8) School building**

The alarm at the school has been constantly ringing since Thursday. This is the third time in recent weeks that this alarm has gone off. The alarm can go on for days on end, sometimes for nearly a week. There is no key holder in Skerries, so no one can turn the alarm off. It was noted that recently the council had sent someone in to turn the alarm off – this means paying a council worker for a whole day, it was suggested that this is not an effective use of council funds.

Lynsey was in Skerries last year when the alarm went off, she managed to get the code to get into the building and turn the alarm off. Since then, she has been at a meeting with the Chief Executive, SIC, along with Skerries IWSP representatives; the problems with the school was discussed during that meeting. Lynsey was not sure who could be nominated as keyholder, or what the process would be. When an islander has asked for the code to get the alarm turned off, they were told they could not be provided with the code.

It was also pointed out that the building is neglected, gradually deteriorating, and is in poor condition. The school is Shetland Islands Council property, but the council are not looking after it, even though the school is shut, the building still needs to be looked after. Councillor Thomson will contact Education Services to try and find a solution to the problem.

**Action: Councillor Thomson, contact Education Services**

It was suggested that there may be the possibility of getting a part-time community maintenance worker in Skerries, similar to the one that has been employed on a trial basis in Fetlar. Looking after

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the school building could be part of their duties. This could be discussed at the Islands With Small Population seminar that is due to be held soon - Councillor Thomson will bring this up at the seminar. The Fetlar post is 22 hours per week, but a post in Skerries could be for less hours if it were felt that was more appropriate.

There was a brief discussion on what tasks could be carried out by a maintenance worker, these included:

- Cutting the kirkyard grass
- Cutting the grass around the school
- Painting and maintaining fences around the school
- Looking after the multi-court
- Carrying out any maintenance work on the waiting room, such as painting the building
- Maintenance on the school building, as required
- Toilet block maintenance
- Shower block maintenance

It was noted that in the past, sometimes work was carried out by locals, who would then submit an invoice for the work carried out, this is cheaper than sending in workers for an entire day, which included four hours travelling time. Councillor Thomson will bring this forward and put in a case for getting a part-time maintenance worker for Skerries.

**Action: Councillor Thomson - take to IWSP seminar**

**9) Risks**

No changes to the register.

**10) Issues**

No changes to the register.

**11) Correspondence Received**

All correspondence has been circulated, electronically.

**12) AOCB**

**12.1 Pest problem**

Several people have been seeing rats around the islands again. They have been sighted in daylight in various places in both Bruray and the West Isle. It was agreed to request another visit, or visits, from Environmental Health.

**Action: Violet to contact Environmental Health**

**12.2 Dogs on the ferry**

One member spoke about the problem with people bringing dogs into the lounge on the ferry, often the dogs lie on the lounge seats – it was felt that this is not acceptable, and that only guide dogs should be allowed in the lounge – some people fear dogs, and some are allergic to them. A request was put forward for a notice be put up telling travellers to keep their dogs in their car. Councillor Thomson agreed to contact the Executive Manager, Ferry Operations.

**Action: Councillor Thomson, contact Ferry Operations**

**12.3 Ferry – vehicle capacity**

It has been heard, through the grapevine, that the booking office has been told not to accept any more than seven vehicle bookings on the ferry. It was noted that the islanders have not been consulted about this, and have not been told officially of these changes. This is having an impact on travel to and from Skerries – some people who have tried to book for the funeral that is to be held next week have not been able to get a booking. The islanders have heard that the problem has been caused by people booking on larger vehicles, resulting in the ferry crew having difficulty getting all the vehicles on the ferry. It was suggested that the booking office could ask for the size of the vehicles at the time of booking. There is no online booking option - all bookings must be made through either phoning or emailing the booking office, so this need not be a major problem. It was noted that when you book to travel to Lerwick you must provide your date of birth and vehicle registration, so this would just be one more question.

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Councillor Thomson agreed to contact the Executive Manager, Ferry Operations, to find out what the situation is and try to find a solution.

**Action: Councillor Thomson, contact ferry operations**

#### 12.4 Community Council Elections

Violet mentioned that the Community Council elections would be coming up shortly. She will keep people informed as appropriate. Nomination forms will be put in the Post Office, anyone interested in coming forward can pick a form up from there. The Notice of Election will be on 12 September, nominations can be validated from 15 September, and the closing date for return of ballot papers is the 20<sup>th</sup> November. There are currently four members on Skerries, the required number is five.

Associate members can stay on; it is full members that need to be elected.

*3.05 pm - Alan Patrick left the meeting*

#### 13) **Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled to be held at 2.00 pm on Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

The meeting concluded at 3.10 pm

#### **Actions:**

##### Councillor Thomson

- School building – Contact Education Services
- Maintenance worker - take to IWSP seminar
- Contact ferry operations, re dogs in ferry lounge
- Contact ferry operations, re seven cars maximum on the ferry

##### Violet

- Contact Environmental Health to request a visit

**Chair Signature**

**Signed**.....