

Skerries Community Council (SCC)
Minute of meeting held at 2.00 pm on Friday, 7th November 2025
In Skerries Community Hall

Present:

Paul James (Chair)
Frances Anderson
Marina Anderson
Ethan Arthur
Dianne Hughson
Janice Hughson
Marina Tait

In attendance:

Alastair Inkster
Lucy James
Councillor Robert Thomson – joined through Teams link
Violet McQuade - Clerk (notes)

1) Apologies

Jilly Ash, Lynsey Hall and Kia James

Paul 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 26th September 2025, were approved.
Proposed by Janice Hughson, seconded by Dianne Hughson.

4) Matters Arising/Actions from last meeting

4.1 Contact SIC Chief Executive – re school building

Paul has contacted the SIC Chief Executive to discuss the current situation with the school building; awaiting a reply.

4.2 Contact Environmental Health

This is still ongoing. The team were due to come to Skerries on Friday, 24th October, but were prevented from doing so due to bad weather and lack of sufficient supplies. Any updates will be circulated.

4.3 Scottish Seafarms

This has been added to the issues log.

5) Election results

The closing date for nominations for members of Community Councils was the 16th of October. Skerries had five nominations for full membership. The target membership has been reached - there will be no need to hold a ballot.

6) Associate Membership

Violet has written to all Associate Members to ascertain whether they would still like to be included. So far, Dianne, Ethan, Jilly and Kia have all agreed they would like to stay as Associate Members. This will be added to the agenda for the next Skerries Community Council meeting.

7) Ditch around the graveyard

The ditch around the graveyard needs to be dug out again. This has not been done for a few years; the ditch is badly in need of attention. Paul agreed to contact Burial Services.

Action: Paul contact Burial Services

8) 2026 Meeting dates

The proposed dates for the 2026 meeting were approved.

9) Clerk Post - procedure

A discussion was held regarding finding a replacement Clerk for the Community Council. Paul has taken advice from Michael Duncan and has received the job profile. As this post is a sub-contract from Shetland Islands council, the successful candidate will have to meet the job description as much as possible.

The post will be advertised. It was agreed to advertise the post in the Shetland Times for two weeks. Depending on the result, it will be agreed nearer the time who would interview/chat with potential candidates. It was decided that an informal chat would likely be sufficient. Violet has done a rough draft of an advert to put in the shop; Paul will look at this later to decide what else needs to be added/amended.

Action: Paul to amend the draft advert

It is hoped that a new Clerk can be appointed in time to start in the post early in 2026.

2.15 pm – Robert Thomson joined the meeting (online)

10) Funding available

Violet reminded those present that there is still funding available in the Community Council account for projects and/or purchasing equipment. Paul suggested that information could be circulated; ideas can be discussed on what would be the best way to make use of funding.

11) Risks

There have been no changes to the Risk Log. It has been a year since the log was updated – Paul suggested circulating the document to give everyone a chance to have a look at it and consider if there needs to be any changes; it will then be updated as appropriate.

12) Issues

Scottish Seafarms proposed salmon farm has been added to the Issues Log. This document will also be circulated for updating as necessary. Paul will also send the documents to Lynsey Hall.

There are currently no updates from Scottish Seafarms – this is in the early stages. Paul will keep the community informed if/when there are any updates.

13) Correspondence Received

All correspondence has been circulated, electronically.

14) AOCB

14.1 Looking at possibility of buying the island

As discussed at the previous meeting, Paul is looking into the possibility of buying the island if it comes up for sale. If the community want to register an interest, a consultation needs to be done, and a Business Plan needs to be provided.

Each member of the community will need to be consulted before taking this forward. If the community decides to try and buy the island, funding will need to be applied for. The case needs to be taken to the Scottish Government. It was noted that communities are realising that they need to look after their own community, this is happening up and down the country.

This is not something that the Community Council can do, it would need a separate entity, or an existing one such as the Skerries Development Group (SDG). Groups can work together on this. The first thing to do is to carry out a survey on what the community would like to do.

It was decided to refer the issue to the SDG meeting, which is due to take place on Saturday, 8th November; a representative from the Scottish Land Fund will be in attendance at that meeting.

This minute is UNAPPROVED until adopted at the next meeting.

14.2 Defibrillator – response from the NHS

Update regarding asking NHS Shetland for a defibrillator to be placed at/or near the pier. The NHS has declined to provide this for the following reasons: Skerries is not large enough to warrant two NHS defibrillators, and there is not enough population to warrant another one. The other option now would be to look into charity funding.

The British Heart Foundation offered to provide defibrillators free of charge – an application form needed to be completed and submitted. On behalf of the SDG, Jilly was dealing with the application. The SDG is awaiting on an update.

It was agreed that another defibrillator at the pier is necessary, due to the number of visitors to the islands, visiting yachts, etc, and the distance of clinic from the pier. Other options to be explored. Paul agreed to look further into the possibility of acquiring a defibrillator from elsewhere.

Action: Paul - investigate donation/purchase of a defibrillator

14.3 Wi-Fi for the Waiting Room

After discussion regarding the possibility of getting Wi-Fi in the Waiting Room, it was agreed that this would be beneficial for various reasons. It was noted that there is Wi-Fi in the other waiting rooms in Shetland. Paul agreed to explore the possibility of getting the council to help.

Action: Paul to contact Ports & Harbours

14.4 Community Conversations

The Council's political leaders, along with the Chief Executive and local ward members, will be hosting a series of public drop-in sessions around the isles in the coming months. These events will help the Council plan for its future activities, with members of the public invited along to discuss their ideas for supporting and improving local services. The council is looking at providing an online event for some of the outer isles, including Skerries. It was felt it would be better if members could attend in person. Paul and Dianne agreed to attend the drop-in sessions, providing the dates/times suit with the ferry.

14.5 Petition - New powers for community councils

There is currently a petition for new powers for Scottish community councils. Scotland's 1,200 community councils have no meaningful decision-making powers and virtually no money. By comparison, England's 10,000 parish councils can choose from a wide range of powers with budgets to match, promoting collective creativity and strengthening local democracy. It was agreed to revisit the email that was circulated regarding the petition, then decide how everyone feels. Members can put in individual responses to the petition, or one can be submitted as a group. Violet will recirculate the email.

14.6 Dog fouling

There have been complaints regarding dog fouling at the airstrip, this had been brought up when the helicopter came to uplift a patient to take them to hospital. Paul agreed to organise a clean-up operation, and also to put up some more notices.

Action: Paul, organise clearing up at the airstrip

14.7 UNCLOS Treaty

Looking at fishermen and fishing as a group, Alastair suggested considering the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) international treaty that establishes a legal framework for all marine and maritime activities, including navigational rights, territorial sea limits, and resource management – around 165 countries signed the treaty. The treaty is enshrined in law, but it is being ignored. Local communities are being forgotten about. The treaty is online if anyone wishes to read it. It was felt that with what is currently happening in the seas around the isles, locals are not being prioritised, or considered.

14.8 Culvert at the Burn

The culvert at the Burn is blocked with seaweed and would need to be cleared, the grating is being filled with seaweed. After discussion, Ethan agreed to the following morning, to clear the seaweed.

Before the meeting concluded, Councillor Thomson stated that although he had managed to follow most of the meeting, there were bits that he had not been able to hear. Partly due to technical problems it had been

This minute is UNAPPROVED until adopted at the next meeting.

a difficult meeting to follow – as well as technical problems there is an echo in the large building. As Skerries is not the only community council with technical problems when holding meetings online, Councillor Thomson is currently trying to arrange for better equipment to be provided for the community councils. Councillor Thomson will speak to Paul later to discuss any issues that need to be addressed.

15) Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to be held at 2.00 pm on Friday, 12th December 2025.

The meeting concluded at 2.45 pm

Actions:

Paul

Amend the job advert

Contact Burial Services, re the ditch around graveyard

Contact Ports & Harbours, re Wi-Fi in the Waiting Room

Organise clearing up at the airstrip

Investigate donation/purchase of a defibrillator

Chair Signature

Signed.....