

Sandness & Walls Community Council

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Draft minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Sandness and Walls Community Council (SWCC) held at Walls Hall on Wednesday 7th October 2026 at 7:00pm

Present: Members - Jane Haswell, Sorley Johnston, Angie Nichols, Haydn Robertson, David Sinclair, Jonathan Laing, Andy Holt (online),
Cllr Liz Peterson
Clerk - Gill Nadin

Apologies: Jane Puckey, Michael Duncan

1. Chair's welcome

Jane Haswell chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone present.

2. Declaration of interest – to be declared at individual items.

3. Police report – June/July and Aug/Sept reports were received and distributed prior to the meeting.

4. Previous minutes and actions

One correction to the minutes was noted in item 6.1:

Cllr Peterson advised that the business case for the Walls road was presented to the Policy & Resources committee, not Transport committee. Also, she has emailed the SIC Legal Dept (not Chief Executive). Cllr Peterson cannot supply minutes of the AIG meeting as they are not accessible to Councillors, but she will forward on the minutes of the Policy & Resources committee meeting, when they are available

With this correction, adoption of minutes from 1st September 2026 was proposed by S Johnston and seconded by J Laing.

The Clerk confirmed that all actions had been completed.

5. Matters arising not on agenda

5.1 Re. 5.1 of 9/26 - Active Travel update

The final report was expected before the end of September, but nothing has yet been received.

5.2 Re. 5.4 of 9/26 – Gruting Hall

The Clerk had contacted the Gruting Hall treasurer (Mary Johnston), to invite them to a future SWCC meeting to discuss any SWCC support they may require. M Johnston was to discuss with Frank Robertson and respond in due course. This invitation will remain open.

5.3 Re. 6.5 of 9/26 – Norse Heritage Signs.

Due to a packed agenda this month, this discussion will be postponed.

5.4 Re. 18.2 of 9/26 – Foula school/hall

Michael Duncan has offered to arrange a meeting between himself, R Smith, the Foula teacher and Neil Beattie from Children's Services to discuss the issue.

5.5 Re. 11.2 of 9/26 – War Memorials

The 6 wreaths for the memorials have been received and are being distributed.

The SIC have weed killed around the Walls war memorial.

The Criminal Justice (CJ) team have now prepared and painted the 1st coat on the Walls memorial, with the 2nd coat due to be completed soon. J Haswell advised that the CJ team could paint the wooden fence beside the memorial. She will get a cost estimate for the materials and present that to the next meeting.

Action: Chair to get costing for materials for painting fence at Walls war memorial

5.6 Re. 18.1 of 9/26 - Poppies for the Walls Shop

The Lerwick Legion advised that they cannot recruit a volunteer to manage poppy sales in an area; that would have to be done nationally. However, they agreed to contact the Walls Shop direct, to see if they would be happy to take a supply of poppies and a collecting tin from them.

5.7 Re. 14 of 9/26 - Shetland Community Energy Network update

As the Network will be a good source of information for the community and John Clarkson has offered to put on a household energy information session, J Haswell has suggested that he attends the Café in the Kirk on a Friday lunchtime. It was agreed that this topic be included in the Community Engagement special meeting in the New Year – see item 18.

6. Correspondence

6.1 Letter from MSP re. banking issues

Following the letter to our MSP, Ms Goodlad had written to the Bank of Scotland (BoS) raising our concerns about the bank closure process and its potential impact on other local community groups. Yesterday, the bank phoned the Clerk and advised that they were re-investigating our complaint as a result of the MSP's intervention. A few hours later, a letter was received from the BoS, advising that they were offering an additional £395 in compensation (in addition to the £100 received in July), for the problems that we encountered, and the time and effort it took us to resolve them. They acknowledged their record keeping had been inadequate, the interest charges needed refunding and their communications

Draft Minutes of the Oct 2026 Meeting of the Sandness & Walls Community Council subject to approval at the next meeting

were confusing. The £395 is already in the SWCC bank account and J Haswell advised it will not be ring-fenced. It can be spent in any way the SWCC chooses.

Action: Chair will write to MSP's office to thank them for their input

6.2 VAS volunteering awards 2026 – closing date 12/10/26

This information had been circulated to members and a post added to Facebook, promoting the awards.

6.3 National Islands Plan – poster and promotion

Email received from the Scottish Islands Federation regarding the National Islands Plan which was published in February 2026. Efforts are being made to improve awareness of the plan across island communities. It was agreed to display the poster locally and on Facebook. Poster copies have been requested.

It was also agreed that future posters from such organisations will only be displayed if they are supplied, rather than SWCC having to print.

Action: Clerk will distribute National Islands Plan posters for display and Facebook post.

7. Finance report

The Clerk confirmed the compensation from BoS (£395) had been received since the finance report was distributed. All other figures were up to date.

The SCBF details have been updated for the new SCBF financial year (01/09/26-31/08/27), so the available SCBF amount until August is £10,686. The Clerk was advised at a recent SCBF information meeting, that future funds of up to 5 years can be drawn down in advance if required for a particular project. Members agreed that this would likely only be in very exceptional circumstances, but good to be aware.

J Haswell confirmed that the SWCC could also apply for funding itself from several organisations, including the SCBF and the National Lottery, if that was considered necessary in the future.

8. Roads

Roads reports continue to be distributed every week and there were no queries.

8.1 West Burrafirth Junction to Walls road improvements

Cllr Peterson reiterated her concerns that the proper decision-making process did not appear to have been followed as detailed in the previous minutes. The AIG recommendation that the business case be paused until a sustainable level of funding was sourced, was an apparent deviation from the process. She has not had any response to her enquiries to clarify why such a decision was made. A decision at the same stage for the Levenwick road upgrade was that it should be approved to go to the next stage, subject to funding and this would be within the defined process. The Walls road has now been paused twice and is the only section of A-class road remaining in Shetland that is not double-tracked. It remains unclear how, when or if this 'paused' process can now move forward. Cllr Peterson will continue to enquire how the project might now proceed and why the

Draft Minutes of the Oct 2026 Meeting of the Sandness & Walls Community Council subject to approval at the next meeting

required process does not appear to have been followed, as there is local concern that this capital project does not appear to have been treated fairly, compared to other similar projects in Shetland.

The members agreed that they are fully supportive of the road upgrade as stated in the business case. It is seen as vital infrastructure for the area and several sections are well-recognised as a safety concern. Cllr Peterson explained that the Road Safety Advisory Panel has also raised the issues. Following discussion, it was agreed the Chair will write to the SIC to:

- state the SWCC's full support for the road upgrade as per the business case,
- to emphasise the safety concerns and the urgency of addressing these,
- seek understanding of the equity with other capital projects decision making processes and how the pause decision affects the project categorisation
- enquire how this project might now proceed including timelines

Action: Chair to write to SIC

8.2 Roads Winter Planning

Further to discussions with Neil Hutcheson at the last meeting, members reiterated that concern remains regarding the potential effectiveness of SIC snow removal plans in the case of heavy and persistent snow. Neil had highlighted the need to use diggers and tractors with loaders to clear the compacted deep snow that ploughs could not. It was suggested that the SWCC could further promote the use of contractors (with tractors, JCBs, loading shovels, etc) by encouraging any local folk with such vehicles not already registered with the SIC to consider joining the contractor list.

It was agreed to contact Neil for information on acceptance criteria for such contractors and how they can get registered / contact details - then to develop a poster and Facebook post to publicise it.

Action: Clerk to contact Neil Hutcheson for information and then develop poster

9. Planning and licencing

9.1 Walls Bakery - Planning Application Ref. 2025/173/PPF

The applicants submitted a notification for review (an appeal) to the Planning Department. No date has yet been set for this.

10. Councillor's report

At a recent Education Committee meeting, 4 possible options for Skeld school were proposed and have gone out for consultation; retain it temporarily mothballed, progress to statutory closure, possible catchment area changes, or any other alternative option. Although the school is outside the SWCC area, any discussions about its future were thought to have potential Westside-wide implications.

Some community members have suggested the school as a potential site for childcare provision for the Westside. The members then discussed a recent Scottish Government initiative – Early Adopter Communities (EAC) project -

designed to test, co-design, and expand affordable school-age and early years childcare to help eradicate child poverty. In Shetland, over £1M was allocated for Sept 2024 - March 26 and was to be targeted at the North Isles and Westside, which had been identified as most in need of provision. Much of the money was not spent and had to be returned. Funding for the EAC project has been extended for 2026/27, with an allocation of £385,169. There have been some successful local projects with EAC funding, eg. Happyhansel breakfast club and the Friday afternoon club at Sandness, but much more is required. If potential money is still available, innovative ways of providing 'wrap-around' childcare locally are needed, as some parents take their children to Scalloway or Lerwick, where before and after school childcare provision exists to allow parents to work full-time. Some of these children could potentially attend local schools, boosting their school rolls. One of the reasons the Skeld school roll reduced was that some parents chose to take their children to Aith on their way to and from work, as it was open for more hours.

Skeld school has also been suggested as a potential facility for children with severe and complex additional support needs. Although there is currently the presumption that all children are in mainstream, some parents do not feel that it's the best thing for their child.

These various options and opinions are likely to be reflected in the outcome of the consultation which is expected to be available before the end of the year.

With the current school rolls in Sandness and Happyhansel, they are both at risk of mothballing if reduced further. The members all agreed that the topics of education and childcare are of vital importance to the whole community. It was therefore agreed to invite a member of the Education Department to a meeting in the New Year. This may be a special meeting to discuss this single topic, rather than trying to include this important subject within a packed agenda.

Action: Education Department lead to be invited to a meeting

11. Funding applications and grants

11.1 SWCC grants awarded 2025-26 poster

This had been forwarded to members and was approved.

Action: Clerk to circulate and S Johnston to include on Facebook post

11.2 General SWCC grant application form – update

This was provisionally approved at the last meeting, and a final version has now been agreed with Michael Duncan.

11.3 Tesco grant bid - update

Foula, Sandness and Happyhansel schools have all been contacted. SWCC have offered to put in a bid to the Tesco grant fund but are now awaiting some more information from Foula School before costing and submitting a bid.

11.4 RVS Xmas grant application

J Haswell left the room due to a conflict of interest.

The SWCC has previously supported RVS Christmas parties and members agreed that it was an important event for potentially lonely and vulnerable adults at the festive time. The RVS have asked for £465 to pay for a gift for all the clients and volunteers in the SWCC area who will attend the Christmas party, as well as those unable to attend. The members were keen to support this application.

- 11.5 Sandness Community Development (SCD) - Huxter Mills - grant application
S Johnston, H Robertson and A Nichols left the room due to a conflict of interest.
SCD are working with Shetland Amenity Trust, Shetland Straw Society and Historic Environment Scotland on a Shetland-wide project aimed at restoring several thatched buildings and preserving heritage skills. Most of the project costs for this first phase (total cost £6360) are being met by the other participants. SCD have asked for £360 to fund the outline condition report of the Huxter Mills. The members agreed to grant the application funding.

- 11.6 Walls Toilets grant application
The application was submitted by the Walls Community Development Group (WCDG) as the organisation who take responsibility for the building and maintaining the facility. A group of about 20 volunteers act as janitors on a rota. The application was for £2250 to assist with the running costs, which include £1800 water charges. The members agreed that this is a vital facility for everyone in the area – locals and visitors alike – and they were keen to ensure it continues. However, there was concern at the high charges faced by the organisation for utilities and the suggestion that if charitable status was sought, these costs could be reduced considerably. The members agreed to support the application with £1500 (the maximum grant that the SWCC now offers), and to offer the opportunity to discuss how to support future funding.

Action: Clerk will liaise with the groups above to arrange approved grant payments
Clerk will pass on members' offer to have further discussions re. funding of future costs

12. SWCC Annual Report

The draft Annual Report had been forwarded and was approved. It can now be sent to Michael Duncan. As he has already approved our accounts, we can now apply to retain the underspend from 2025-26.

This is the first year Community Councils have had to produce an Annual Report, and following any feedback, the format can be adapted for future years.

Action: Clerk will forward report to Michael Duncan and apply for underspend retention.

13. Resilience Planning

Following the resilience planning training in mid-Sept and an email from Michael Duncan stating that each Community Council area's draft Community Resilience Plan should be ready for review by 31st October, J Haswell met with Ian Taylor (SIC Emergency Planning & Resilience Advisor). She explained to him that the SWCC does not have the capacity to develop such a plan at short notice. She emphasised that the SWCC is keen to be involved and feed into the SIC Emergency Plan for the whole area, but it is a widespread population with many potential challenges. Sandness Community Development Ltd have an emergency

plan in place for their area, but they have a paid resource to assist in producing such documents. Ian accepted this and will be meeting with SIC colleagues to discuss how this is best managed for the whole SWCC area. Ian advised that the SIC currently has the emergency plan information required for Foula and Papa Stour (although A Holt was unaware of any document for Papa).

Cllr Peterson recalled that the previous SWCC developed an emergency plan some years ago and this was located within the documents received from the retired Clerk. It was dated July 2023 and contains contact details as well as basic plans on what to do, who to call, which resources are available, etc. to deal with various emergencies.

Concern was raised that the decision had been taken to remove landline services in January, rather than a month when the potential for severe weather is less. It is not yet clear how those with poor mobile phone signal or inadequate broadband services at home will be able to communicate during normal circumstances, let alone the additional problems for everyone when there are power outages. For some individuals with community alarms, it is unclear how reliable those services will be after the switch off, despite the provision of back-up batteries.

Ian Taylor is happy to attend an SWCC meeting to discuss resilience planning with all members. As there is already a speaker invited next month, it was agreed to invite Ian to attend in December.

Action: Clerk to invite Ian Taylor to attend December SWCC meeting

14. Defibrillators update

14.1 Walls defibrillator.

The Walls defibrillator was checked by Thomas Malcolm of Grampian Training Services in mid-September and found to be defective. Following liaison with the defibrillator guardian, the battery was changed and the defibrillator is now operational again.

14.2 West Burrafirth defibrillator

As the West Burrafirth defibrillator guardian, the Clerk received an email reminder from The Circuit that the routine (3 monthly) check was due. This was completed and all found to be satisfactory.

14.3 General defibrillator update

J Haswell had contacted Michael Duncan to enquire if there were any long-term plans for defibrillator support in Shetland. He advised contacting Andy Mayhew at the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS), which she did, but there has been no response so far. Cllr Peterson confirmed that the matter has often been discussed by the Community Safety and Resilience Board. As there are so many different groups and individuals involved and various brands of defibrillators in Shetland, no-one organisation has taken responsibility for the defib network. Although there is one recognised national register for defibs (The Circuit - which still does not have all available Shetland units registered to it), there remain other lists that are also incomplete and complicate the issue. Although it is frustrating that these

Draft Minutes of the Oct 2026 Meeting of the Sandness & Walls Community Council subject to approval at the next meeting

potentially life-saving items are not better supported by statutory organisations, it was agreed that the SWCC will await an update from the SAS.

Action: Clerk to follow-up if no response received

D Sinclair left the meeting at 8:40pm

15. ASCC / Community Councils Energy Convention update

It was advised that the Chair of the ASCC, Shayne McLeod, has resigned with immediate effect. The ASCC will appoint a new Chair at the next meeting on 23rd November. Any Community Council member can stand.

Following the Community Councils Energy Convention, a further draft document, the 'Shetland Unified Statement' had been circulated to members in mid Sept.

16. Sandness Community Development LPP statutory consultation

The members thought the document was excellent and a valuable resource for the area. No gaps or omissions were identified and no comments made. It demonstrated what could be achieved by having a paid, dedicated resource who can make things happen, especially when decisions are being devolved to communities. J Haswell had attended the Shetland Partnership Planning meeting earlier in the day and this view was echoed there. Few areas in Shetland have functioning Community Development Groups and long-term funding is an ongoing issue. J Haswell noted that it was clear that areas with a paid community development officer have access to more funding and initiatives such as community housing.

Action: Chair will write to the SCD to pass on the members' appreciation of the LPP.

17. Local Fire Plan Consultation

The members agreed the document was good, but quite general and could be applied to almost any rural area of Scotland. The focus on prevention was excellent, but there was concern that no mention was made of retaining smaller local fire teams, eg. in Walls, and avoiding centralisation. Further to the discussion regarding resilience, it was considered vital that the Westside fire cover is retained at its current level as a minimum.

Action: Chair will respond with above comments, before the deadline of 15th October.

18. SWCC engagement & draft poster

The Chair and Vice Chair are keen to ensure community engagement and suggested a separate meeting, like the funding meeting held in July 2026, to discuss this issue. The date of 17th February was proposed.

In advance of this, a poster had been developed to offer meetings with local community groups and organisations, to discuss how the SWCC can best support and represent them. This poster was corrected and approved.

Action: Clerk to circulate posters and S Johnston to include on Facebook post
Plans for the February meeting will be developed

Draft Minutes of the Oct 2026 Meeting of the Sandness & Walls Community Council subject to approval at the next meeting

19. AOCB

The dates, times and venues of the SWCC meetings for 2027 must be finalised and confirmed to Michael Duncan before 18th Dec 2026. In August it was agreed to move all meetings to Wednesday until April and from then, to revert to Tuesdays. The meetings will therefore be planned on this basis and confirmed at the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to book 2027 meetings with Sandness and Walls Halls for 2027.

Date/Venue of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was set for **Wednesday** 4th November at 7pm.
Venue – Sandness Hall and TEAMS.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and participation

Meeting closed at 8:50pm

We welcome your contact

- Do you have any community issues or concerns you would like us to discuss?
- A safety issue or an idea for improving the area?
- Do you wish to discuss or apply for funding?

Please get in touch by email - sandnesswallsc@gmail.com



or speak directly to any member via <https://tinyurl.com/yhwa3wus>