

GULBERWICK, QUARFF & CUNNINGBURGH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 30TH APRIL 2024 AT CUNNINGBURGH SCHOOL AT 7.30PM

A. THE CIRCULAR CALLING THE MEETING HELD WAS READ.

B. PRESENT	Mrs M Davis Mr P Coleman	Mr E MacPherson	Mrs P Christie
EX OFFICIO	Cllr R McGregor		
IN ATTENDANCE	Mrs K Geddes	Mr M Duncan, SIC Community Council Liaison/Grants Officer	
CHAIRPERSON	Mr C Clark		
APOLOGIES	Mrs A Arnett Mr G Murray	Cllr B Peterson	Miss E Copland
NOT PRESENT	Cllr A Armitage	Cllr A Duncan	

C. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mrs K Geddes and Mr P Coleman both declared interests in the grant application from the Sound School Parent Council in Agenda Item 4 as their children attend the school. Mrs K Geddes also declared an interest in Item 12 – Clerk’s Salary. Cllr R McGregor declared an interest in Item 11 – Planning, as he is Chair of the SIC Planning Committee.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19TH MARCH 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 19th March were approved on the motion of Mr P Coleman and seconded by Mrs M Davis.

1. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

1. Dental Provision Letter

A reply to the letter to the NHS Dental Services has been received. Members wanted to add their voice to frustrations surrounding the level of service being provided in the hope it would strengthen the evidence for extra government funding.

Antony Visocchi, Director of Dentistry for NHS Shetland sent a two-page reply on 13th March. He set out the current state of the dental service, confirming that for now and the foreseeable future, they are only able to provide an emergency/non-routine service. However they have a new strategy which has just been approved and they are hopeful they can secure additional clinical workforce in 2024.

He said he would be grateful if the information could be shared amongst the community and that he was happy to remain in contact and ensure an open dialogue is maintained. Members were pleased with the reply and agreed to keep an eye on the issue, but decided that no further letters were needed at present.

2. Active Travel

DRAFT MINUTES – Subject to approval at the June 2024 meeting

An email replying to members frustrations at the lack of communication on the path planned along the main road and the lack of progress on projects they had identified was received from Transport Policy and Projects Officer Robina Barton on March 27th.

She didn't explain why the Community Council hadn't been told of the plans for the path but explained that 'members contributed to its identification at the audit workshop that took place on 23 March last year.' She also said she had only just seen the proposals put together by Community Council members and passed to Sustrans in 2018, as they were 'not raised in the workshop'. Members are exasperated as this is the document they have mentioned in every meeting with the officers and in various emails too.

Members decided to write formally to Cllr McGregor expressing their frustration. Lack of staffing and resources are clearly causing issues and they would like it addressed.

ACTION: Clerk to write to Cllr McGregor regarding frustrations around active travel.

3. Smart Meter Installation Concerns

MP Alistair Carmichael had forwarded on further communications in response to the clerk's email expressing members' concerns about the consequences of the rollout of smart meters.

The Data Communications Company (DCC) High Level Escalations and Complaints Manager Rizwan Lockhat replied, aiming to assure the Community Council of the strategic benefits to the nation of the implementation of the smart meter rollout. Details were given of the technical pilot in Orkney of a Wi-Fi solution to the connectivity problems, and drew attention to the formal role Citizen's advice has been given by the Government to advise consumers on all matters to do with Smart Meters.

Lord Callanan, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Energy Efficiency and Green Finance replied on behalf of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. He wrote about the benefits and savings smart meters can bring, and the fact that there is no legal obligation to accept one. He acknowledged the poor connectivity in Shetland and referred to the possible solutions being explored by the DCC. He said meters do not record personal information and that coverage of smart meters are progressing evenly across most customer groups, including households in fuel poverty.

Mr Carmichael explained he is also going to bring the issue up at Prime Minister's Question Time. Mr MacPherson had various issues in each letter which he gave further clarification on, explaining that some of the concerns raised had still not been fully addressed, but given the level of response which Mr Carmichael had been able to generate and the work he had clearly done on it, then there was not much further to add unless sending thanks to the MP, who everyone agreed had done a 'cracking job'.

ACTION: Clerk to pass thanks back to Mr Carmichael and to send details of Prime Minister's Question Time to members when it comes from London.

4. NorthLink Drydock Timetable

The clerk wrote to NorthLink several months ago asking them to consider moving their planned maintenance period a few weeks later in future, to a time which is likely to be less busy with visitors, tourists and Shetlanders coming home for the Up Helly Aa festival. No reply has yet been received.

ACTION: Clerk to add it to Outstanding Items and follow up reply again.

2. POLICE REPORT

The police report for February and March 2024 was read and noted.

Everyone present wanted to record their sympathy to the family and friends of Fraser Smith from Dunrossness, who died in a road traffic accident on Friday 12th April.

3. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The bank statement on April 30th reads £4,069.77.

All of the grants agreed at the last meeting were paid: £345 to the Gulberwick Hall for a defibrillator battery, £300 to SMUHA for internal works to their shed, £945 to Cunningsburgh Village Club for a range of community activities, £150 for the Cunningsburgh Christmas Party and £234 for Shetland Gymnastics Club for a beam transporter.

The road grant money was paid to Garriock Brothers - £229.47, and £18.00 was paid out for stamps from earlier in the year.

We have not received our grant funding for this year yet. Following a meeting with the chair and vice chair to decide on budgets for the year, the clerk has indicated that we would like to draw down our full Core Grant funding and that we will apply for a £3,000 Distribution Fund from the CDF. This will leave £1,000 possibly available for a project grant – though the fund is competitive. The CDF Online application was submitted in time for the Round 1 deadline on Friday 26th April.

The 2023/34 accounts have been submitted to VAS for independent verification.

4. GRANT APPLICATIONS

Shetland Community Benefit Fund

An email and information sheet was received from SCBF setting out some information on the main fund. There was some discussion around the new fund and how it would be administered and a reminder that there is a scheduled Zoom meeting for Thursday May 2nd at 6pm for any members who had further questions or queries.

There was only one SCBF application to consider, from SMUHA for the same project to do indoor work on the galley shed. Members decided again to wait until later in the year to see what other applications come in before deciding how much to award. There may also be an application from the Community Council itself so that has to be taken into consideration.

GQC CC Applications

Members approved the full amount for the following grant applications:

Sound Parent Council's application for £250 for transport for an activity week for the P7 pupils.

Cunningsburgh Parent Council's application for £300 towards tables for the school.

Cunningsburgh School had made it clear that the Education department had done its best to secure more tables outside of budget setting time but that those offered when contacting other schools were understandably the ones they didn't want, meaning they were mismatched and old. Members felt education could be suffering as a result of sticking too closely to paper rules and policies so decided to contact the Chair of the Education and Families Committee with their concerns.

ACTION: Clerk to get in touch with SMUHA and the SCBF to let them know of the delay in making a decision. Clerk to contact successful applicants and let them know what they have been awarded. Clerk to transfer funds accordingly.
Members to let SCBF Fund Manager Eleanor Gear know if they would like to attend the Zoom call.
Clerk to contact Davie Sandison, Chair of Education and Families Committee, regarding members concerns about rigidity of budget rules and policies.

5. ROADS

Blocked ditches at the old Fladdabister loop road were leading to flooding on both the new and old roads but when the clerk passed this on to Roads, they were already dealing with it. Mr MacPherson expressed his gratitude to the Roads department for dealing with it so swiftly.

The muddy area around the large bins at the top of Shurton Brae was discussed again. Clerk to follow it up to ask for an update – can a concrete slab be laid there?

ACTION: Clerk to email thanks to Roads and to check on update on Shurton Brae bins.

6. GULBERWICK, QUARFF & CUNNINGSBURGH DEVELOPMENT GROUP UPDATE

The clerk and vice-chair are to meet with Andrew Blackadder on Friday to hear his experience and advice with development of plans and projects for Scalloway. They will report back following the meeting.

Various options for what form a group should take were discussed as were constitutions and possible projects. Mrs Christie will be able to be more involved after May 20th so a meeting may be arranged after that date.

ACTION: Mr Clark and Mrs Geddes to report back after meeting with Andrew Blackadder. Possible meeting after May 20th and before June 4th to discuss next steps.

10. CORRESPONDENCE

Melvyn Clark, Cunningsburgh School headteacher entered the room (8.15pm) to check on access to the school that evening and was agreeable to staying to give an account of the school transport issue raised by a local parent so it was agreed to move this up the agenda.

He explained that almost all bairns are given school transport during the winter months but that in summer months the distance rules enforced Shetland-wide mean it is really only the bairns from Quarff who are eligible.

The road is very busy and some of it doesn't have pavements, requiring several crossings to stay safe. Parents have concerns that it is not realistic to expect bairns to walk this route and would like the spaces on the bus in the summer to be used for their children – it would just mean the bus heading into the loop road on its way past.

There are a lot of new houses and young families at Aithsetter and the school role has gone up from 68 when he started in January 2022, to 86 now. The school car park is full of staff cars now due to the increase in staffing and drop off and pick up are chaotic due to the single track road. There is queueing and various non-school parking areas being used by some parents – one of which is no longer available due to a private sale.

It is an issue which comes up at almost every parent council meeting and the parents have gone down various routes to try to resolve it – the green issue – one bus is better than so many cars; the parking and access issues; and of course the safety issues of both the walk to and from school and the safety in the car park of the school itself.

SIC staff have been out to talk through the issue with him but they have a policy of equity across the whole of the SIC so can not offer something in Cunningsburgh they would not be able to offer elsewhere.

Members spoke through the issue and agreed they would support the parents. The clerk is to write a letter to Cllr McGregor emphasising how the safety of the bairns is paramount.

There was also talk about a possible application to the SCBF for a transport project, and factoring in a parking area for the school into any Local Place Plans which may be developed. It was also agreed that thought needed to be given to local infrastructure developments any time a new housing development was considered.

---- Mr Clark left 8.30pm ----

ACTION: Clerk to write to Cllr McGregor about the issue and to update the parent who first got in contact.

7. UPDATES FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

Cllr McGregor shared that some of the current priorities for him were fuel poverty and the need for there to be a Shetland tariff; and transport with the Fair Isle ferry and the replacement of the aging fleet of vessels.

Mr Clark asked if there was any way for the SIC to follow Orkney's example and set up its own wind farm. OIC are planning to use the profit from the windfarm to fund their services. Cllr McGregor said it was important that the SIC tries to get equity in any future projects.

There were no updates from other SIC councillors available.

8. LOCAL PLACE PLANS

Various documents about the launch of Local Place Plans sent from both the SIC Planning Department and through the Association of Shetland Community Councils were read and noted.

Mr MacPherson gave details on how he had brought the Fladdabister and Ocrquooy settlement design statement to the Planning Department's notice and shared some of the correspondence he had received. The document was adopted by the SIC in June 2005 but would now be viewed as out of date as it doesn't have spatial maps included. Despite this, he said it has been a success and is still being used by residents, so he is hopeful that it will be an appendix on to any Local Place Plan and continue to be used to inform the Planning Department.

As there is now a formal invitation to communities to prepare a Local Place Plan Mr Duncan advised registering interest to be kept informed of future developments and to be able to learn alongside other similar organisations at the same stage as GQC CC. There is an online launch event happening in May.

ACTION: Clerk to register interest with the SIC re the Local Place Plan launch event. Mr MacPherson to share the emails he had regarding the Fladdabister and Ocrquooy settlement design statement.

9. COMMUNITY COUNCIL SCHEME REVIEW

Michael Duncan, SIC Grants and Community Council Liaison Officer attended to speak specifically about the review, which is now in Phase Two of Three. He provided paper copies of the latest survey and review documents and spoke through each of the question in detail.

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He explained that the scheme has not been reviewed since the 90s and a planned review was put on hold when the Boundary Commission were doing their own review of boundaries. There is a very specific statutory process they have to follow for any review and that has set out what is explored in each phase.

In Phase One between Christmas and January, boundaries and composition were considered and the message came back loud and clear - leave the boundaries as they are. There were almost no comments about the composition of CCs.

In Phase Two they are now tasked with looking at developing a whole scheme so they are asking questions about budgets, election rules, constitutions, draft scheme documents etc. – basically a whole draft proposed scheme.

There are online and paper copies of the survey questions and answers can be submitted in any way. He emphasised that they are just proposals and he welcomed feedback of any kind.

The First Question looks at budgets and proposes that the two current funds are amalgamated. Community Councils would need to advise what they intend to spend the money on at the beginning of the year and put a report in at the end to say what has been done. It aims to get rid of the work there is in applying, to ensure there is no ringfencing of money and CCs have more control over what they spend their money on, and that the money can be released more quickly. Some members expressed a desire to be able to carry money over to other years for bigger projects.

The Second Question looks at whether there should be a fixed allocation of budget per CC and whether it should be linked to population as done in many other areas of Scotland. Discussions were around whether it could be island-proofed and whether consideration should also be given to the services available in each area and the land area too. The small amounts given out every year for grants for things like Christmas Parties or wreaths would also be good to consider.

In Question Three it looks to close a loophole by where a member could join the Community Council but never turn up for meetings, taking up a place of a member who could be more active. It would give the option to remove them if they hadn't attended for six months, or also to give them more time if they had a legitimate reason for their absence.

Linking the number of members with the population as given in the latest census is the subject of Question Four. This would aim for a more consistency across each CC but would not mean any change to GQC's numbers.

Question Five gives a draft set of standing orders for CCs – basically a rule book for how we govern. Procedures to follow if a new chair is elected or if a vote has to happen etc. There is a draft set to look at and comment on.

Question Six updates the Code of Conduct – again there is a draft to be looked at, and Question Seven looks at the possibility of a youth category of members aged 12-16.

Question Eight brings Shetland in line with everywhere else, stopping SIC members being CC members too, and Question Nine looks at the length of time for chairs, proposing a maximum of four years per term.

The last Question – Ten – is a space to put down anything else, any ideas, bugbears etc.

Members spoke through various points and agreed that it was a well-thought out draft. They will consider their answers individually and come back together at the June meeting to draft a CC response. They thanked Mr Duncan for all the hard work which had gone into the scheme so far.

ACTION: Members to complete their own survey document and come back with completed surveys to pull answers into an official GQC CC response. Members can submit their own personal views separately if they wish to do so.

10. CORRESPONDENCE

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2. Remembering Together

Local artist Helen Robertson was commissioned to make plaques to commemorate the experience of people during Covid. It is a Scotland-wide arts project which aimed to create: "Collective acts of reflection, remembrance, hope and healing with communities across Scotland." She was one of five artists chosen in Shetland and she has now finished making her art and is distributing one to each Community Council. Members discussed where to site them and it was decided to contact the halls to see if they would be willing to site it there.

ACTION: Clerk to contact the halls to see who would be willing to have the artwork.

3. Bench from SSE

Two benches have been delivered and are sitting outside the clerk's house awaiting a decision to be made on where they will be sited.

ACTION: Community councillors for each area are to come up with a site for a bench and to get in contact with the clerk when they have more solid plans. It is hoped that the locations will be decided to be able to take action before, or at the very latest at, the June meeting.

10. PLANNING

There were no planning applications to consider or view.

Emails detailing changes to Building Warrant applications and to fees for planning applications were read and noted, as was an email from the Development Plans team at the SIC about the approval of this year's Development Plan Scheme.

11. CLERK'S SALARY

Members approved to raise the clerk's salary by 10p per hour in line with the salary scales agreed nationally and by the ASCC. They also approved £23.80 of backpay. They thanked the clerk for her work.

ACTION: Clerk to amend pay transferred each month and to transfer backpay also.

12. AOCB

1. Association of Shetland Community Councils – June Meeting

The next meeting of the ASCC will be held on June 11th and Mr MacPherson indicated he would attend.

ACTION: Clerk to pass any documents on to Mr MacPherson, who will give an update following the meeting.

2. June Meeting

The clerk wanted to draw everyone's attention to the fact that the June meeting has been pulled forward by a week to June 4th to avoid a clash with the ASCC meeting. The school

has confirmed the room is free and CCLO Mr Duncan has been informed so he can amend COINS.

3. Meeting Clash

Cllr McGregor asked that the meeting days be looked at so that South End SIC Councillors do not have a clash with the Sandwich CC meeting. Each of the three South End CCs have traditionally met on different nights of the week but Sandwich moved theirs a few years ago without consultation and it now clashes with GQC. We did try moving to Wednesday but it did not suit most of the members so has been moved back, occasionally clashing with Sandwich again. Cllr McGregor has spoken to Cllr Peterson who is currently chair of the Sandwich CC and they have asked the clerks to speak to figure out a solution.

ACTION: Clerk to contact Sandwich CC Clerk to talk about meeting days.

4. Apologies for June Meeting

Both Mrs Davis and Cllr McGregor have given their apologies in advance for the June meeting.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is on Tuesday 4th June 2024. Please note earlier date than previously advertised.

Meeting Ends – 9.30 pm.

CHAIR

14. OUTSTANDING ITEMS

March 2024 – Clerk to create a draft application to SCBF for a community event involving food and consultation for future projects for a development group. To look at over summer.