

Skerries Community Council (SCC)

Minute of meeting held at 2.00 pm on Friday, 23rd August 2024

In Skerries Community Hall

Present:

Paul James – Chair
Bertha Anderson – Vice Chair
Frances Anderson
Janice Hughson
Jilly Ash
Marina Tait

In attendance:

Lynsey Hall – Community Support Worker for Skerries
Robert Thomson – SIC Councillor
Elaine Park - Transport Contracts & Operations Officer, SIC
Matt Willmott – Shetland Conservation Officer, RSPB
Alistair Carmichael – MP, Orkney and Shetland
Beatrice Wishart – MSP, Shetland
Olaf Kurtz
William Coulter
Dianne Hughson
Violet McQuade - Clerk (notes)

1) **Apologies**

Marina Anderson, Michael Duncan and Kia James.

Paul welcomed everyone, and thanked Alistair, Beatrice and Matt for attending the meeting.

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

Chairperson asked for declaration of interests – there were no declarations of interest.

3) **Minutes of last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting, held on the 12th July, were approved.
Proposed by Bertha Anderson, seconded by Janice Hughson.

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

As there were technical issues, an update on items that Councillor Thomson was dealing with will either be circulated or carried forward to the next meeting.

4.1 Contact Waste Management re bins

Paul has been in contact with Waste Management regarding the bins. Still waiting for a response.

4.2 Contact Environmental Health re hogweed

Violet has been in communication with various departments in the Council seeking advice on how best to deal with the hogweed problem. Photos of the weed were sent over; some were identified as hogweed, and some were angelica. One suggestion was (for landowners) to cut down the hogweed/angelica plants at the beginning of the growing season/summer. Another suggestion, after consulting with an Agronomist was that a mix of glyphosate could be effective, but it was felt that this could cause problems for both domestic animals and wildlife. Violet will circulate all up-to-date correspondence to members.

Action: Clerk – circulate information to members

4.3 Write to Ferry Services re the Thursday timetable

Violet wrote to both SIC Transport and Ferry Services asking if the ferry could leave Skerries at 9.30 am on Thursday, instead of 10.00 am. This request was refused. This item is now closed.

Elaine Park joined the meeting (remotely)

4.4 Follow up on access to school key

This is still to be resolved. There is a key safe outside the school door, with a key in it, but no one in Skerries has been given access to the code. A member of staff from Education Services will be in attendance at the next SCC meeting – it is hoped that a solution will be found at that time.

4.5 Send Crown Estate information to Councillor Thomson

This has been done. This item is now closed.

5) Skerries trees, crops and wildlife – Presentation by Matt Willmott

RSPB Officer, Matt Willmott gave a very informative presentation on Skerries wildlife, and possible (to be agreed in conjunction with the Skerries community) proposals for the way forward to provide a wildlife habitat on Skerries. Matt said that Skerries is one of the best places in Britain for rare birds, there are also rare plants in Skerries, such as the Oyster Plant.

Matt spoke about the successful tree-planting operation that took place in Skerries in the spring of this year. The event was coordinated by Paul, who also applied for the funding. SCC members thanked Dianne Hughson for granting permission to use some of her land to plant trees on.

There are potential opportunities for future enterprises, including the possibility of ploughing some land to produce crops, which would benefit both residents and wildlife. A small area in the West Isle has been identified as a possible place to start; the landowner has given permission to use some of his land.

The next step is to find out how the community feel about the proposals. A workshop could be held during the winter to find out what the community would like to do to support wildlife, and what funding sources can be identified. Although the project needs to be led by the community Matt is willing to help as much as he can. The RSPB could help the community to find what funding is available.

The Scottish Government is proposing to deliver biodiversity through the National Planning Framework. Under the plan, wildlife has to be left in a better place than it was before. The proposals can also be tied in with the Local Place Plan (to be discussed under Item 8).

It was agreed to look into planting crops again in Skerries, and that Paul and Matt could meet up later for further discussion on the way forward.

Matt left the meeting at 2.30 pm

6) Public bus contracts – Community Needs and Opportunities

Elaine Park gave a presentation on the consultation on future delivery of passenger transport services in the Shetland. The consultation will help determine the needs of, and expectations of the public bus network and school transport in Shetland over the next 5 to 10 years.

As there were some technical difficulties with getting a satisfactory connection, it was decided that instead of sharing the slides for the presentation on screen, Elaine would send the slides to Violet, who would be able to circulate them to the community.

SIC Transport Services are currently touching base with every community to inform, and to find out what the priorities for each community is, looking for problems that need to be solved, and any opportunities for change. Current transport contracts run up to mid-August 2025.

The purpose of the consultation is to gather as many views as possible, as well as regular bus users the consultation is interested in people who don't use buses, and find out why they don't use buses as a means of transport. All the statistics are included in the slides, which will be circulated to the community. It has been recognised that, as far as Skerries is concerned, there are very lengthy waiting times involved when using the current service that connects through Whalsay. The dial-a-ride service for Skerries on late Friday afternoons and late Sunday afternoons has not been particularly well used – it would be good to understand if anything could be done to better improve that service.

Information is primarily being gathered through the online surveys. The link to the survey will be circulated along with the slides, which, to get as full a picture as possible, it is hoped as many people as possible will complete. It was agreed to encourage individuals to complete the online survey.

Elaine left the meeting after completing the presentation.

7) Nursing availability

There was a discussion on the healthcare support in Skerries. Although residents had been led to believe that they would have support from the Healthcare Support Worker (HSW) for five days a week, it has turned out that support is only available for three days a week. All residents in Skerries are happy with the HSW, and do not wish to lose her, but would like to be supported for the five days, as promised, instead of three days a week. It was recognized that the HSW has to go out of the island regularly to keep up her qualifications up-to-date.

As the situation is similar in Fetlar, it was suggested that this could be brought up at the Islands With Small Populations event that will be happening next week.

After discussion it was decided that Paul would contact the NHS, again, regarding HSW availability, with a proposal that an additional HSW could cover the other two days, this would also support the Skerries HSW in her role. Also, Beatrice agreed to raise this at her next meeting with the NHS, which is due to be held in September.

**Actions: Chair to contact NHS/raise issue at IWSP
MSP to raise HSW availability with NHS**

8) Local Place Plan

Lynsey gave an overview of the Local Place Plan.

Communities are encouraged to create a local place plan – this is not compulsory, and to be done only if the community want to do this. The purpose of a Local Place Plan (LPP) is that it must represent the aspirations of the whole community, giving due regard of relevant national, regional and local policies and strategies. Its key features are:

- Community-led plans setting out proposals for the development and use of land
- A LPP can only be led by formally constituted community bodies, such as Community Councils, Local Development Companies or Public Hall Committees
- The plan would include things such as paths, and how people move around, and possible cycle routes
- The boundaries of the place can be determined by the community
- There is no obligation on any community to prepare an LPP
- A valid LPP must be registered by the Council
- Registered LPPs must be taken into account when preparing Shetland's next Local Development Plan
- Groups can get together to put forward their ideas of how they want things done

Community bodies who have registered an interest in creating a Local Place Plan can now access updates, support and guidance. Paul has registered with the Local Place Plan on behalf of the Skerries Community, and is happy to create a plan, but needs to know what the community would like. There is information available online that anyone can read to find out more about what a Local Place Plan is.

It was agreed that Paul would organise a get-together with members of the community to have a discussion.

Action: Chair to organise a get-together to discuss the LPP

9) Funding Application/s received for money from Distribution Fund

1) Application from the Skerries Cooperative

The Clerk explained that the application form received (and circulated) from the Skerries Cooperative did not meet the criteria of the Distribution Fund. The application was for funding to cover insurance and energy; after checking with Shetland Islands Council's External Funding / Community Council Liaison Officer, who deals with Community Council Funding, it was confirmed that the fund does not cover running costs, which insurance and energy would come under. The funds are to be used for projects, buying equipment, events, etc, but not for running costs.

As it was so near the meeting being held that the information was confirmed by the Funding Officer Violet felt it was best to explain to members during the meeting what the outcome of the query had been. It was agreed the funding, as applied for, could not be granted.

Action: Clerk to inform applicant/s of the outcome

2) Application from Skerries Hall Committee

As this form only arrived on the 22nd August, it was agreed to carry this forward to the next meeting, which is due to be held on the 4th October.

Action: Clerk to inform applicant/s of the outcome

10) Risks

Risks and Issues are standing items on the agenda.

The wording on the Risks Log has been updated since the last meeting. The updated version was circulated at the end of July. Violet will recirculate the log.

One SCC member questioned why the Risks Log included an item, or items, that the community has no control over. After discussion it was agreed that, although some items included in the log are outwith the control of the community, they are still a risk. It was agreed that because the items, as discussed, are a risk to the community they will be kept on the log.

Paul provided an overview of the contents of the Risks Log, item by item.

After discussion it was agreed to add the planned loss of landlines to the log.

11) Issues

There are no updates to the Issues Log – most of the items were covered in Item 10.

12) Correspondence Received

All correspondence has been circulated electronically.

13) AOCB

10.1 Bins/Skips

Violet asked if a skip is needed for Skerries at the moment – It was agreed to order a skip.

10.2 Generator and IT provision for the Nurse's House

As discussed at previous meetings, there is still no generator for the nurse's house, also the IT connection at the nurse's house is very poor. After discussion it was agreed that Beatrice would discuss the lack of a generator, and poor IT connection at the nurse's house during her next meeting with the NHS. It was noted that even the doctor couldn't get online the other day when he was in Skerries.

Action: MSP to raise generator/IT issues with NHS

10.3 Marine debris

Councillor Thomson has been in touch with relevant departments in the SIC regarding the marine debris. It is hoped that a meeting can be arranged with various parties, possibly including SEPA and the Crown Estate, to discuss finding a solution to the problem. It is hoped to be able to meet before Christmas, and that the meeting can be held in Skerries.

10.4 Stoura Windfarm

Representatives from Stoura Windfarm have been in touch with Paul. It was hoped that representatives would be able to visit Skerries – there is no information on when that visit would take place. An open day is scheduled to be held in Shetland Museum on the 19th September, Paul is hoping to attend the event.

10.5 Cutting grass at the school

A request was put forward to ask if the Council could organise for the grass on the school grounds to be cut. It was suggested that when the person comes to cut the grass in the graveyard that they could cut the grass at the school the same day. Currently the grass at the school is only cut if a local person does it. If the grass is not cut it comes up to, and above their knees, of the bairns playing in the play park area. It was agreed for Violet to contact the relevant council department to put forward the request.

Action: Clerk – request school grass to be cut

10.6 Online booking

A request was put forward to ask if there is any possibility of the Skerries booking being included in the online booking system. There have been mix-ups with ferry bookings lately. It was agreed that Paul would follow this up.

Action: Chair – contact Ferry Operations re online booking

10.7 Propped up gravestones

The problem about the way the council has left many gravestones in the graveyard propped up with wood was raised. After discussion it was felt, at the moment, that the community cannot do anything about the issue. It was thought that the council may be looking into who would be responsible for putting this right. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to ask if anything will be done regarding the problem.

Action: Clerk to write to Burial Services

14) Date of the next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Friday, 4th October 2024.

The meeting concluded at 3.25 pm

Actions:

Chair: Contact NHS/raise issue at IWSP, re nursing availability
Organise a get-together to discuss LPP
Contact Ferry Operations re online booking

Clerk: Circulate information to members, re hogweed
Inform applicants of the outcome of applications for Distribution Fund money
Request school grass to be cut
Write to Burial Services re propped up gravestones
Order a skip

MSP: Raise HSW availability with NHS
Raise generator/IT issues with NHS

Chair Signature

Signed.....