

# Unst Community Council

## Chair

Claire Priest  
Engistou  
Baltasound  
Unst  
Shetland

## Clerk

Josie McMillan  
Rockfield  
Haroldswick  
Unst, Shetland  
Tel: 01957 711554  
Email: [clerk@unstcc.shetland.co.uk](mailto:clerk@unstcc.shetland.co.uk)

## Minutes of the Special Meeting on Housing held on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 at 6.30 pm in the Baltasound Hall Library

### Present

Claire Priest, Chair  
Gary Betney  
David Cooper  
Hazel Spence  
Robert Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)

### Attending:

Frances Browne, Community Involvement and Development Officer  
Anita Jamieson, Executive Manager - Housing, Shetland Islands Council  
Bryan Leask, Chief Executive, Hjaltland Housing Association  
Gordon Thomson, Unst Partnership Ltd  
Josie McMillan, Clerk

### Apologies

Caroline Hunter, Vice Chair  
Patrick Fordyce  
John Peterson  
Janice Priest  
Julie Thomson  
Duncan Anderson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)  
Ryan Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)

This extra housing meeting was organised to discuss the housing situation on Unst.

### Social Housing

Claire welcomed Anita Jamieson and Bryan Leask to the meeting. She explained that David and Gary had led on this on behalf of the Community Council so would lead the discussion. Introductions were made. David tabled a sheet showing the Shetland Islands Council Local Housing Strategy; Background Information; Transport Problems; Housing breakdown and Forecasts for Housing Market Areas. (Appendix 1). David went over the information on the sheet. He said that there are endless big documents which they have downloaded and read to understand the policies and relevant legislation about housing. He explained that there is National Government legislation which is handed down to Local Authorities which is legally binding but is open to interpretation. Robert said that there is a morass of paperwork to make sense of. With housing they follow national guidelines which have to be approved by Councillors. Bryan said the quantity of new legislation these last three years has been endless and is very restrictive. Housing is the most regulated section, with no flexibility. Anita said that they have to look at the whole housing market, she outlined several different policies, the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP). She said that they had to look at demographics, population, a whole raft of different things. The Scottish Government consultation on Social Housing Net Zero Standard in Scotland ended in March this year. All current policies are on the SIC/Hjaltland Housing Association websites.

David tabled another document, extracts from the Scottish Human Rights Commission (Appendix 2). The Commission is mandated by an Act of Parliament to monitor human rights in Scotland. As part of this role in 2023/24, the Commission will focus and report on what is happening to people's economic, social and cultural rights in the Highlands and Islands. The Commission highlighted the following issues of particular human rights concern in rural areas of Scotland: - Lack of affordable and quality housing; Limited access to sufficient and nutritious food; Inaccessible health care services; Fuel poverty; Access to technology or poor internet connectivity; Poverty related attainment gap in education and Transport connectivity to essential public services and supplies.

Gary said that the Local Housing Strategy 2021 for the next 10 years said that there should be 8 houses built a year, so to date that would be 24 houses. Anita explained that these are Housing Supply Targets and the purpose and method of calculation. Minimum targets to match land supply to overall need. There has been no new Social Housing built on Unst since 1990. Bryan said that Hjaltland had bought 16 ex MOD houses in 2005/2006. Gary repeatedly asked for a break down of the numbers for Unst but Anita was unable to give this.

Unst's population has dropped by 7%, with 31% of the remaining population being over 65 years of age. Income is also less than the Shetland average. There needs to be a way to encourage young people to stay here and have somewhere to stay. Anita said depopulation is a problem in many rural areas. SIC Housing can only do what government legislation and funding allows them to.

Bryan explained about the Scottish Government grant rate for new build housing. He also said about the EPC rating of houses and how it was not designed for the purpose it was used for, new build housing. The new rating will be done on Kilowatt per square metre. This looks at airtightness, if the houses are not airtight heating them is more difficult. There was a discussion about newbuilds and the changing building standards. Anita said the SIC would be focusing on investment on Fabric efficiency, windows, walls, insulation etc, making sure houses are energy efficient. She said that COVID had put a big hole in their planned maintenance program. This is also increasing because of the changes in standards. Anita said that the SIC has many statutory responsibilities as a social landlord. They have faced huge challenges getting contractors to do the work. The SIC are also limited by financial restraints and all investment has to be funded from tenants' rents.

Members said about people working in Unst who needed Housing, e.g. Teachers, Space Ports workers and Salmon workers were used as examples, these people were having to rent private houses. Anita said that anyone can apply for a social housing as long as they are over 16 years old and eligible to live in the UK. Every application is assessed in line with the Allocation Policy.

Gordon explained that UP had conducted a Housing Survey (Appendix 3). The questions asked were probably the same as consultants would ask. This showed that there is a demand for housing on Unst for people within Unst. There is also a demand for housing from outwith the island as well. The results of the survey are shown in Appendix 3.

Bryan said that all Social Housing has to meet the new Government Standard, which hasn't been finalised and published yet. He thinks that implementing these new standard will cost Scottish Councils and Housing Associations about £30 billion. The Government has only committed £1 billion, so all monies will have to come from either rent or borrowing. He said if this legislation goes through, without commitment of significant government funding, their funding will be decimated. This will then impact financially on the ability of Hjaltland and the Council to do any new build. Anita said that the Knab site is intended to be mixed development and is not all social rented housing provision. Gary said that if no

new social housing was built it would have a negative impact on the community. He asked if there were any financial schemes to help people with new builds. There isn't.

Bryan said that the Hjaltland Housing stock in Unst is in good condition. He went on to explain about the different types of house kits and what insulation these houses needed. There are 13 meters in Hjaltland houses in Unst at present. These are calculating the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) - the energy rating of the houses. Gordon asked which houses in Unst would have maintenance done on them first. Anita said that the Council's housing stock in Unst, and generally, is much older stock, the programme of planned maintenance work will be published soon, but for now she could not answer the question.

David asked what the Community Council had to do if we wanted to change things. Bryan said that there is an option around community led housing that is available through the Rural and Island Fund. He said that neither Hjaltland Housing Association or the SIC will be in a position to build houses for possibly the next 10 years. Orkney have already done this through the Island Based Community Development Company. There are also groups on the West Coast of Scotland that have been successful in securing funding.

Robert said that the SIC had been in talks with developers who would be bringing large numbers of workers into Shetland. The SIC are asking how they plan to house them. He said that all rural areas were facing the same challenges. He said that to go for funding there needs to be Housing Need and Demand Assessment done at a local level. Robert suggested applying to Highlands and Islands Enterprise to fund a development worker to do a feasibility study at a local level, might be an option if a local community group wanted to pursue this further.

There are a lot of properties in Unst where there is just a single occupant in three bedroom houses. There is a need for single occupancy houses.

They were asked if rent rates in Unst are different from Lerwick. Both said that there was a difference. Bryan said that all this information can be found on the websites.

Frances said that this meeting has given the Community Council a lot more to look at and discuss. Once this has been done the Community Council can get back to Hjaltland Housing and SIC Housing.

Claire thanked them for attending the meeting, which had been informative.

Anita, Bryan, Frances and Robert left the meeting at 8.20pm.

### **Shetland Community Benefit Fund – UnstFest Application**

There was a discussion about the SCBF – Advance Grant Scheme Application from UnstFest. They had applied for a grant of £10,000 towards the cost of building a new storage facility to store bulky equipment used in the festival. They are applying to various funding bodies Coastal Communities; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; SIC Economic Development; Lottery A4A; Sandison Trust; Cooke Aquaculture, CLLD and their own contribution raised through the online auction. After a discussion it was agreed to support the application.

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

## Appendix 1

### Shetland Islands Council Local Housing Strategy 2022-2027

1. Equalities Act 2010 – public sector equality duty
2. Fairer Scotland Duty
3. The Islands Scotland Act 2018  
The island Communities impact Assessment sections of the Act came into force in 2020
4. Shetland Partnership Delivery Plan 2023-2028
5. Island Communities Impact Assessment 3 August 2022
6. ZetTrans
7. Shetland Islands Council Equality and Diversity Policy January 2019

### Background Information

1. Population of Yell, Unst and Fetlar 1,542  
7% of Shetland population.
2. 7% decrease in population over 10 years.
3. 31.3% of the population are aged over 65 in Yell, Unst and Fetlar  
(the Shetland average is 21.8%).
4. The cost of living is up to 13% higher than the Shetland average for residents of Yell, Unst and Fetlar.
5. The cost of living for residents of Lerwick and Bressay is up to 13% lower than the Shetland average.
6. The median income for Yell, Unst and Fetlar is 25.7% lower than the Shetland average.
7. Forecast for household growth for Shetland in the next 10 years are between 3% and 3.4%.

### Transport Problems

1. Lerwick residents are provided with a seven day integrated bus service for travel by flight (Sumburgh Airport) and ferry (Northlink terminal) for outward or homeward connections with the Scottish mainland.
2. Yell, Unst and Fetlar residents are only provided with a six-day service (Monday to Saturday).
3. Residents of Shetland are entitled to membership of the Air Discount Scheme, Islander fares (Northlink) and if over 60 a free bus pass and 4 Northlink ferry vouchers. On Sunday, no residents of Yell, Unst and Fetlar are able to use the above schemes, which are funded by the Scottish Government. This equates to 7 weeks, 3 days.
4. The weakness of the inter-island ferry service for Yell, Unst and Fetlar due to lack of capacity, staff sickness and morale, and older vessels.

## Hjaltland Housing Association

Lerwick - 414 houses and flats

394 have an EPC of C and above ( 95% )

20 have an EPC of D ( 5% )

Number of houses and flats built since 1990 is 339

Unst - 16 houses

16 houses have an EPC of D ( 100% )

None built since 1990

## SIC Housing Association

Lerwick - 867 houses and flats

421 have an EPC of C and above ( 48.5% )

446 have an EPC of D and below ( 51.5% )

Number of houses and flats built since 1990 is 143

Unst - 56 houses

7 have an EPC of C and above ( 12.5% )

49 have an EPC of D and below ( 87.5% )

None built since 1990

## Forecasts for Housing Market Areas

Lerwick and Bressay - 427

Staney Hill, The Knab, The Lanes plus Sandveien refurbishment

North Isles - 80

No breakdown of the number of houses for each island

## **Appendix 2**

### **The Scottish Human Rights Commission launches a project to find out how human rights are being experienced across the Highlands and Islands.**

As Scotland's National Human Rights Institution, the Commission is mandated by an Act of Parliament to monitor human rights in Scotland. As part of this role in 2023/24, the Commission will focus and report on what is happening to people's economic, social and cultural rights in the Highlands and Islands.

#### **Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in rural areas**

In March 2023, the Commission delivered a report to the United Nations in Geneva on how economic, social and cultural rights are being experienced in Scotland. Our evidence gathering to inform this highlighted the following issues of particular human rights concern in rural areas of Scotland:

- Lack of affordable and quality housing
- Limited access to sufficient and nutritious food
- Inaccessible health care services
- Fuel poverty
- Access to technology or poor internet connectivity
- Poverty related attainment gap in education
- Transport connectivity to essential public services and supplies

The Commission has therefore taken the decision to take a deeper look at these potential human rights denials to understand more about how economic, social and cultural rights are being experienced in the Highlands and Islands.