

Unst Community Council

Chair

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Baltasound
Unst
Shetland

Clerk

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Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 4th November 2024 at 6.30 pm in the Baltasound School Music Huts and by MsTeams

Present:

Claire Priest, Chair
Caroline Hunter, Vice Chair
David Cooper
John Peterson
Janice Priest
Hazel Spence

Attending:

Frances Browne, Community Involvement and Development Officer
Gordon Thomson, Unst Partnership Ltd
Josie McMillan, Clerk

01/11/24 Apologies

Gary Betney
Duncan Anderson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)
Robert Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)
Ryan Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)
Michael Duncan, Community Council Liaison Officer

02/11/24 Declaration of Interest

Claire, Caroline and Hazel declared an interest in 09/11/24.2 SCBF Baltasound JHS Parent Council Residential Trip to Loch Insh Residential Centre and 12/11/24.1 Baltasound Junior High School Parent Council – Residential Trip to Loch Insh Residential Centre.
Frances declared an interest in 12/11/24.2 Unst Working Mens Society.
Janice and Caroline declared an interest in 12/11/24.3 Uyeasound Hall.

03/11/24 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes from the meeting held on Monday 30th September 2024 were proposed by Claire and seconded by Janice.

04/11/24 Matters Arising from last minutes

There were no matters arising from the last minutes.

05/11/24 Ferries/Fixed Links

05/11/24.1 Ferries – Emergency Cover Disruption

Andrew Inkster, Executive Manager, SIC Ferry & Airport Operations & Port Infrastructure, replied to the email about the lack of Emergency Ferry Cover which recently occurred on Yell Sound, but has also

happens regularly on Bluemull Sound. Mr Inkster explained that their "Safety Management System" is clear, and places responsibility on the Master to inform HM Coastguard whenever emergency cover cannot be provided. He said that "this is a relatively regular occurrence during winter, when vessels are tied up due to strong winds. Mr Inkster said that while Masters may elect to tie up for normal sailings, they may still be willing to sail at times of emergency, so it is very much up to the Master and the prevailing conditions. Mr Inkster said that instances caused by a lack of crew are very rare, but given the issues they currently face around the recruitment and retention of staff, these cannot be ruled out in the future." Mr Inkster explained that HM Coastguard take the lead role in coordinating emergency responses from all blue light services utilising SIC vessels, and there is no requirement from them for wider emergency services consultation by Ferry Operations to take place. Members believe that the doctors should be notified as well, in case there is a medical emergency, they would know whether it would be the ferries or Coastguard helicopter that would be used. Mr Inkster met with Councillors Alison Duncan and Catherine Hughson, Community Safety and Resilience Board, and has agreed with them that he will contact NHS, Scottish Ambulance Service, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service and the Police, to review current arrangements and ensure they are fit for purpose. Mr Inkster will provide an update after this meeting. Members queried whether SIC Ferries Department were paid to provide out of hours emergency cover. They believed that the Yell Sound crews are on contract but the Bluemull Sound crews do these runs on a goodwill basis. The Clerk will email SIC Ferries about this.

05/11/24.2 Incident on the Bigga, Bluemull Sound

Andrew Inkster, Executive Manager, SIC Ferry & Airport Operations & Port Infrastructure emailed to say that "following the recent incident on board Bigga, SIC Ferries were contacted by the MCA, who have confirmed that with immediate effect, all vehicles over 3.5 tonnes must be secured at all times on the route between Gutcher and Belmont, irrespective of weather and tidal conditions." He said that "other routes, including Fetlar remain unaffected, and existing arrangements can continue." He explained that "this is a departure from previous arrangements, where the Cargo Securing Manual for the vessel stipulated a degree of discretion which could be applied by the Master, based on the type of vehicle and the conditions on the day. That discretion on the route between Gutcher and Belmont can no longer be applied." Mr Inkster explained that "this will inevitably mean a change to current timetables, to allow time for large vehicles to be lashed down during the daytime period when most freight traffic occurs. Lashings will also reduce available deck space for other vehicles travelling at the same time." SIC Ferries are assessing the implications of this change, and identifying all options to minimise impacts on service delivery. They will be meeting with members of the Transport Planning Team on Friday. There was a discussion about this, the Community Council have received a lot of correspondence from the community about this. One business owner who regularly travels between all three of the North Isles is concerned that the SIC will reduce the number of runs to and from Unst. This would have a detrimental affect on an already fragile service. There was a discussion about the timetables and members agreed that if the timetable is to be reviewed it needs to be a complete rebalancing of the service provided to both Fetlar and Unst. When the timetable changes from the summer to winter timetable it is the Bluemull service which has the biggest drop in runs. One example given in the immediate aftermath of the incident on the Bigga, Bluemull Sound was left with just the Geira running to a Saturday timetable with no bookings. Each morning the service commenced from Fetlar at approximately 06.15 sailing to Gutcher, on to Belmont, back to Gutcher then back to Hamars Ness. This meant that there was only 1 ferry out of Unst in the early morning. There was a discussion as to why the initial sailing from Fetlar could not have gone directly to Belmont especially as there were a number of stock boxes waiting to travel from Unst as there were sales at the Marts on both of these days. All the North Isles SIC Councillors have been contacted about this, Robert said that he understands the problems this is potentially going to cause. He said he will be engaging with Ferries and Transport Planning to look at various options to mitigate and minimise the inevitable disruptions the timetables changes will bring. The Clerk will write John Smith, SIC Director of Infrastructure Services; Moraig Lyall, SIC Chair Environment and Transport Committee; Andrew Inkster, Sheena Summers, Fiona Farquhar SIC Ferries Department; and the three North Isles Councillors.

05/11/24.3 Unst Tunnel Action Group (UTAG) AGM Meeting – Baltasound Hall, 10th October 2024

The UTAG AGM was held on Thursday 10th October. There were some new people at the meeting. The office bearers are the same, except Sarah Kerr is now the secretary. The North Isles Tunnel group has very nearly reached the target that was originally set of £200,000 to cover the costs of a new technical study. The Shetland Inter-Island Transport study is being carried out by Stantec Consultants, this will take 18 months to be completed. Billy Briggs, editor and writer at The Ferret, Scotland's first media platform dedicated to public interest journalism, is coming to Shetland to do an in depth report on tunnels.

06/11/24 SIC North Isles Councillors Update

All three North Isles Councillors are away. Ryan sent in a report saying that he hadn't attended any meetings as he had been abroad. He said that he is monitoring the Bluemull Sound situation closely and will continue to have discussions with officers and councillors regarding how this will impact on Unst, Yell and Fetlar residents. He said that Unst cannot have any sort of reduction in service on Bluemull sound from what it is today.

07/11/24 Unst Partnership Ltd (UP) Update.

The next UP skip day is on Saturday, 9th November. White goods can also be brought along then. UP may have a new contractor willing to take away scrap metal on Skip days but this has still to be confirmed. The UP shop continues to trade well. It is unlikely that UP will hold a Participatory Budget event this year as running costs and Skip costs are quite high this financial year. UP is still considered to be a charity by OSCR as it runs a Skip scheme and recycles goods through the charity shop. The funding for a Community Development Plan 2025-28 is being provided by the Coastal Communities/CLLD fund. Consultants from "Community Enterprise" are holding public meetings about suggestions/ideas for the new plan on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th November, times and venues to be confirmed. UP has contacted housing consultants L & L Fraser Ltd about carrying out a Housing Needs Assessment for Unst. Luke Fraser has already carried out a similar study in North Yell and has a lot of experience with rural housing issues and local housing projects. UP has applied to Cooke Scotland and the Sandison Trust for funding support. The work should start early in the new year. In conjunction with this, UP is putting in a funding request to the SSEN Scotland Community Benefit Fund for a Housing Development Officer. This would be a full time post for a year/18 months to look at ways of providing additional housing in Unst. If the bid is successful and the Housing Needs Assessment supports such an idea, the post-holder would begin work from April 2025. The deadline for applying to this fund is 22nd November. UP has had some limited success in removing scrap cars from Brakefield Crescent and Millburn Park. One of the big issues is that most scrap merchants use a winch and if cars have wheels missing or punctures, they may refuse to take them.

08/11/24 Community Involvement Update

Frances said she has got funding to run Winter pop ins again this year. There has been one in October, which was run in conjunction with the Community Library. There had been 10 people at this session. The funding will cover these pop ins being run once a month. Frances is planning to run a daytime session, maybe at Nordalea. She is going to organise a separate meeting to discuss the Local Place Plans (LPP) and Community Development Plans (CDP). It was agreed that this would be very useful, it would give a better understanding of what is involved with each of these plans. There has been no further information about Local Place Plans.

09/11/24 Shetland Community Benefit Fund (SCBF)

09/11/24.1 Update

David said that the changes to SCBF funding are now in place. He suggested contacting the SCBF office to find out the best route for applying for funding. SCBF are also awarding funding for apprenticeships. They are putting information out to business and encouraging them to apply. SCBF believe there will be more applications for funding towards apprenticeships than they have funds available for. Members said that

SCBF do not give grant funding towards transport costs and it is these costs that groups in Unst need help with.

09/11/24.2 Baltasound JHS Parent Council (On behalf of all North Isles Schools) - £1,000 – Residential Trip to Loch Insh Residential Centre

After a discussion about this application, members agreed to approve it. There were three Community Councillors that declared an interest, so did not take part in the discussion.

10/11/24 Community Council Scheme Review Update

Claire had attended the meeting about this. She said they are still looking at different models going forward. The SIC funds for Community Councils has remained the same for many years, as has the allocation of funds to each Community Council. Members were worried that the SIC might want to centralise some of the services. But there was agreement that this does not work very well.

10/11/24.2 Co-option of Community Councillors

There have been expressions of interest from 3 people who are interested in becoming Community Councillors. They need to complete a co-option form, and attend the next meeting where they will be appointed to the Community Council.

11/11/24 Applications for Planning

There were no applications for planning.

12/11/24 Application for Donations

12/11/24.1 Baltasound Junior High School Parent Council – School Trip to Loch Insh Residential Centre

After a discussion it was agreed to approve this application, and give £1,000 towards to costs of the residential trip to Loch Insh. Three members took no part in the discussion as they had declared an interest.

12/11/24.2 Unst Working Mens Society

It was agreed to give a donation of £385 towards the costs of hosting a Christmas Party for bairns from Baltasound, Haroldswick and Norwick.

12/11/24.3 Uyeasound Hall

It was agreed to give a donation of £105 towards the costs of hosting a Christmas Party for bairns from the Uyeasound area.

12/11/24.4 Unst Under 5s

It was agreed to give a donation of £77 towards the costs of hosting a Christmas Party for the Under 5s group.

13/11/24 Application for Unadopted Road

13/11/24.1 Haroldswick Methodist Church

It was agreed to give an unadopted road grant of £600 towards the cost of tarring the access road at the Haroldswick Methodist Church. Tarring the road will make the Church accessible to everyone including wheel chair users. The grant will be paid on receipt of paid invoices.

14/11/24 Correspondence

14/11.24.1 ASCC meeting - 6th November 2024

Claire had planned to attend this meeting but now has another commitment. Frances is planning to attend so can feedback to the Community Council at the next meeting.

14/11/24.2 Scottish Government – Online Survey – Fuel Poverty Research – closing date 08/11/24

There was a lot of discussion about this online survey, each question was discussed and answered. Claire agreed to complete the survey online.

14/11/24.3 Community Council online survey – Insights on Community Resilience in Emergencies

Matt Mason, Group Commander - Shetland Scottish Fire and Rescue Service emailed to say that the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) and Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) are working together through a partnership with the British Heart Foundation to equip people with vital cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation skills and potentially save someone's life if they go into cardiac arrest outside of hospital. The training session for communities will cover the following topics:- Learn how to recognise a cardiac arrest and what to do in an emergency situation; Understand when you should call 999 and what to expect; Learn CPR technique and help you perfect it while you practise and Learn how to use a defibrillator and where you can find your nearest one. The sessions are around 60-90 minutes long and include instruction and practice of CPR and defibrillation facilitated by the Ambulance and Fire team. Caroline said that she can offer sessions on how to use defibrillators.

14/11/24.4 Social Housing

Maggie Sandison, Chief Executive, SIC replied to the Community Council's letter about Social Housing. She said that "the officers who attended the meeting (01/07/24) were both experienced professionals who provided a realistic assessment of the current position that social landlords are operating in. There are huge challenges in delivering housing services at the moment with increased costs, reducing contractor workforce and constrained budgets alongside increasing demand pressures. The wider housing market and specific social landlord responsibilities operate in a complex working environment." Ms Sandison explained that "the Council has the statutory responsibility as the strategic enabling body for housing for Shetland and alongside that role is also a social landlord for the local authority's housing stock. Local authorities have the statutory duty to tackle and prevent homelessness. The Hjalmland Housing Association is a charitable company operating as a registered social landlord. The basis for how the Council develops its housing strategy is through the analysis of evidence of housing need from the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment. The evidence sources have to be assessed and signed off by the Scottish Government as robust and credible. There is a clear difference between housing need and aspirational demand. This is shown through the scenario testing of the evidence using varying assumptions on migration, economic growth, demographic data etc, by housing market area. The delivery of housing is not a competition between geographic areas. The purpose of social housing is to address housing need. There are other forms of housing and options for addressing market gaps that are also set out in the Local Housing Strategy. Evidence shows that there is a low level of demand for social housing in Unst and that there is generally sufficient turnover to meet local levels of identified housing need. All of the evidence sources are kept under review and regularly updated." Ms Sandison said that "the purpose of the meeting with the local construction industry was to build an open dialogue with the industry to ensure that the pipeline of work for housing can be delivered. The meeting sought to identify the barriers facing the industry and how public bodies can assist to overcome those. The allocation of funding for new build housing comes through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan based on the evidence of the housing market and the priorities of the Local Housing Strategy. There is a 'golden thread' of evidence that runs through these strategic documents. The Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding is under acute pressure and is being cut at a time when costs are rising so it is likely that our delivery programme will have to be re-prioritised to match the level of funding. In terms of landlords' investment in current stock this comes through annual budget cycles and is based on stock information and current prescribed standards which are monitored and regulated by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator. Landlord accounts are effectively funded from tenants' rents and that restricts the overall amounts of funding that can be channelled into the services provided, as well as the impacts of increased costs and availability of contractors to carry out works." It was agreed that David would compose a reply to this email expressing the Community Council's frustration with the lack of plans for

social housing in Unst, given the work being carried out in Lerwick, including the “rebuilding” of houses in Lerwick and Scalloway.

14/11/24.5 Transport

The Shetland Times carried out a poll which asked – “Can you rely on public transport to Sumburgh Airport?” – the results were Yes 23% (82 votes) and No 77% (276 votes). It was agreed to include the poll results along with the information which was collated about an integrated return bus service from Unst to Lerwick on Sundays and send to Michael Craigie, ZetTrans and Elaine Park, SIC Transport Contracts and Operations.

15/11/24 Community Council Finances

15/11/24.1 Community Council Bank Account – changes to terms and conditions

A letter was received from the Bank of Scotland explaining that the Community Council bank account is being changed to a Community Account, which has a monthly maintenance charge of £4.75. The Clerk will look at different options for bank accounts.

16/11/24 A.O.C.B.

16/11/24.1 2025 Community Council Meeting Dates

The proposed meeting dates for 2025 were circulated and agreed. The dates set for November and December could be changed because Community Council elections will be taking place in November 2025.

16/11/24.2 Roads

It was agreed to write and ask when the Bus Shelter at the Hamar corner will be replaced. The gate at the side of the Muness Grid isn’t closing right, allowing animals to get through. The speed sign at the Uyeasound Galley shed doesn’t have an electronic cancellation, so shows 20 mph on past the physical sign for the end of the speed restrictions. It was agreed to write about these issues.

17/11/24 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Monday 9th December 2024

Caroline thanked Claire and Hazel for their many years of voluntary service to the Community Council. Claire has been vice chair and then chair for several years. Caroline said she hoped they both might consider standing again for the Community Council in future.

Chair: _____ Date: _____

Clerk: _____