

Minute

General Meeting of the Council

Tuesday, 10 March 2026, 10:30.

Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.



Present

Councillors Graham A Bevan, Stephen G Clackson, Alexander G Cowie, David Dawson, P Lindsay Hall, Steven B Heddle, Rachael A King, Kristopher D Leask, James R Moar, John A R Scott, Gillian Skuse, Jean E Stevenson, Ivan A Taylor, Mellissa-Louise Thomson, Owen Tierney, Duncan A Tullock and Heather N Woodbridge.

Present via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

Councillors W Leslie Manson, Janette A Park, Raymond S Peace and Gwenda M Shearer.

Clerk

- Gavin Mitchell, Head of Corporate Governance.

In Attendance

- Oliver D Reid, Chief Executive.
- Stephen Brown, Chief Officer, Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership.
- Lorna Richardson, Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development.
- James Wylie, Director of Education, Communities and Housing.
- Erik Knight, Head of Finance.
- Hazel Flett, Service Manager (Governance).

In Attendance via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

- Gareth Waterson, Director of Enterprise and Resources.
- Andrew Groundwater, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

Observing

- Kirsty Groundwater, Communications Team Leader.

Declarations of Interest

- No declarations of interest were intimated.

Chair

- Councillor Graham A Bevan, Convener.

1. General Meeting of the Council

Minute of Meeting held on 9 December 2025

On the motion of Councillor Graham A Bevan, seconded by Councillor Heather N Woodbridge, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the General Meeting of the Council held on 9 December 2025 as a true record.

2. Planning Committee

Minute of Meeting held on 10 December 2025

On the motion of Councillor Owen Tierney, seconded by Councillor David Dawson, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 10 December 2025 as a true record.

3. Licensing Committee

Minute of Meeting held on 11 December 2025

On the motion of Councillor Duncan A Tullock, seconded by Councillor Kristopher D Leask, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 11 December 2025 as a true record.

4. Local Review Body

Minute of Meeting held on 18 December 2025

On the motion of Councillor Owen Tierney, seconded by Councillor Duncan A Tullock, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the Local Review Body held on 18 December 2025 as a true record.

5. Enterprise and Infrastructure Committee

Minute of Meeting held on 3 February 2026

On the motion of Councillor Kristopher D Leask, seconded by Councillor Mellissa-Louise Thomson, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the Enterprise and Infrastructure Committee held on 3 February 2026 as a true record.

The Council thereafter resolved to approve the recommendations contained in the Minute of the Meeting of the Enterprise and Infrastructure Committee held on 3 February 2026.

6. Education, Communities and Housing Committee

Minute of Meeting held on 4 February 2026

On the motion of Councillor Gwenda M Shearer, seconded by Councillor Ivan A Taylor, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the Education, Communities and Housing Committee held on 4 February 2026 as a true record.

The Council thereafter resolved to approve the recommendations contained in the Minute of the Meeting of the Education, Communities and Housing Committee held on 4 February 2026.

7. Monitoring and Audit Committee

Minute of Meeting held on 5 February 2026

On the motion of Councillor P Lindsay Hall, seconded by Councillor Mellissa-Louise Thomson, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the Monitoring and Audit Committee held on 5 February 2026 as a true record.

8. Planning Committee

Minute of Meeting held on 11 February 2026

On the motion of Councillor Owen Tierney, seconded by Councillor David Dawson, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 11 February 2026 as a true record.

9. Policy and Resources Committee

Minute of Meeting held on 17 February 2026

On the motion of Councillor Alexander G Cowie, seconded by Councillor Graham A Bevan, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 17 February 2026 as a true record.

The Council thereafter resolved to approve the recommendations contained in the Minute of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 17 February 2026.

10. Policy and Resources Committee

Minute of Special Meeting held on 3 March 2026

On the motion of Councillor Heather N Woodbridge, seconded by Councillor Alexander G Cowie, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 3 March 2026 as a true record.

The Council thereafter resolved to approve the recommendations contained in the Minute of the Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 3 March 2026, including those relating to the budget and Council Tax levels for 2026/27 as follows:

10.1. That the savings proposals, as set out in Appendix 3 to the Minute of the Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 3 March 2026, be approved for inclusion in the 2026/27 budget.

10.2. That the unavoidable service pressures and uprating assumptions, as set out in Appendices 4 and 5 respectively to the Minute of the Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 3 March 2026, be included in the 2026/27 budget.

10.3. That Council Tax for 2026/27 be increased by 6%, increasing a Band D liability to £1,669.07, to maintain the national average Band D level.

10.4. That the budget for 2026/27 be set at £153,346,600, as detailed in Appendix 5 to the Minute of the Special Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 3 March 2026.

10.5. That the policy of presumption against new commitments should continue to remain in force across General Fund services, with the following conditions:

- Exceptions might be considered for new commitments which are 100% funded by external bodies – proposals involving the Council in partnership funding shall require compensatory savings to be identified.
- The Council should consider undertaking new statutory duties or any case where it was considered that statutory duties were not being fulfilled, however, such duties having financial implications should first be reported to the relevant Committees for approval.
- The Council should consider new commitments where compensatory savings could be identified – any Committee considering such recommendations should, in the first instance, seek to identify savings from within its revenue budget.

10.6. That Directors should review and increase existing charges by a minimum of 3.8%, from 1 April 2026, if possible, or as early as possible thereafter, apart from the undernoted exceptions, where alternative arrangements were required:

- Building Warrant and Planning fees – set nationally.
- Harbour Charges – annual increase considered separately by the Harbour Authority Sub-committee.
- Ferry fares – policy is to match fare increases to those applied on Transport Scotland's supported ferry services.
- Car Park and Electric Vehicle charges – annual increases should be considered separately by the Enterprise and Infrastructure Committee.
- Residential Care and Home Care – based on cost of service.
- Very Sheltered Housing – based on cost of service.
- Supported Accommodation – based on cost of service.
- Meals At Home Service – full cost recovery.
- Licensing fees – annual increase considered separately by the Licensing Committee.
- Ship Sanitation Certification – set nationally.
- Marriage / Civil Partnership – set nationally.
- Roads Inspection Fees – set nationally.
- Trade Waste charges – based on cost of service.
- Homelessness rents – set in accordance with the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
- Selected quarry product sales – based on cost plus.

10.7. That powers be delegated to the Head of Finance, in consultation with the Director of Enterprise and Resources and the Chief Executive:

- To determine further variations in charges during 2026/27 where it was deemed expedient to do so.
- To allocate any General Fund underspend from 2025/26 to the setting of the General Fund revenue budget for 2026/27.

- To determine where any General Fund overspends from 2025/26 would be funded from General Fund earmarked reserves balances, while ensuring that the non-earmarked General Fund reserves balance, amounting to 3% of the overall revenue budget for 2026/27, was in place.
- To prepare and distribute a detailed budget incorporating all the budget adjustments agreed by the Council, and any settlement updates and/or clarifications unknown at the date of this meeting.

11. Police and Fire Sub-committee

Minute of Meeting held on 24 February 2026

On the motion of Councillor David Dawson, seconded by Councillor Duncan A Tullock, the Council resolved to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the Police and Fire Sub-committee held on 24 February 2026 as a true record.

The Council thereafter resolved to approve the recommendations contained in the Minute of the Meeting of the Police and Fire Sub-committee held on 24 February 2026, attached as Appendix 1 to this Minute.

12. Conclusion of Meeting

At 10:37 the Convener declared the meeting concluded.

Signed: Graham A Bevan.

Minute

Police and Fire Sub-committee

Tuesday, 24 February 2026, 14:00.

Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.



Present

Councillors David Dawson, Duncan A Tullock, Graham A Bevan, Jean E Stevenson, Alexander G Cowie and Raymond S Peace.

Present via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

Councillor Mellissa-Louise Thomson.

Clerk

- Sandra Craigie, Committees Officer.

In Attendance

- Lorna Richardson, Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development.
- Kenny MacPherson, Head of Property and Asset Management.
- Veer Bansal, Solicitor.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:

- Robert Lennox, Area Commander.
- David McGroarty, Group Commander.

Police Scotland:

- Chief Inspector Scott Robertson.

Declarations of Interest

- No declarations of interest were intimated.

Chair

- Councillor David Dawson.

1. Performance Against Orkney Fire and Rescue Plan

After consideration of a report by Robert Lennox, Local Senior Officer, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from David McGroarty, Group Commander, the Sub-committee:

Scrutinised the statistical performance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services, Orkney Islands area, for the period 1 October to 31 December 2025, detailed in the Quarterly Performance Report, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Local Senior Officer, and obtained assurance that progress was being made against the objectives.

2. Performance against Local Policing Plan

Councillor David Dawson declared an interest in this item, his connection being that he was Chair of Orkney Drugs Dog, but as the matter was not discussed in detail, he did not leave the meeting.

After consideration of a report by Chief Inspector Scott Robertson, Area Commander, copies of which had been circulated, the Sub-committee:

Scrutinised progress made against the objectives set within the Orkney Islands Local Policing Plan 2023 to 2026 Year 3, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Area Commander, for the period covering 1 April to 31 December 2025, and obtained assurance that progress was being made against the objectives.

Councillor Mellissa-Louise Thomson left the meeting during discussion of this item.

3. Strategic Policing Plan for Scotland 2026-29

Draft Consultation Response

After consideration of a report by the Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Property and Asset Management, the Sub-committee:

Resolved to **recommend to the Council** that the response to the consultation on the draft Strategic Policing Plan for Scotland 2026–2029, previously submitted to the Scottish Police Authority on 23 January 2026 to ensure the Council's views were represented within the consultation timeframe, attached as Appendix 1 to this Minute, be approved.

4. Conclusion of Meeting

At 15:10 the Chair declared the meeting concluded.

Signed: David Dawson.

Draft Consultation Response

Strategic Outcomes

Outcome 1: Communities are safer and more secure, with less crime and improved wellbeing, through effective policing services reflective of local needs.

Response: Strongly Agree

Rationale: This outcome is especially relevant here as the impact of single incidents can be significant due to geography and limited resources. The focus on local needs, prevention, and wellbeing aligns with priorities and the realities of island communities.

Outcome 2: Services are designed and delivered compassionately, in a trauma-informed and person-centred way to ensure victims have trust and confidence in policing and are supported.

Response: Agree

Rationale: The commitment to trauma-informed, person-centred service delivery is positive and in small communities, compassionate policing is essential for building trust and supporting recovery.

Outcome 3: Partners and stakeholders are involved in developing a responsive and proactive whole-system approach to prevention, early intervention and harm reduction.

Response: Neither agree nor disagree

Rationale: Opportunities for partnership working, shared assets and training sit within the sphere of the Community Planning Partnership, and the principles of whole-system working are supported. However, the current arrangements with Police Scotland do not provide for quarterly (three-month) local reporting and scrutiny, which is essential for timely oversight and effective collaboration in Orkney. Without this, it is difficult to fully endorse the outcome as currently implemented

Outcome 4: The working environment is safer and its culture more inclusive and is one where inspiring leadership enables everyone to feel valued and supported.

Response: Neither agree nor disagree

Rationale: The ambition for a safer, inclusive environment is welcome, but the strategy lacks recognition on how these aims will be delivered in islands locations. Persistent challenges in Orkney include limited resourcing, difficulties in recruitment, and the need to travel due to the lack of islands tailored training and development.

Outcome 5: The policing system delivers best value through efficient, effective and sustainable services, which are adaptable, and embrace opportunities for innovation and collaboration.

Response: Agree

Rationale: Support the drive for efficiency, sustainability, and innovation, provided that these changes do not reduce accessibility or visibility in rural and island areas. Technology and estate changes should enhance frontline presence, not diminish it. Monitoring the impact of digital tools on officer time and community engagement will be important to ensure best value is achieved.

Additional comments

"The Council welcomes the Strategic Policing Plan 2026–29 as an overarching framework that sets out clear national priorities and values for policing in Scotland. We recognise that the plan is not intended to address operational detail, but rather to provide direction and outcomes that will guide the development of the Annual and Local Police Plans.

It is important that the plan explicitly acknowledges the diversity of Scotland's communities and the need for flexibility in how national priorities are delivered locally. For rural and island areas such as Orkney, this means ensuring that the framework enables local priorities, challenges, and opportunities to be reflected in subsequent planning and delivery. We encourage the plan to highlight the importance of ongoing engagement with local authorities and communities, so that the strategic outcomes are translated into effective action on the ground.

We support the plan's emphasis on prevention, partnership, compassion, and innovation, and its commitment to inclusive and trauma-informed policing. To realise these ambitions, it is essential that the mechanisms for local input, accountability, and adaptation are clear and robust. This will help ensure that issues such as resourcing, recruitment, and training—while operational in nature—can be addressed appropriately through the Annual and Local Police Plans, in line with the strategic direction set by the plan.

In summary, we support the strategic direction of the plan and ask that it continues to provide space for local voices and priorities, so that policing services remain responsive, effective, and trusted in all communities across Scotland.

Digital tools and estate changes must enhance, not diminish, accessibility and visibility in rural areas. Efficiency gains should not come at the expense of frontline presence. The impact of technology on officer time and community engagement should be monitored and reported.

Road safety, drug-related harm and protection of vulnerable people remain top priorities. Partnership investment and pragmatic flexibility in resource deployment are essential to maintain public confidence and community safety. While we support the plan's strategic outcomes, we urge that implementation is sensitive to the unique needs of island and rural communities, with clear mechanisms for local input, transparent performance measures and sustained partnership working.