

Minute of the Meeting of Stromness Community Council held in the John Rae Room, Warehouse Buildings, Stromness and via Teams, on Tuesday, 17 June 2025 at 19:00

Present:

P McLaughlin, K Bevan, D Harrold, W Mackay, C Sinclair (via Teams) and M Sutherland.

In Attendance:

- Councillor G Bevan.
- Councillor L Hall.
- Councillor J Park.
- H Green, Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development.
- J McGlynn, Executive Manager, Orkney Research and Innovation Campus.
- G Harrison, ORIC Board Member.
- S Craigie, Clerk.

Chair:

- P McLaughlin.

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1. Apologies

Resolved to note that no apologies for absence had been intimated.

2. Resignation

The Chair informed members that A Esslemont had recently handed in her resignation from Stromness Community Council due to conflicts of interest following her recent new post within HIE. The Chair expressed her thanks to A Esslemont for all her work.

3. Orkney Research and Innovation Campus

As Councillors L Hall and J Park were both members of the Planning Committee, both declared an interest and left the meeting for this item.

The Chair welcomed J McGlynn and G Harrison to the meeting, who had been invited to discuss concerns previously raised by Stromness Community Council regarding their current planning application.

The Chair commented that one of the concerns raised was that Stromness Community Council and Stromness Development Trust had been involved in the early consultation process regarding the proposed extension, where concerns had been raised. However, the plans submitted bore little resemblance to what had been discussed by ORIC to Stromness Community Council members.

J McGlynn informed members that in terms of the planning process, the application had been submitted 15-18 months ago for validation and had been stuck in the system and only now coming to Committee for a decision. He continued that the initial idea had to demolish Block 3. However, following feedback received from consultation it was proposed to extend the building which did go through a number of iterations prior to the final submission of the plans. He stated that as far as he was aware, Stromness Community Council could contact the Planning Department regarding a planning application or was perhaps already a statutory consultee.

G Harrison stated that he understood that parking was an issue that had been raised during the consultation process and stated that the key thing they looked at initially was opening up the space for traffic flow. The proposed extension of Block 3 and redevelopment of the space would mean that the proposed parking spaces would be 44, although when the larger accessible spaces were taken into account, this number would be 37. He confirmed that the car park would remain in the ownership of the Council.

The Chair stated that the proposed development of Block 3 were mainly office spaces and queried whether there was a proven need for additional offices, as ORIC were currently advertising office spaces for let.

J McGlynn informed members that office space currently was at approximately 88% occupancy, with only one or two office spaces available for let. However, there was a strong justification for the additional office space as in the coming 4-5 years there would be projects in various sectors that ORIC would want to host and having the additional office space would be a crucial part of them being able to do so.

G Harrison stated that the current offices had been full until very recently and agreed with J McGlynn regarding the justification for the additional office space, giving an example of EMEC who currently work with many different organisations but were unable to host the organisations and have to work together remotely due to the lack of office space.

M Sutherland commented that what was currently stopping individuals coming to Orkney was a lack of accommodation.

J McGlynn stated that there were various stages of the proposed development. The business growth, which was the extension of Block 3 with additional office space, and then the accommodation development. He continued that in the initial stages; the plans had included an accommodation development in the old playground site. However, that had been something that the UK government were unwilling to fund currently. Funding options for the proposed accommodation development was still being investigated, albeit the development may now have to be on a smaller scale than had initially been envisaged.

K Bevan thanked both J McGlynn and G Harrison for coming to speak to the Community Council, stating that he was really supportive of ORIC. He was aware that the Board no longer had Council representatives and going forward would like to see a more collaborative approach involving members of the Community Council and hoped that this was the first steps of such a collaboration.

G Harrison stated that following the new ownership arrangements with HIE taking on the Council's share in ORIC, they were still taking stock of the changes but confirmed that the Council were still supportive. He confirmed that funding was being sought from the UK Government, through the Islands Growth Deal.

Following a query from the Chair regarding next steps, J McGlynn confirmed that should planning permission be granted, they would go out to tender for the proposed development and then apply for the additional funding via the Islands Growth Deal and seek the rest of the funding from their own Board. He confirmed that, if approved, development of the site would not begin for at least 12 months.

M Sutherland queried whether the roof garden café would be open to the public. J McGlynn stated that all common areas of ORIC were currently open to the public Monday to Friday 9-5. He confirmed that following a meeting with Stromness Development Trust who were already planning a café at Stromness Community Centre, ORIC had stepped back from that idea and would have coffee facilities in place instead. However, should the Development Trust not go ahead with their plans, they may step in again.

G Harrison commented that regarding accessibility, there would be steps at the north end to link to the primary school but there would also be a lift which would improve accessibility.

Following a comment from W Mackay regarding setting a good example regarding the wider parking spaces, J McGlynn stated that they would be guided by the Council. G Harrison confirmed that they had gone beyond what was required regarding accessible spaces.

Following a comment from D Harrold, G Harrison confirmed that the proposed development was not dependent on the Deepwater Quay but was dependent on offshore wind projects.

Councillor G Bevan stated that housing was the issue, and his thoughts were that the proposed plan for linked accommodation for ORIC should be developed at the same time as the proposed office extension.

G Harrison stated that student accommodation was an issue and confirmed that this was something that HIE were constantly looking at. However, as student numbers varied so much it was difficult to put a case together, which he realised was a bit of a chicken and an egg situation as with if there was more accommodation more students would come. However, the issue was funding. He further confirmed that the play area at the old primary school was a difficult area to develop.

Councillor G Bevan confirmed that he was keen to support any activity, citing that a potential area for development may be the Old Town House directly in front of ORIC.

The Chair thereafter thanked J McGlynn and G Harrison for attending the meeting, who both left the meeting at this point.

4. Community Council Input into Future Funding Received from the Scottish Government

The Chair welcome H Green, Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development, who was in attendance regarding the Community Council's request to have more input into applications to the Scottish Government for funding.

The Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development confirmed that where officers have time, they do contact the relevant community councils to gain their views. On other occasions where there was a short window they do refer to existing policies or make the decisions using delegated authority. She was aware that members may not like the decisions made but they do try to be thoughtful in their approach.

Regarding the chevrons recently erected at bridges, she was aware that Stromness Community Council members were unhappy with these, but these were an example of a short time frame between the funding becoming available and the closing date for applications. She confirmed that the chevrons were in line with current road safety policy. She continued that again these were an example of if they had gone out to consult with community councils, some would have welcomed the signs, others would not have.

She confirmed that following this meeting, she would have a conversation with her team, as well as the Chief Executive and other directors, to support community councils in terms of their understanding of what consultation should come before community council members and what was covered by policy and/or delegated powers.

She continued that Stromness Community Council meets very frequently. However, she was aware of other community councils that did not meet as often and, therefore, would miss the consultation deadlines.

Referring to the chevrons, D Harrold commented that while he did not expect the erection of chevrons to come before community council members, he was surprised to learn that elected members were unaware of the proposal until they had been erected and queried how the funding window was so short that this could be the case? He continued that the chevrons were unsightly and could be described as civic vandalism.

The Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development confirmed that Council Officers had delegation to make operational decisions. Further, the matter would have been discussed at Road Safety forums. She further confirmed that this matter was operational and that that not everything the Council undertook was at a Councillor decision making level and there was delegation in place for officers to undertake the day-to-day matters.

M Sutherland commented that she would be interested to see the figures around the number of accidents that had occurred at any of the bridges.

D Harrold commented that, in his opinion, the erection of chevrons at bridges was not a small operational matter as it had a huge visual impact and while the cost of the signs may have been free, how much had been spent on the time to erect them?

W Mackay questioned the need for the chevrons at all, as the most dangerous bridges had already been marked with black and white posts with reflectors.

The Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development confirmed that the work had taken place when the staff were out and about but did take on board the points that had been raised.

Regarding removal of street lighting, the Chair queried whether there was any further update. The Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development confirmed that the individuals in Stromness and Kirkwall had been written to and, as far as she was aware, had agreed with the proposal.

Councillor G Bevan commented that Stromness' heritage was in danger of disappearing and that it needed to be protected. The houses had been in the lanes of Stromness had been occupied for generations, the lanes were rights of way regarding access but were considered a type of "no man's land" regarding ownership and responsibility. He continued that a solution needed to be reached.

Councillor J Park commented that the importance of heritage should be looked at in the upcoming revised Stromness Local Place Plan.

Councillor L Hall commented that if there were no lights down a wet lane with steps was that not a safety issue?

Councillor G Bevan queried whether there was Scottish Government money available for lighting? He continued that he was concerned regarding the decision to remove the lights and urged the Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development that going forward there was accountability and balance in decisions being taken.

W Mackay commented that would the situation arise on an unadopted lane where handrails that had been erected by the Council would not be replaced as it was not their responsibility. He further commented that there was a real safety issue regarding slippery lanes and the poor state of the handrails.

Referring to W Mackay's comment, the Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development confirmed that there had been no mention of removing hand railings in lanes. She confirmed that she would feedback all the comments and concerns raised to colleagues and reiterated that she would speak to colleagues and get something issued to community councils detailing what should and should not be done regarding the Council and community councils. She continued that she could also provide a suite of information regarding what was constituted as operational. She further accepted the concerns raised regarding no discussion regarding the removal of the streetlights. She also confirmed that the community council could take on the responsibility of the streetlights if they wished.

Following a query from Councillor G Bevan regarding what was the process for getting lanes adopted by the Council, the Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development commented that she would look into the process but that she did not think the Council were looking to adopt any more lanes.

Councillor L Hall commented that the Council should be aware that when individuals came on community councils it was because they were passionate about the place that stayed in which needed to be recognised by the Council.

Councillor G Bevan further commented that historically the Council had always taken responsibility for the streets and lanes in Stromness which was important for the heritage of Stromness and while there were policies in place, a one size fits all approach may not be the best way for Stromness.

The Chair thereafter thanked the Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development for attending the meeting and she left the meeting at this point.

5. Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2025 were approved, being proposed by M Sutherland and seconded by P McLaughlin.

6. Matters Arising

A. PA System

K Bevan provided an update, advising that Stromness Development Trust had applied to the Community Led Local Development grant fund for financial assistance toward the PA system which had unfortunately been turned down. He further advised that Stromness Shopping Week had donated £2,000 towards the new system. He continued that they had run out of funders that could be approached and confirmed that they would be approximately £2,000 short. Following further discussion and on the motion of the Chair, seconded by D Harrold, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £2,000, from the General Fund, be donated to Stromness Community Development Trust towards the new PA system.

B. Gym Opening Times in Stromness

It was advised that no response had been received regarding why Stromness Academy, which was a community school, were unable to provide the community with access to Stromness Academy Gym through the ActiveLife scheme as it did with both Kirkwall Grammar School and Dounby Primary School, and it was:

Resolved that the Clerk would again contact Democratic Services to ask the relevant section for a response.

C. Orkney 2025

The Chair advised that 12 hanging baskets had been ordered from Glues at a cost of £34.99 each. She further advised that the businesses that had expressed an interest in having ones of the baskets were all happy to pay a donation of £15 each towards the basket, which would be paid to Stromness Community Council via BACs transfer. She confirmed that the Flower Club were still to get back to her regarding whether they were able to do a display at Stromness Academy foyer.

Regarding the Welcome to Stromness Banner, D Harrold confirmed that he was waiting for a quote for the banner and would email members when he had received it.

Following further discussion regarding the donated Island Games Bunting and who was responsible for erecting and dismantling the bunting at the Pier Head and along the Street, it was:

Resolved that Councillor G Bevan and the Chair would liaise with Stromness Shopping Week Committee regarding who would put up and take down the bunting.

D. Toilets at Pier Head

Following an update from the Service Manager (Building Cleaning), copies of which had been circulated, regarding the Pier Head toilets closing early, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

E. Abandoned Car near GMB Garden

Following discussion, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that the white car had been removed but the blue car was still situated there.
2. That the Clerk would contact the relevant section regarding removal of the blue car.

7. Correspondence

A. Memorial Bench

Following consideration of correspondence received from L Thomson, copies of which had been circulated, thanking members for their help with her memorial bench, it was:

Resolved that the small hamper, which had been donated by L Thomson to Stromness Community Council, would be donated to the upcoming Clan Midnight Walk to be used as a raffle prize.

B. Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance

Following consideration of correspondence received from M Hanratty, Community Fundraising Office, Highlands and Islands, copies of which had been circulated, raising awareness of the work of Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

C. 2025 SURF Awards Open for Applications

Following consideration of correspondence received from SURF – Scotland's Regeneration Forum, copies of which had been circulated, regarding applications for the 2025 SURF Awards, it was:

Resolved to note that the closing date for applications was 1 September 2025.

D. Vandalism in Stromness

Following consideration of correspondence received from S Gray, copies of which had been circulated, regarding the recent spate of vandalism in Stromness, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should respond to S Gray thanking her for raising her concerns and that Stromness Community Council had highlighted her concerns with Police Scotland.

E. The Orkney Fund

Following consideration of correspondence received from The Orkney Fund Board, copies of which had been circulated, regarding Expressions of Interests to explore funding opportunities for local Place Plans, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

F. Ayre Offshore Windfarm

Following consideration of correspondence received from Thistle Wind Partners, copies of which had been circulated, regarding Ayre Offshore Windfarm pre-application consultation events, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

8. Consultations

A. Draft Updated Sectorial Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy

Following consideration of correspondence received from the Scottish Islands Federation, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note that responses to the consultation on the draft Sectorial Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy were required by 22 August 2025.

B. Payphone Removal

Following consideration of correspondence received from the Planning Section, regarding the removal of payphones in the Orkney area, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note responses were required by 1 September 2025.

9. Publication – Family Fun Day

Resolved to note the information provided regarding the Family Fun Day held on 15 June 2025.

10. Reports from Community Council Representatives

A. MARS Updates

Resolved to note that no issues had been reported recently.

B. Stromness Development Trust

Following an update from the Stromness Development Trust representative, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that work was ongoing in the background regarding the Stromness Community Centre.

2. To note that the Trust had received funds from Stromness Community Business Forum now that they had merged and that the Bonanza and the Stromness Christmas tree would be supported.

C. Stromness Local Place Plan Working Group

Resolved to note that as A Esslemont had now resigned from the Community Council, D Harrold would be Stromness Community Council's representative.

K Bevan left the meeting at this point.

11. Financial Statements

A. Community Council General Fund

Following consideration of the General Finance statement as at 5 June 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note that the estimated balance was £16,942.39.

B. Donations Account

Following consideration of the Donations Account statement as at 5 June 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note that the balance was £1,675.72 of which £1,050.72 was to be solely used for the upkeep and maintenance of the stage area.

C. Community Council Grant Scheme

Following consideration of the 2025/2026 Community Council Grant Scheme statement as at 5 June 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note that the balance remaining for the Community Council Grant Scheme 2025/26 was £2,016.00.

D. Community Development Fund

Following consideration of the Community Development Fund Statement as at 5 June 2025, it was:

Resolved to note that the balance remaining for approval was £6,524.04.

E. Seed Corn Fund

Following consideration of the Seed Corn Fund Statement as at 5 June 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that the Seed Corn Fund had been fully allocated.
2. That although all the funding had been fully allocated, there were still monies that had not yet been claimed.

12. Requests for Financial Assistance

A. Young Enterprise Orkney

Following consideration of correspondence received from Young Enterprise Orkney, copies of which had been circulated, requesting financial assistance towards three Stromness residents attending the Young Enterprise Scotland finals in Glasgow, and on the motion of the Chair, seconded by M Sutherland, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £50 each, totalling £150, be given.

B. M Kirkpatrick – Scottish National Open Championships – 27-29 June 2025

Following consideration of correspondence received from M Kirkpatrick, copies of which had been circulated, requesting financial assistance towards attending the Scottish National Open Championships held in Edinburgh on 27 to 29 June 2025, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £25 be given.

13. Dates of Meetings

After discussion, it was:

Resolved to note the following dates for Stromness Community Council were agreed:

Tuesday, 26 August 2025.

Tuesday, 30 September 2025.

Tuesday, 11 November 2025.

Tuesday, 20 January 2026.

Tuesday, 25 March 2026.

Tuesday, 12 May 2026.

Tuesday, 16 June 2026.

14. Any Other Competent Business

A. Picnic Bench

Following discussion, it was:

Resolved that as the Mens Shed were only able to charge for materials, a donation of £40 should be given for the new picnic bench.

B. Signs – Motorhomes

A member queried what had happened to the signs to stop motorhomes going through the street and, following discussion, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk would contact the relevant section for an update.

C. Quanterness Community Benefit Team

A member queried the fairness of the amount of benefit Community Councils would receive from the Quanterness Community Benefit Scheme and, following discussion, it was:

Resolved that Councillors Bevan, Hall and Park would take the matter on board for further investigation.

D. Warebeth Coastal Path

A member queried what was happening regarding maintenance of the coastal path at Warebeth and, following discussion, it was:

Resolved that Councillor L Hall would contact the Criminal Justice section to see if it was something they could assist with.

15. Date of Next Meeting

Resolved that the next meeting of the Stromness Community Council would be held in the John Rae Room, Warehouse Buildings, on Tuesday, 26 August 2025 at 19:00.

16. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 21:25.