

Stornoway Community Council

Minute of Meeting held in the Newton Ward Community Rooms, Stornoway
on Thu 22 May 2025 at 7:00 pm

Present	Robert Doig (Chair)	Josh Gibbens (Treasurer)
	Mike Macleod (Secretary)	Betty Jappy
	Ian Minty	Morag Smith
	Cllr George Murray	Cllr Gordon Murray

In Attendance Sharon Reid (Community Development Worker)

Three members of the public attended in person.

Apologies	1	Kenneth Burns	Janet Macdonald
		Cameron Thompson	Cllr Duncan Macinnes
		Cllr Angus McCormack	Cllr Frances Murray
		Cllr Rae Mackenzie	Elma Afrin
		Kirsten Macinnes	Kaleigh Macleod
		Angela Macritchie	

Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2025 2 This was adopted with the amendment that on page 3 first sentence, "helped save a training role." should be replaced by "helped save the Post Office facility at the Trading Post.", proposed by Morag Smith and seconded by Betty Jappy.

Matters Arising 3 Item 6 – Closure of Stornoway Crown Post Office. Ian Minty mentioned that the ladies working there did not know where they will be moving to. The Secretary reported that they had written to the MP, suggesting the small Co-op might be a suitable location for a franchised Crown Post Office. The MP has to speak to the Co-op on a number of matters, including of course the very serious issues in the Southern Isles. He will call in and speak to the MP's staff. Cllrs George and Gordon Murray agreed to follow up on this matter with the Comhairle.

Macrae Place Parking Places 4 Since our last meeting, HHP has had discussions with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. It is now agreed that the parking places are the responsibility of the individual property owners and HHP, for their tenants. HHP have asked if we could co-ordinate ascertaining the views of the owner-occupiers and if they pay for their share of the paint (which has to be of a quality specified by the Comhairle) then HHP will pay for the share they are responsible for, and contribute their handyman's time to carry out the work, including painting the owner-occupiers' parking places.

The Secretary said that it may turn out to be extremely difficult and time-consuming to get agreement from the various owner-occupiers. Therefore it might be more practical for Stornoway Community Council to pay for the specialist paint itself, as a modest contribution to the project which we can afford to make. Councillor Frances Murray has very kindly undertaken to find out the cost of the specialist paint from the Comhairle, but has not got back to us yet. However Betty Jappy pointed out that other parts of the town have parking places in need of work, and would come to us if we adopted this policy.

**Macrae Place
Parking Places
(contd.)**

- 4 Charlie Nicolson explained that in his experience, in previous years when repairs were necessary on shared or communal property such as the steps on the path at the side of Macrae Place, HHP had simply carried out the repairs and had not contacted the individual owner-occupiers to ask them to contribute towards the cost. He also explained that the lines on the parking places were put in because of disabled people who needed access for wheelchairs etc. HHP should not dodge responsibility. Cllr George Murray explained that a resident had pointed out an issue – someone who works offshore and does not reside in Macrae Place simply parks their vehicle there while they are away. Since there is no Road Traffic Order in place, nothing can be done about this. Morag Smith stated the painting was HHP's responsibility. It was agreed that the Secretary should write back to HHP to inform them of this, and that the Community Council will not be contacting the individual owners, or contributing towards the cost.

**Tesco Generator
Noise**

- 5 The Secretary reported that we had written to Mr Malcom Burr, Comhairle Chief Executive about the Hebridean Hum. He has replied, confirming the Comhairle Environmental Health Team has received only three complaints about this, from different parts of Lewis (only one was from Stornoway). Accordingly at present these are being treated as isolated complaints. Mr Burr has also confirmed that the Comhairle has adequate monitoring equipment to look into the matter, however the source of the low frequency noise can be hard to identify.

The Secretary also reported that the Comhairle Planning Department are willing to look into whether the Tesco generators would have required planning permission, but have asked that we provide details of their dimensions, etc. Planning passed our enquiry on to Environmental Health, who will have sent us some documentation and are looking for an incident log so they can progress an investigation.

Charlie Nicolson stated that he had looked into the Tesco Generator Noise in 2023. Planning did not have anything, but Environmental Health did a check late at night, and said there was an issue. However the residents declined to maintain logs of the noise as requested by EH, on the basis that it was EH's responsibility to do something. Fortunately it now looks as if Tesco have removed the two generators that were making the noise, replacing them with two quieter ones, plus two additional ones on the other side. The Treasurer stated that Google Earth showed no generators in 2015, but they had appeared around 2018. Charlie Nicolson said the noise level appeared to be fine now.

**Comhairle
Finances**

- 6 Cllr Gordon Murray read out a statement he had prepared, setting out his concerns relating to the Town Centre Legacy Fund. This had been established when Scottish Government funding for the Bayhead infill could not be spent, the project was abandoned due to tidal flows. Instead two properties were purchased, with the town to benefit from the rental income. Both properties have now been sold, with the proceeds from one being allocated to the Legacy Fund, and to be used for various maintenance projects. Gordon was concerned by the allocation of funds from the sale of 49-51 Cromwell Street for £453,000, without first ascertaining from the Scottish Government that the proceeds were not ring-fenced. Gordon had wanted clarity before any decision was taken. Unfortunately his amendment had been defeated. The Treasurer expressed his concern that in the papers for the meeting, officers "believed" the funds were not ring-fenced – the 2023 Cyber Attack keeps being used as an excuse.

**Comhairle
Finances (contd.)**

- 6 Cllr Gordon Murray mentioned that only three of the seven Stornoway Councillors present voted for his amendment. Cllr George Murray said that there had been a feeling in the Council Chamber that an agreement made in 2008 would have lapsed after ten years. After discussion a motion was passed, proposed by the Treasurer and seconded by Morag Smith, that the Secretary should write to the MSP and ask what information the Scottish Government has on the arrangements for the original funding and the terms of its allocation to the Stornoway Town Centre Legacy Fund, and also to Malcolm Burr.

Separately there was some discussion about the difficult state of Comhairle finances in general. The Secretary expressed his concern about the funding algorithm which penalises the Western Isles for depopulation and not having many young people of school age, this is determined by COSLA. Cllr Gordon Murray stated that in his three terms as Councillor, while the Comhairle sent representatives to COSLA meetings, the Comhairle has not made any formal motions or amendments to change the funding algorithm. Also that misleading statements had been made in the media about the funding algorithm. In fact there is a floor, which means that the loss of funding to the Comhairle is limited to only 2%. The Secretary mentioned that at present the reserves are being run down and this minimises the effects of the funding shortfall. But what happens when the reserves are exhausted in the next year or so? Cllr Gordon Murray suggested that the Comhairle needs to look at increasing its income, and look at renewables and recycling. His experience in the Comhairle is that they 'salami-slice' – demand a 5% cut in every department. Cllr George Murray stated that once the reserves run out, significant cuts in services would have to be made.

It was agreed that the Secretary should ask the head of Administration whether Council papers that refer specifically to Stornoway could be forwarded to the Community Council before meetings.

**Removal of BT
Payphones**

- 7 The Secretary referred to the information the Community Council had received from Shona Hadwen of CNES regarding this – BT plans to close 47 payphones across the Western Isles. Within the Stornoway Community Council area, these are Nicolson Road, Seaforth Road, Goathill Crescent, Sandwich Road, Cromwell Street and Bayhead Street. Also just outside our Boundary – 19 Cearn Shodaidh and Plasterfield. He expressed concern that although the payphones may not be used much, not everyone has a home landline, or even a mobile, and the payphones are valuable resources at time of need for those who are digitally excluded.

Charlie Nicolson stated that twice he had had to contact the head of BT regarding repairs to payphones in the town. After discussion it was agreed that the digital changeover, whereby all analogue phone lines will be switched off, seems to be the reason for the proposed closure. Cllr Gordon Murray recommended that we should write to our MP, as he will have a direct contact at BT for issues of this kind.

AOCB

- 8 Faire Alarm System – following on from the previous item, it was agreed that the Secretary should write to Mr Malcolm Burr to ascertain what would happen with the Faire alarm system after the analogue switch-off, and copy all the Stornoway Councillors. In particular there was some concern about what would happen in the event of a power-cut.

AOCB (Contd.)

- 8** Infectious Diseases on Cruise Ships – Ian Minty gave the example of a cruise ship which called in to Lerwick carrying thousands of passengers. Unfortunately there was a serious infectious disease on board, some sort of bacteria, which resulted in passengers vomiting. The cruise ship did not tell the Port Authority, and allowed passengers to go ashore. Once word of the disease spread, bus companies and taxi operators refused to take the cruise ship passengers.

Cllr George Murray gave the example of a cruise ship passenger who had gone over last year to Arnol, and had sadly suffered a stroke. They had refused to be taken to Western Isles Hospital, despite that being the best course of action from a health perspective, but had insisted in being taken back to their ship, because otherwise they would have had to pay their own way back to their home in another country.

After discussion it was agreed that the onus must be on the cruise ship operator and the port authority, but it was a multi-disciplinary issue. Ian Minty will send the link to the Shetland News item to the Secretary, who will circulate to members and write separately to Stornoway Port Authority, CNES Environmental Health and the Health Board.

Community Learning & Development – Charlie Nicolson expressed his gratitude to the Community Learning & Development officers for the work they do, and hoped the Councillors will take note. Cllr Gordon Murray endorsed this and stated that Sharon Reid and Kaleigh Macleod were definitely making a difference in Stornoway North. It was agreed that the Secretary should write to Malcolm Burr and copy the Stornoway Councillors.

Funding for Projects – Cllr Gordon Murray stated that projects for Stornoway North are to be finalised on Monday.

AGM – The Treasurer confirmed that there are annual elections for Community Council officebearers.

Close

- 9** The Chair thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.