

Minute

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee

Wednesday, 7 June 2023, 09:30.

Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.



Present

Councillors Gwenda M Shearer, Jean E Stevenson, Graham A Bevan, Stephen G Clackson, Alexander G Cowie, Steven B Heddle, Rachael A King, James R Moar, John A R Scott, James W Stockan, Ivan A Taylor and Heather N Woodbridge.

Religious Representatives:

Reverend Susan Kirkbride and Reverend Fraser Macnaughton.

Present via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

Religious Representative:

Marie Locke.

Also Present via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

Councillor Gillian Skuse, who had been invited for Items 4 to 9, 11 and 12.

Clerk

- Sandra Craigie, Committees Officer.

In Attendance

- James Wylie, Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.
- Peter Diamond, Head of Education.
- Frances Troup, Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing.
- Jo Wallace, Interim Principal, Orkney College (for Items 1 to 12).
- David Brown, Service Manager (Resources).
- Garry Burton, Service Manager (Leisure and Culture) (for Items 9 to 20).
- Hazel Flett, Service Manager (Governance).
- Lesley Mulraine, Service Manager (Housing, Homelessness and Schoolcare Accommodation).
- Jane Partridge, Service Manager (Secondary and Tertiary Education) (for Items 1 to 12).
- Pat Robinson, Service Manager (Accounting).
- Sheila Tulloch, Service Manager (Legal Services).
- Craig Walker, Service Manager (HR Operations) (for Items 1 to 11).

- Claire Kemp, Assistant Principal, Orkney College (for Items 1 to 12).
- Nick Hewitt, Team Manager (Culture) (for Items 9 to 13).

Apologies

- Mary Maley, Teacher Representative.
- Councillors David Dawson, W Leslie Manson and Raymond S Peace, who had been invited for Items 4 to 9, 11 and 12.

Not Present

- Jo Hill, Teacher Representative.
- Councillors Duncan Tullock, Kristopher D Leask, P Lindsay Hall, Mellissa-Louise Thomson and Owen Tierney (who had been invited for Items 4 to 9, 11 and 12).

Declarations of Interest

- Councillor Graham A Bevan – Items 4 to 6, 11 and 12.
- Councillor Rachael A King – Items 4 to 9, 11 and 12.
- Councillor Steven B Heddle – Items 4 to 9, 11 and 12.

Chair

- Councillor Gwenda M Shearer.

1. Disclosure of Exempt Information

The Committee noted the proposal that the public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of Item 11, as the business to be discussed involved the potential disclosure of exempt information of the classes described in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 as amended.

2. Performance Monitoring

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, the Committee:

Scrutinised:

2.1. The performance of the Education, Leisure and Housing Service for the reporting period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023, as set out in sections 3 to 5 and Annexes 1 and 2 of the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

2.2. That the following service plan actions, which had been progressed to completion, be closed:

- 01 – Planning and Improvement – Work with service managers to adopt a logic model that can add pace, build trust and create capacity (ABC).

- 03 – National Improvement Framework – Implement and continuously review the impact of and revise, as appropriate, Orkney’s achievement and attainment improvement plan in line with the National Improvement Framework.

2.3. That, as this was the last performance monitoring report on the Education, Leisure and Housing Service Plan 2019 to 2022, the following actions, which had not been progressed to completion, be considered for inclusion in the Education, Leisure and Housing Directorate Delivery Plan:

- 04 – Support for Learners – Implement, review the impact of and revise, as appropriate, the review of support for learning, including taking forward a review of the Resource School Model.
- 05 – Social Rented Housing – Work with the relevant internal and external partners to complete a business planning exercise, including appropriate scenario planning.

3. Orkney College – Annual Engagement Visit

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Interim Principal, Orkney College, the Committee:

Noted:

3.1. That Education Scotland undertook the Annual Engagement Visit to Orkney College on 14 February 2023, with the letter and report on the progress visit attached as Appendices 1 and 2 respectively to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

3.2. The five national themes which Annual Engagement Visits included, namely:

- Curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment.
- Services to support learning.
- Stakeholder engagement.
- Evaluation to facilitate improvement.
- Learner progress and outcomes.

3.3. The overall outcome from the Annual Engagement Visit for Orkney College, in that Education Scotland was confident that the college had made satisfactory progress with regard to improvement actions from the previous progress visit and had the capacity to continue to improve.

The Committee scrutinised:

3.4. The inspection findings contained in Education Scotland’s report on the Annual Engagement Visit, attached as Appendix 2 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, and obtained assurance that action had been taken or agreed as necessary.

4. Orkney College Business Review and Short-Life Working Group

Operation and Outcomes

Councillor Graham A Bevan declared an interest in this item, his connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, but concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Councillor Steven B Heddle declared an interest in this item, his connection being that his wife was the Director of the Institute for Northern Studies and that he was a visiting professor for the University of the Highlands and Islands, but concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Councillor Rachael A King declared an interest in this item, her connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, and was not present during discussion thereof.

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Secondary and Tertiary Education), the Committee:

Noted:

4.1. That, on 10 March 2022, the Council established a short-life working group, with a remit to inform a business review and strategic five-year plan for Orkney College.

4.2. The outcomes from the Orkney College Business Review Short-Life Working Group, as detailed in sections 5 and 6 of the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, resulting in a suite of reports to be considered by the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee on the following matters:

- Governance.
- Staffing Matters.
- Branding.
- Academic Partnership Agreement.
- Strategic Plan.
- Operating Principles.

The Committee resolved:

4.3. To defer consideration of the proposed disestablishment of the Orkney College Business Review Short-Life Working Group, until the outcome of the suite of reports relating to Orkney College, referred to at paragraphs 5 to 9 and 11 below, was determined.

5. Orkney College – Review of Governance Arrangements

Councillor Graham A Bevan declared an interest in this item, his connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, but concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Councillor Steven B Heddle declared an interest in this item, his connection being that his wife was the Director of the Institute for Northern Studies and that he was a visiting professor for the University of the Highlands and Islands, but concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Councillor Rachael A King declared an interest in this item, her connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, and was not present during discussion thereof.

After consideration of a joint report by the Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions and the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Governance), the Committee:

Noted:

5.1. That, on 16 February 2022, when considering actions being taken in regard to a business planning review of Orkney College, as well as other relevant issues, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee recommended that a short-life working group, to conclude by the end of 2022, with a remit to inform a draft detailed business review and business plan for Orkney College, be established.

5.2. That, on 5 July 2022, when considering appointments to the College Management Council Sub-committee, the Council resolved that the Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions should review the composition and operation of the College Management Council Sub-committee, and submit a report to the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee no later than May 2023.

5.3. Options regarding future governance in respect of Orkney College, as detailed in section 5 of the joint report by the Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions and the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, with the preferred option being establishment of a stakeholder group.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

5.4. That the College Management Council Sub-committee be disestablished.

5.5. That an Orkney College Stakeholder Group, acting as a strong link into the communities that Orkney College served, providing local oversight and ensuring information passed between the College and local stakeholders, be established, with the following core membership:

- Five Elected Members of the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee (including Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee).
- Four Business Community representatives.
- Four Community/Third Sector representatives.
- Two Student representatives.
- Two Staff representatives.
- Two representatives from the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI).

5.6. That existing members of the College Management Council Sub-committee, where currently in post, should be appointed to the Orkney College Stakeholder Group, for the period up to July 2024.

5.7. That the following Terms of Reference for the Orkney College Stakeholder Group be approved:

- Understanding the impact of the college on the communities it serves.
- Advising on initiatives that might help meet the business and social needs.
- Feeding into curriculum delivery that helps meet industry needs.
- Overseeing performance of the college in support of quality improvement plans.
- Developing valuable contacts in the community, including employers.

5.8. That the Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions and the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing should submit a joint report, to the meeting of the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee to be held in June 2024, reviewing the Terms of Reference and operation of the Orkney College Stakeholder Group, together with proposals for the appointment of members and term of office.

5.9. That the Chair of the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee, as Chair of the governing body of the local academic partner, be appointed to UHI's Partnership Forum.

Councillor Steven B Heddle left the meeting during discussion of this item.

6. UHI Branding and Position Project

Councillor Graham A Bevan declared an interest in this item, his connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, but concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Councillor Rachael A King declared an interest in this item, her connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, and was not present during discussion thereof.

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Assistant Principal, Orkney College, the Committee:

Noted:

6.1. That, in early 2018, a major strategic project was developed and agreed by the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to refresh the university's brand and visual identity, with the intention that the rebranding project be inclusive of all academic partners in UHI, to deliver a unifying brand story through greater alignment of the partnership's corporate and visual identity.

6.2. That, on 25 November 2021, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee recommended that the following key elements of the UHI branding and visual identity design and framework, be supported:

- For the brand, only the acronym UHI used, and writing 'University of the Highlands and Islands' in full dropped.
- 'Orkney College UHI' replaced with the brand name 'UHI Orkney'.
- The strapline 'UHI is where learning means more'.
- A new UHI brand marque.
- A proposed colour palette from which UHI partners could choose.
- A library of stock images to be used across the partnership covering place, subjects and people.

6.3. That, on 7 December 2021, the Council resolved that the recommendations relating to the UHI Branding and Positioning Project be referred back to the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee, to enable the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing to further explore the ramifications of the Project, with particular regard to comments made in the consultant's documentation, as presented, and to consider the viability of 'sub-branding'.

6.4. That, on 16 February 2022, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee established a short-life working group, to conclude by the end of 2022, with a remit to consider the Strategic Review, the Options Appraisal and the UHI Branding and Positioning Project, together with any other relevant pertaining issues, with a view to informing a draft detailed business review and business plan for Orkney College.

6.5. That, on 28 March 2022, the new visual identity was adopted and publicly launched by the academic partners of UHI, with the exception of Orkney College UHI and Perth College UHI.

6.6. That, in January 2023, Perth College UHI subsequently adopted the new visual identity.

6.7. That the short-life working group, referred to at paragraph 6.4 above, had given further consideration to the UHI Branding and Positioning Project, and had recommended that all the key elements be adopted by Orkney College UHI.

6.8. That, should the recommendation at paragraph 6.9 below be approved, Orkney College UHI would work closely with the Communications team, UHI Executive Office, to agree an implementation plan to formally launch the new brand and visual identity before the end of 2023.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

6.9. That, in line with the other partner colleges in the University of the Highlands and Islands, Orkney College UHI adopt the branding and visual identity design and framework, including the following key elements:

- The acronym UHI to be used for the visual identity, and writing 'University of the Highlands and Islands' would rarely be used in full.
- The naming strategy in that the brand name 'UHI Orkney' replaced 'Orkney College UHI'.
- The use of the strapline "UHI is where learning means more".

- The new UHI brand marque.
- The colour palette and use of the library of stock images for all digital and printed marketing and promotional material.

Councillor James W Stockan left the meeting at this point.

7. Academic Partnership Agreement

Councillor Rachael A King declared an interest in this item, her connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, and was not present during discussion thereof.

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Education, the Committee:

Noted:

7.1. That the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) operated as a collegiate partnership, with Orkney College, through the Council, being one of 12 academic partners.

7.2. That the relationship between UHI and its academic partners centred around three agreements, namely:

- An All-Party Agreement that affirmed each Academic Partner's commitment to the University Project and precluded withdrawal without consent.
- The Millennium Commission Distribution Agreement which regulated the allocation of Millennium Grant funds from the University to Academic Partners.
- An Academic Partnership Agreement between the University and each partner that regulated the rights and obligations that existed between each party.

7.3. That the agreements referred to above were now significantly out of date and required to be updated to ensure they remained fit for purpose and appropriately reflected the parties' obligations and how the relationship operated in practice.

7.4. That the updated and revised Academic Partnership Agreement comprised two parts, as follows:

- Part One, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, which provided a high-level all-party agreement confirming a formal commitment between all the parties to co-operate and collaborate effectively together as a unified partnership and in accordance with 11 overarching guiding principles.
- Part Two, attached as Appendix 2 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, which comprised a contract between the University and Orkney College setting out the legal responsibilities and obligations of the University to each partner and vice versa.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council**:

7.5. That powers be delegated to the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Governance, to finalise the Academic Partnership Agreement between UHI and Orkney College.

7.6. That the Chair of the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee be authorised to sign Part One of the Academic Partnership Agreement.

8. Orkney College Strategic Plan

Councillor Rachael A King declared an interest in this item, her connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, and was not present during discussion thereof.

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Interim Principal, Orkney College, the Committee:

Noted:

8.1. That, on 10 March 2022, the Council established a short-life working group, with a remit to inform a business review and strategic five-year plan for Orkney College.

8.2. The draft Orkney College Strategic Plan 2023-2028, attached as Appendix 2 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, which contained five strategic priorities, namely:

- Blue Economy.
- Green Economy.
- Well-Being Economy.
- Creative, Cultural and Heritage.
- Local economic development and community engagement.

8.3. That high level delivery plans in respect of the five strategic priorities detailed above, would be developed in collaboration with stakeholders and monitored by the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council**:

8.4. That the Orkney College Strategic Plan 2023 to 2028, attached as Appendix 1 to this Minute, be approved.

9. Orkney College – Proposed Operating Principles

Councillor Rachael A King declared an interest in this item, her connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, and was not present during discussion thereof.

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Secondary and Tertiary Education), the Committee:

Noted:

9.1. That Orkney College was in the unique position of being the only college in Scotland fully owned by a local authority.

9.2. That Orkney College, as part of the Council, had two distinct relationships with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), namely:

- It was one of the 12 Academic Partners of the UHI, collegially delivering Higher Education and Research.
- It was assigned, by statute, to UHI, which was the Regional Strategic Body, receiving funding from the Scottish Funding Council which was then allocated to Orkney College for both Further and Higher Education provision.

9.3. That the Orkney College Business Review Short-Life Working Group recommended that a set of operating principles be adopted to clarify the relationships, referred to above, and their implications for the day-to-day working of the College.

9.4. That, should the draft Orkney College Operating Principles, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, be approved, the College Management Team would use the Operating Principles to guide their work with staff in the Council, with UHI and external partners.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

9.5. That the Orkney College Operating Principles, attached as Appendix 2 to this Minute, be approved.

10. Exclusion of Public

On the motion of Councillor Gwenda M Shearer, seconded by Councillor Jean E Stevenson, the Committee resolved that the public be excluded for Item 11, as the business to be considered involved the disclosure of exempt information of the classes described in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 as amended.

Councillors Steven B Heddle and James W Stockan rejoined the meeting and Reverend Susan Kirkbride and Reverend Fraser Macnaughton left the meeting at this point.

11. National Bargaining for College Academic Staff – Update

Councillor Graham A Bevan declared an interest in this item, his connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, and was not present during discussion thereof.

Councillor Steven B Heddle declared an interest in this item, his connection being that his wife was the Director of the Institute for Northern Studies and that he was a visiting professor for the University of the Highlands and Islands, and was not present during discussion thereof.

Councillor Rachael A King declared an interest in this item, her connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, and was not present during discussion thereof.

Under section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public had been excluded from the meeting for this item on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 11 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, the Committee:

Resolved to **recommend to the Council** what action should be taken with regard to National Bargaining for College academic staff.

The above constitutes the summary of the Minute in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 section 50C(2) as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

Marie Locke left the meeting at this point.

12. Orkney College Business Review and Short-Life Working Group

Operation and Outcomes

Councillor Graham A Bevan declared an interest in this item, his connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, but concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Councillor Steven B Heddle declared an interest in this item, his connection being that his wife was the Director of the Institute for Northern Studies and that he was a visiting professor for the University of the Highlands and Islands, but concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Councillor Rachael A King declared an interest in this item, her connection being that a close family member was employed at Orkney College, and was not present during discussion thereof.

With reference to paragraph 4 above, and following conclusion of the suite of reports relating to Orkney College, referred to at paragraphs 5 to 9 and 11 above, the Committee:

Resolved to **recommend to the Council** that, as the working group had completed its remit, the Orkney College Business Review Short-life Working Group be disestablished.

13. Museums Service Forward Plan

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment and an Island Communities Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Team Manager (Culture), the Committee:

Noted:

13.1. That the four museums managed by the Council were accredited through Museums Galleries Scotland's 2019 Accreditation Standard which had a requirement for the Museums Service to have a current Forward Plan.

13.2. The purpose of a Museums Forward Plan, as follows:

- To review the preceding plan and assess its success or failure against a series of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) objectives.
- To summarise the structure of the Service, outline a resource plan against the most accurate available information and set similar SMART targets for the forthcoming period.

13.3. That the existing Museums Service Forward Plan covered the period 2017 to 2022 and, therefore, required to be updated.

13.4. The current status of actions in the Museums Forward Plan 2017-2022, as follows:

- 36 actions (65.5%) were complete.
- 10 actions (18.2%) were partially complete.
- 9 actions (16.3%) were not yet complete.

13.5. The draft Museums Forward Plan 2023 to 2028, attached as Appendix 2 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, which might be further amended, depending on the outcome of a consultant-led review of the Culture Service which was due to report by December 2023.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

13.6. That the Museums Forward Plan 2023 to 2028, attached as Appendix 3 to this minute, be approved.

14. Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Resources), the Committee:

Noted:

14.1. That progress towards meeting and continuing to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) was inter-related to work to address the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

14.2. That, while a second Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing was required to be met by 2032, the Scottish Government was currently undertaking a review of that standard and therefore delivery of that standard was temporarily on hold.

14.3. That the review, referred to at paragraph 14.2 above, was due to be completed by Summer 2023 when it was anticipated that the Scottish Government would publish new guidance.

14.4. That the Scottish Housing Regulator had requested that the Annual Return on the Charter Indicators for 2022/23 should reflect compliance in relation to meeting the initial EESSH target, which was to be met by 30 December 2020, and maintenance of that target thereafter.

The Committee scrutinised:

14.5. The level of progress towards meeting the initial EESSH target, as detailed in sections 4 and 5 of the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, and obtained assurance that the Council's response to meeting and maintaining that standard was satisfactory.

15. Homelessness in Orkney

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Housing, Homelessness and Schoolcare Accommodation), the Committee:

Noted:

15.1. The statistical and performance information in relation to homelessness in Orkney for 2022/23, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, which indicated the following:

- The number of homeless presentations for 2022/23 had increased by 10% from 2021/22.
- The reasons for homelessness remained broadly comparable to previous years, with a slight increase in relationship breakdown (non-violent) and asked to leave by family/friends.
- Homeless presentations for the period 1 April to 9 May 2023 had increased again, having seen a significant increase from the previous year.
- Homelessness remained a significant issue in Orkney and that lets to homeless households remained substantial relative to overall lets.

The Committee scrutinised:

15.2. The performance information, detailed in Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, and obtained assurance that the Council's response to homelessness was operating satisfactorily.

16. Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing Services

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment and an Island Communities Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted:

16.1. That, as the Council had significant requirements in respect of homelessness, its prevention and provision of advice and information, a broad structure of strategic planning was in place.

16.2. That domestic abuse, whether violent or non-violent, was a significant contributor to homelessness both locally and nationally.

16.3. That, during 2022/23, 15 households became homeless in Orkney as a result of domestic abuse.

16.4. That legislative changes over recent years had increased the provisions available for those experiencing domestic abuse, as well as defining and criminalising the issue.

16.5. That as a result of the legislative changes referred to at paragraph 16.4 above, there was now a need for a policy for the Housing Service to assist both tenants and other service users who were experiencing domestic abuse.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

16.6. That the Domestic Abuse Policy for Housing Services, attached as Appendix 4 to this Minute, be approved.

17. Advice and Information Strategy

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment and an Island Communities Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted:

17.1. That the Council produced its first Advice and Information Strategy in 2005 and since then had embarked on a sustained programme of ensuring that good quality advice and information was available in appropriate formats to meet the needs of service users.

17.2. That, since 2005, significant improvements had been made, including achieving a nationally recognised accreditation, the National Standards for Advice and Information Providers.

17.3. That the wider field of advice and information, and the inter-related policy area of homelessness, had been subject to significant change in recent years, resulting in the Council's Advice and Information Strategy requiring significant review.

17.4. That an event was held in September 2022 to seek the views of a range of partner agencies across the statutory and voluntary sectors, to consider local strategies around the wider area of homelessness and identify gaps in the provision of advice and information and identify priorities.

17.5. The draft Advice and Information Strategy 2023 to 2028, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to Council:**

17.6. That the draft Advice and Information Strategy 2023 to 2028, referred to at paragraph 17.5 above, be approved for consultation.

17.7. That the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing should submit a report, to a meeting of the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee in early 2024, regarding the outcome of the consultation process, referred to at paragraph 17.6 above, together with a revised Advice and Information Strategy.

18. Asset Management Strategy

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment and an Island Communities Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted:

18.1. That the Housing Service had a strong role in respect of Asset Management and was regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

18.2. That the Council's Housing Service held various assets including land holdings, garages and housing stock.

18.3. That strategic planning of the Council's housing assets was important to ensure housing stock of the right size, type and location was held, that the stock was managed appropriately, that plans were in place to ensure required standards were met and necessary checks were undertaken, and which interlinked with the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and financial plans in order to plan efficiently and ensure rents remained as affordable as possible for tenants.

18.4. That the Housing Service required an Asset Management Strategy which aligned with the Scottish Housing Regulator's guidance on Integrated Asset Management (2023) and took account of their guidance on Housing Revenue Account Business Planning (2015).

18.5. That the previous Asset Management Strategy, which ran from 2014 to 2019, required substantial review.

18.6. The draft Asset Management Strategy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council**:

18.7. That the draft Asset Management Strategy, referred to at paragraph 18.6 above, be approved for consultation.

18.8. That the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing Committee should submit a report, to a meeting of the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee in early 2024, on the outcome of the consultation referred to at paragraph 18.7 above, together with an updated Asset Management Strategy.

19. Lettings Plan

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Island Communities Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted:

19.1. That, following a legislative change regarding allocation of social rented housing, the Council approved a new Lettings Policy in March 2020, for implementation from 1 April 2021.

19.2. That, although unexpected delays were experienced due to COVID-19, implementation of the Lettings Policy now required to be progressed.

19.3. That the Council was required, in allocating its housing, to give reasonable preference to the following groups:

- People who were homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- People living in unsatisfactory housing.
- Tenants of social landlords who under-occupy their homes.

19.4. That a Lettings Plan was required in order to assign targets to different groups within the Lettings Policy.

19.5. That Orkney had relatively small numbers of properties for allocation each year and therefore required flexibility in its Lettings Plan.

19.6. That, as the level of housing need was quite different between Mainland Orkney and the linked South Isles and the ferry linked isles generally, a Lettings Plan had been designed with the intention of applying separate targets to properties on mainland Orkney and the linked south isles, from those on the ferry linked isles.

19.7. That the Lettings Plan was intended to be appropriately flexible to ensure that reasonable preference groups were prioritised followed by those otherwise in housing need.

19.8. That, given implementation was a significant process, it was proposed that the lettings plan cover a period of two financial years, namely 2023/24 and 2024/25.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

19.9. That the Lettings Plan, attached at Appendix 5 to this Minute, be approved for use in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

20. Conclusion of Meeting

At 13:27 the Chair declared the meeting concluded.

Signed: Gwenda M Shearer.