

MINUTES of MEETING of SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP - OUR ISLANDS: OUR FUTURE
held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, KILMORY, LOCHGILPHEAD
on TUESDAY, 13 MAY 2014

Present: Councillor Len Scoullar (Chair)

Councillor Robin Currie
Councillor Anne Horn

Councillor Duncan MacIntyre
Councillor Isobel Strong

Attending: Charles Reppke, Head of Governance and Law
Audrey Martin, Projects and Renewables Manager
Fergus Murray, Head of Economic Development
Patricia O'Neill, Central Governance Manager

Also Present: Councillor Dick Walsh – for item 3 only

The Chair ruled and the Short Life Working Group Agreed to take an urgent item: Update from Council Leader on discussions at a national level in respect of island issues ahead of item 3 Minutes on the published agenda.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Mary Jean Devon and Councillor Robert E MacIntyre.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were intimated.

3. UPDATE FROM COUNCIL LEADER

The Council Leader provided an update on discussions at Cosla and with the Minister for Local Government and Planning. The Council Leader advised that a number of discussions have taken place in respect of how other Councils such as Argyll and Bute, Highland, and North Ayrshire could benefit from the Three Islands Partnership developments. The Minister was keen to hear more about the particular issues facing island communities within Argyll and Bute such as depopulation and expressed an interest in meeting to discuss this further. This would be taken forward in conjunction with the Chief Executive and the Leader would intend to extend any such invitation to meet to the SLWG. The Leader advised that the initial discussions had been positive and he was optimistic that the discussions would continue to move forward.

The Short Life Working Group undertook a discussion regarding the Three Islands Partnership. The Group noted that while it was important that while we benefit from this initiative and any associated package of measures that our key focus should be on the tasks and activities to best benefit our islands. The Short Life Working Group considered the possibility of looking at the outcomes set out in the Single Outcome Agreement and agreed to look at how best to "island proof" these without the need for a separate plan but to ensure island issues were addressed

within the delivery plans.

Discussion took place on the information collated by the Economic Development Team through a range of discussions with island communities and it was noted this information would provide a helpful basis for discussions with the Minister.

The Chair thanked the leader on behalf of the Short Life Working Group for providing an update on the discussions with Cosla and at a ministerial level.

Decision

The Short Life Working Group noted the update from the Leader and agreed that it is a positive step forward.

The Short Life Working Group agreed to give further consideration to “island proofing” the SOA and associated delivery plans and a matrix of island issues would be developed for the next meeting.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Short Life Working Group Our Islands: Our Future were approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments -

Under item 4, Our Islands: Our Future – add in an additional decision:

5. Agree to invite the leader of the Western Isles Council to a future meeting of the Short Life Working Group.

5. CHANGE OF NAME OF SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP

The Short Life Working Group discussed the possibility of changing the name of the Short Life Working Group.

Decision

The Short Life Working Group agreed to make a recommendation to Council that the name of the Short Life Working Group be changed to Argyll Islands Task Force Short Life Working Group.

6. PRESS RELEASE

In response to a question on public response to the Press Release Elected Members indicated that they had not received any feedback as yet however it was noted that the establishment of the group was already known and it was still early days.

The Group participated in a discussion regarding the purpose of this Short Life Working Group and how important it is that the Group achieves the goals which it sets out.

Charles Reppke advised that the Group could look at creating an overall objective which the Council would deliver but additionally look at smaller scale objectives which the Short Life Working Group could make happen themselves or by influencing other people in order for change to occur. The Short Life Working Group agreed that this was a good approach so people can see that the Group is actively trying to make a difference as opposed to just discussion on how they could make a difference.

Fergus Murray advised that there is ongoing work that is being done to support the Islands however this needed to be communicated more effectively.

The Short Life Working Group agreed that it would be helpful to look at island success stories and identify why they are successful and then see if the causes of the success can be applied elsewhere. The Group noted that although it may seem that some Islands may appear to be a success, this might not be the underlying case and it is important to try and address any problems that they may be facing.

Decision

The Short Life Working Group agreed to identify clear objectives as to what the Group wants to achieve and release further communication to the public once this has been identified.

7. OUR ISLANDS: ISSUES

Audrey Martin presented the matrix that she had been working on to the Group and explained that the aim of the matrix is to identify overarching Island issues and key issues that are specific to certain Islands. Audrey advised that she had received data which had been gathered during the Community Planning Partnership consultation events that had recently taken place. Audrey reported that Chris Carr had advised that it would be possible to break down the population statistics into demographics in order to try and help identify issues that the Islands are facing and the reasons as to why they are facing these issues. The Short Life Working Group agreed that the demographics of an Islands population would be an important consideration and a discussion was held on this.

The Short Life Working Group undertook a discussion on how ferry reliability was affecting the Islands and how in some instances this was deterring people from living on the Island as it was having a negative impact on their ability to undertake work on the mainland. The Group noted that the matrix contains information regarding Ferry Costs, Capacity and links to other methods of transport however requested that an additional column headed Ferry Reliability be added.

Decision

The Short Life Working Group agreed that:

1. Fergus Murray and Audrey Martin would bring back a report setting out proposed priorities and objectives for the Short Life

Working Group to discuss which would then form the basis of a future report to Council with recommendations for approval

2. The next meeting of the Short life Working Group will be held in the afternoon of 2 June 2014.

8. OTHER PARTNER COUNCILS

In response to a discussion on working with other Partners and Councils with regards to lobbying on behalf of island communities outwith the Three Islands Partnership it was agreed that Fergus Murray should make an informal approach to North Ayrshire Council and Highland Council to gain an understanding of their views on these matters.

Decision

The Short Life Working Group agreed that Fergus Murray would speak to the Head of Economic Development at North Ayrshire Council and Highland Council and report back to the group at the next meeting.