Public Document Pack

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 2 FEBRUARY, 2016**

A MEETING of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE will be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, NEWTOWN ST BOSWELLS, TD6 0SA on TUESDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2016 at 12.30 pm

J. J. WILKINSON,
Clerk to the Council,

26 January 2016

		BUSINESS	
	1.	**Apologies for Absence**	
	2.	**Order of Business**	
	3.	**Declarations of Interest**	
		EDUCATION BUSINESS	
	4.	**School Estate - Pre-consultation and Review** (Pages 1 - 28) Consider report by Service Director Children and Young People on the proposed review of the school estate and pre-consultation with communities. (Copy attached.)	45 mins
		Education theme additional Membership of Committee:- **Mr G. Donald, Mr J. Walsh, Mr G. Jarvie, Jeanette Aitchison (Parent Representative), Alison Ferahi (Parent Representative), Pupil Representatives.**	
		OTHER BUSINESS	
	5.	**Minute** (Pages 29 - 32) Minute of meeting of 19 January 2016 to be approved and signed by the Chairman. (Copy attached.)	2 mins
	6.	**Scottish Landfill Communities Fund** (Pages 33 - 40) Consider report by Chief Executive providing an overview of the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund.	10 mins
	7.	**Any Other Items Previously Circulated**	
	8.	**Any Other Items which the Chairman Decides are Urgent**	

	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS	
9.	**Economic Development Update** (Pages 41 - 46) Presentation on recent Economic Development progress by the Chief Officer Economic Development. (Briefing note attached.)	20 mins
10.	**Highlighting Innovation - Mountain Biking** Presentation of a short video on the innovations being developed at Glentress Forest by Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland and local businesses. This will be followed by a short question and answer session.	20 mins
11.	**Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband Roll-out Update** (Pages 47 - 52) Consider report by Corporate Transformation and Services Director providing an update on the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband Programme. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
12.	**Borders Railway Blueprint - Update** (Pages 53 - 62) Consider report by Corporate Transformation and Services Director providing an update on the delivery of the Borders Railway Blueprint and other railway related project activity. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
13.	**Any Other Economic Development Items Previously Circulated**	
14.	**Any Other Economic Development Items which the Chairman Decides are Urgent**	
	Economic Development theme additional membership of Committee:-Mr J. Clark, Mr G. Henderson.	
15.	**Private Business** Before proceeding with the private business, the following motion should be approved:- "That under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the aforementioned Act."	
16.	**Minute** (Pages 63 - 64) Private Minute of Meeting of 19 January 2016 to be approved and signed by the Chairman.	2 mins

NOTES
1.   **Timings given above are only indicative and not intended to inhibit Members' discussions.**

2.   **Members are reminded that, if they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any item of business coming before the meeting, that interest should be declared prior to commencement of discussion on that item. Such declaration will be recorded in the Minute of the meeting.**

Membership of Committee:- Councillors D. Parker (Chairman), S. Aitchison, S. Bell, C. Bhatia, J. Brown, M. J. Cook, V. M. Davidson, G. Edgar, J. G. Mitchell, D. Moffat, D. Paterson, F. Renton and R. Smith

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SCHOOL ESTATES – Pre-consultation and Review

Report by Service Director Children & Young People

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2 February 2016

1   PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1   **This report seeks to update the Executive Committee on the proposed review of the school estate and agree the content of the proposed pre-consultation with communities across the Scottish Borders.**

1.2   Curriculum for Excellence is being implemented and further developed in all Scottish Borders schools. A review of the school estate must deliver maximum educational benefits for our children and young people within the new curriculum.

1.3   Our school estate has buildings and locations, which have been in existence in some cases for over 100 years. Scottish Borders Council Executive (Education) on 20 January 2015 agreed principles which would guide us in reviewing the school estate. These principles will ensure we take a strategic approach whilst delivering:

  a) Increased educational opportunities
  b) Improved outcomes for children and young people
  c) A school estate best placed to enable the Authority to deliver across its range of statutory educational duties
  d) Sustainability
  e) A future-proofed school estate
  f) Affordability

1.4   The pre-consultation seeks to engage with all stakeholders to gather information and their views regarding the quality and issues within the current school estate provision. The consultation will also seek views and ideas as to what our future school estates provision should aspire to look like.

1.5   Scottish Borders Council will analyse the feedback and information gathered from the pre-consultation and consider both the information from the public and our own data in analysing the existing school estate. This information will then be used to identify a way forward as to how we will improve our school estate. A report is expected to be taken to Scottish Borders Council meeting on 19 May 2016.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   **I recommend that the Executive Committee:-**

(a)   **Agrees to the proposed pre-consultation on the school estate across the school communities of the Scottish Borders.**

(b)   **Agrees that the outcome of the consultation is reported back to the Full Council on 19 May 2016.**

(c)   **Agree that the consultation includes a consideration of key themes within the previously agreed principles of 'maximising educational opportunities', 'improving individual outcomes', 'sustainability', 'affordability', 'delivery of statutory educational duties', and 'future proof' within the School Estate Strategy.**

(d)   **Agree that, following the pre-consultation, and Full Council's consideration of its outcomes , the Service Director Children and Young People should prepare a set of school estate proposals which would then be brought back to Full Council for its consideration in August 2016.**

(e)   **Scottish Borders Council's Small Schools Policy, produced prior to the Schools Consultation Act 2010, is formally withdrawn.**

3   PROPOSAL

3.1   On 20 January 2015, recommendations from the Depute Chief Executive (People), were approved by the Education Executive in relation to the school estate.

3.2   Approval was reached that:

   a) Scottish Borders Council adopts a long term strategic approach to the development and design of the school estate.
   b) All options are considered in the development of the school estate strategy.
   c) The primary principles of 'maximising educational opportunities' and 'improving individual outcomes' are considered in conjunction with the other principles of 'sustainability', 'affordability' , 'delivery of statutory educational duties' and 'future proofing' throughout the school estate strategy.

3.3   Improving Educational Outcomes for Children and Young People in the Scottish Borders

   Scottish Borders Council has statutory duties relating to the provision of Education which we fulfil in our school provision. These duties are set out in legislation and include:

   a) Education (Scotland) Act 1980, Section1, which requires Scottish Borders Council to secure for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education.

   b) Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000, Section 3, which requires Scottish Borders Council to endeavour to raise standards and secure improvement in the quality of school education provided in our schools. The education we provide must be directed to the development of the personality, talents and the mental and physical abilities of the children or young people to their fullest potential.

   c) Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2004 and the Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland)Act 2009, which requires Scottish Borders Council to identify and provide support for any children with additional support needs and prepare co-ordinated support plans for those with the most extensive needs.

   d) Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2009 which requires Scottish Borders Council to give advice and information to a parent of a school pupil when reasonably requested, on any matter relating to the education provided to that pupil.

   e) Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2009 which requires Scottish Borders Council to give advice and information to a parent of a school pupil when reasonably requested, on any matter relating to the education provided to that pupil.

   f) Children and Young People's Act 2014 requires Scottish Borders Council to implement key policies relating to Early Learning and Childcare, provide additional support for children and young people who are looked after and accommodated including kinship care, extend free school meals and strengthen the rights and

participation of children and young people.

3.4   Scottish Borders Council sets out within the context of national and local policies what it is aiming to achieve in terms of raising levels of achievement and attainment and improving educational outcomes for all children and young people in the key priorities set out in our Business Plan and our Children and Young People's Services Plan.

3.5   Our key priority is "to improve attainment and achievement levels for all our children and young people, both within and outwith the formal curriculum."

3.6   As part of a multi-agency partnership, we have identified the following priorities within our Children and Young People's Services Plan:

   a) Raising attainment and achievement for all and closing the gap between the lowest and highest achievers

   b) Promoting the health and well-being of all children and young people and reducing health inequalities

   c) Keeping children and young people safe

   d) Improving the well-being and life chances for our most vulnerable children and young people

   e) Increasing participation and engagement

3.7   The purpose of the curriculum is encapsulated in the four capacities - to enable each child or young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.

3.8   The curriculum aims to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work, now and in the future. The attributes and capabilities of the four capacities are outlined below:

successful learners	confident individuals	responsible citizens	effective contributors
attributes	**attributes**	**attributes**	**attributes**
• enthusiasm and motivation for learning • determination to reach high standards of achievement • openness to new thinking and ideas	• self-respect • a sense of physical, mental and emotional well-being • secure values and beliefs • ambition	• respect for others • commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life	• an enterprising attitude • resilience • self-reliance
capabilities	**capabilities**	**capabilities**	**capabilities**
• use literacy, communication and numeracy skills • use technology for learning • think creatively and independently • learn independently and as part of a group • make reasoned evaluations • link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations.	• relate to others and manage themselves • pursue a healthy and active lifestyle • be self-aware • develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world • live as independently as they can • assess risk and make informed decisions • achieve success in different areas of activity.	• develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it • understand different beliefs and cultures • make informed choices and decisions • evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues • develop informed, ethical views of complex issues.	• communicate in different ways and in different settings • work in partnership and in teams • take the initiative and lead • apply critical thinking in new contexts • create and develop • solve problems

Page 4

3.9   The <u>experiences and outcomes</u> are a set of statements which describe the expectations for learning and progression for each of the eight curriculum areas.

3.10   The title 'experiences and outcomes' recognises the importance of the quality and nature of the learning experience in developing attributes and capabilities and in achieving active engagement, motivation and depth of learning. An outcome represents what is to be achieved.

3.11   The experiences and outcomes for each curriculum area build in all the attributes and capabilities and so develop the four capacities. All our schools in the Scottish Borders are expected to deliver Curriculum for Excellence as set out within the four capacities and the experiences and outcomes.

3.12   Our school estate must be fit for purpose and support the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence whilst maximising educational opportunities and benefits for all our children and young people.

3.13   Vision for the school estate:

(a)   The shared vision of local government and the Scottish Government for the future of the school estate is articulated in *Building Better Schools:Investing in Scotland's Future*:

"Our vision is for schools which signal the high value we place on learning; which people and communities can enjoy using and can be proud of; which are well designed, maintained and managed and which encourage continuous engagement with learning; which are far more than just 'educational establishments' whose quality of environment supports an accessible range of services and opportunities and which enrich the communities they serve and the lives of learners and families."

(b)   Scottish Borders Council shares this vision for the future of the school estate and along with other Local Authorities, has articulated aspirations and principles related to the planning and management of the school estate. The aspirations of the national strategy and of our school estate strategy are as follows:

i.   All children and young people will be educated in, and community users will use, schools that are 'fit for purpose' in terms of condition, suitability and sufficiency;

ii.   Schools are well-designed, accessible, inclusive learning environments that inspire and drive new thinking and change and which support the delivery of high quality educational experiences through Curriculum for Excellence;

iii. Schools are integral parts of the communities they serve, with pupils making use of community facilities and communities accessing school facilities;

iv.   Schools accommodate and provide a range of services, activities and facilities that make a difference to people's health and well- being, to sustaining economic growth and to the strength and vibrancy of communities;

v.   A sustainable school estate whose design, construction and operation is environmentally and energy efficient; contributes directly to delivering the year on year reductions in

Page 5

greenhouse gas emissions introduced by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, which is resilient to the impact of climate change and which leads by example in matters of environmental performance;

vi. A school estate that is efficiently run and that achieves best value.

vii. A school estate which is flexible and responsive - both to changes in demand for school places and to learners' and teachers' requirements and wishes and where the beneficial impact of change is maximised by thorough consultation and engagement with users and stakeholders.

3.14 Guiding Principles in the Review of the School Estate

The aim of this strategy is to deliver on the vision and these aspirations set out above. The following principles will guide us in the review of the School Estate:

(a) **We will continue to prioritise the investment in our school estate.** Through asset management planning, prioritisation criteria will be developed for investment in the school estate ensuring resources are targeted to the highest priority areas.

(b) **We will promote sustainability in the school estate.** This includes energy efficient measures, renewable technologies and in the design of new, extension or repair works.

(c) **We will utilise our buildings effectively and efficiently ensuring affordability**. A programme of area based reviews is planned, with the aim of improving the effective use of the property portfolio in a geographic area and opening new lines of communication with public sector partners.

(d) **We will actively pursue the development of further community based facilities** within school buildings as we review our property portfolio and prepare plans for future development.

(e) **We will engage with users and communities** in developing the school estate on a local basis.

(f) **We will refine and develop performance measures** for the school estate including school design guidelines and post occupancy reviews.

(g) **We will future proof** the school estate taking into account planning consents, future opportunities and roll projections.

(h) **We will increase educational opportunities** by considering the learning pathways from 0-18 years and focus on increasing educational opportunities, taking into account equality.

(i) **We will aim to improve educational outcomes** for all young people by ensuring that educational benefits are a key driver in decision making in our school estates strategy.

Within these principles there are key themes of data sets and information which will enable a robust and thorough approach to the Review of the School Estate. We will share with stakeholders the following information:

   i.   School catchment areas
   ii.   School rolls and roll projections
   iii. School capacities and occupancies
   iv.   Placing request numbers per school
   v.   School building condition and suitability ratings
   vi.   Community use of schools
   vii. Average cost per pupil per school

3.15   Our provision:

(a)   It is important that such a significant and valuable asset is managed in an efficient and effective manner while meeting the wider strategic objectives of the Council and benefiting our communities.

(b)   Our school estate strategy considers the development and management of the school estate in the context of meeting national and local outcomes, planning ahead and providing best value and benefits to our communities.

(c)   The Children and Young People's Directorate provide a wide range of services to all communities in the Scottish Borders, including Education (Early Years, Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Additional Support Needs), Youth, Community, Sports Development, Culture, and Children's Services.

(d)   In order to provide these services, Scottish Borders Council manage a large number of property assets including schools, community buildings, community learning centres, libraries, museums, art galleries, outdoor centres, resource centres and child and family centres; 71 primary schools, 9 secondary schools, and 8 enhanced provisions for children with additional support needs.

(e)   The assets managed and run by Scottish Borders Council, including the school estate, need to be fit for purpose and provide modern public services that meet the current and future needs of our communities.

3.16   Pre-Consultation and Review Process

Decision making protocols and guidance around the school estate are set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and reflect recommendations made in the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education Report. They provide very clear expectations and details as to how consultation on the school estate should be implemented as well as stating the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders: Council, Education Scotland, Scottish Government, the public and stakeholders in the school community. In relation to the Act, it is important to note that this proposed consultation is an informal consultation or pre-consultation which aims to engage with communities before any formal 2010 Act proposal papers are considered. The Statutory Guidance states " *pre-consultation"* *can cover a range of engagement with communities regarding a proposal*

Page 7

before a formal 2010 Act proposal paper is published. It is not a substitute for, nor does it reduce any of the requirements for formal consultation under the 2010 Act. However, pre-consultation can play an important part in information gathering and sharing in advance of a statutory consultation. It is often this type of participation which really engages and empowers communities to understand and help shape the proposals that affect them. There are many different approaches to pre-consultation, from an extension to the authority's regular engagement with Parent Councils to consider concerns regarding a school's future and possible options, to an authority issuing a pre-consultation paper on a wider range of possible options for the school estate before refining which of these should become statutory proposals."

In this pre-consultation Scottish Borders Council aims to engage constructively with our communities in advance of statutory consultation so that statutory consultation is not a surprise to communities. We aim to achieve a full, fair and rigorous consultation providing high quality and accurate consultation information and documentation whilst ensuring high standards of transparency.

(a)   It is proposed that we embark upon an informal, or "pre-consultation", where we would seek to share the vision for the future of the school estate detailed in 3.13 above, and, to engage with stakeholders in the broadest of terms. We will do this by holding a daytime through to evening open pre-consultation event in each of our 9 secondary schools in March 2016. All families and local members of the community will be invited to attend.

(b)   The format for the engagement event will be:

   i.   Information boards which share key data and information about the school estate in each local area;
   ii.   Information on the educational outcomes being delivered within Curriculum for Excellence in local schools;
   iii.   Opportunities to comment upon key themes within the guiding principles behind the Review: 'maximising educational opportunities' ,'improving individual outcomes', 'delivery of statutory educational duties' are considered in conjunction with the other principles of 'sustainability', 'affordability' and 'future proofing' throughout the school estate strategy;
   iv.   Questionnaire for all stakeholders
   v.   Information boards which outline the guidance set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

(c)   We are engaging with a QC, who is providing us with external and independent legal advice regarding all our communications in the pre-consultation so that we can be confident that our materials fulfil the expectations for transparency and openness set out in the school consultation act guidance and legislation. A questionnaire will be created in keeping with this independent legal advice which will seek to gather views and responses to questions relating to existing school estate provision and future estates provision based upon achieving the vision set out in this report. We will create an information question and answer sheet, which will go out with the letter inviting parents to the open evening, providing them with some background information, as we recognise this is quite a

complex matter. We will gather views during the engagement evenings and through the questionnaire, which will be available for a consultation period.

The feedback from the pre-consultation event will be used to inform next steps. It will be taken into consideration in the formulation of any proposals which may thereafter be prepared. A further, formal, consultation process will then follow in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (as amended by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014) and the Statutory Guidance issued pursuant to that Act.

It should be noted that at this stage there are no particular options being considered. This is a review of the whole school estate and will identify and consider a full range of possible options such as:

i.   Status quo
ii.   Catchment reviews;
iii.   New school build requirements;
iv.   School merger proposals on a new site involving closure of existing schools;
v.   School closures and re-location of the catchment to existing schools;
vi.   School re-design for children and young people within a catchment area eg 2-18 years campus, or 2-8 years campus, or 8-18 years campus;
vii.   Any alternative proposals presented by stakeholders during consultation.

(d)   The Service Director Children and Young People will present the findings of the pre-consultation to Full Council on 19 May 2016.

3.17   Scottish Borders Council produced a Small Schools Policy in 2007 (Appendix 1). This policy was produced prior to the Schools Consultation Act 2010. The policy has never been fully implemented by Scottish Borders Council and certainly not in the period since the 2010 Act and accompanying guidance came into being. While this policy has never been fully implemented, nor has it ever been formally revoked or withdrawn. However, in light of the change in the statutory framework together with the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence, this guidance is no longer considered to be relevant or useful. It is therefore recommended that it should now, for the avoidance of confusion, be formally withdrawn.

3.18   Approval is sought to go forward with a Schools Estates pre-consultation and review.

4   IMPLICATIONS

4.1   **Financial**

The Review of the School Estate will influence the Council's Capital Investment Plan and long term Revenue Financial Planning.

Page 9

4.2   **Risk and Mitigations**

A strategic approach to the School Estate is required to ensure there is scope for improving educational outcomes for all children and young people across the Scottish Borders. We must ensure we have a sustainable estates plan which maximises educational benefits for all children and young people or the Council could face significant risks such as poor condition school buildings and unmanageable building maintenance issues.

4.3   **Equalities**

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of a School Estate Strategy Development to mitigate against any adverse equality implications.

4.4   **Acting Sustainably**

There are no significant impacts on the Economy, Community or Environment arising from the proposed engagement with families and communities as proposed within this report. However, the School Estate Strategy will seek to ensure sustainability, which will be considered as proposals come forward.

4.5   **Carbon Management**

There are no significant effects on carbon emissions arising from the proposals contained in this report. However, the School Estate Strategy will seek to promote environmental responsibility and effective carbon management as part of any proposals that come forward within this Review of the School Estate.

4.6   **Rural Proofing**

In preparing the School Estates Strategy particular regard will be paid to the issue of rurality and rural schools. It will be a key component of any discussions regarding changes to the school estate.

In addition, the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 create specific statutory obligations in connection with certain proposals for rural schools. These include, for example, a requirement to consider impact on the local community and the effect of any changed travelling arrangements. These obligations will be fully implemented, in accordance with the Act and the Statutory Guidance, if they do become relevant.

4.7   **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals contained in this report.

5   CONSULTATION

5.1   The Chief Financial Officer, the Service Director Regulatory Services as Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated in the final report.

Approved by

Donna Manson	**Signature** ....
Service Director	
Children and Young People	

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Donna Manson	Service Director Children and Young People

Background Papers:
Appendix 1 – Small Schools Policy – Scottish Borders Council
Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Statutory Guidance
Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Timeline
Building Better Schools Investing in Scotland's Future – Scottish Government
Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education – Scottish Government
Children's Services Business Plan

Previous Minute Reference: N/A

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Donna Manson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells TD6 0SA.

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Education & Lifelong Learning

Small Schools Policy

Version 2: January 2007
Next Review : September 2009

Scottish Borders Council - Policy for Small Schools

1.   Introduction

The policy has been developed following extensive research into the issues facing small schools and through consultation.   The consultation process had five distinct phases: in-depth interviews with headteachers of small schools in the Borders, an open public consultation on elements of school review, a separate consultation for teaching staff on support for small schools and a final consultation on the draft policy itself. The fifth phase was to consult on proposed changes to the policy after its first complete cycle of review.

The policy document is divided into five sections:
1. The background and context of the policy
2. Defining the size and characteristics of a small school for the Borders
3. Creating a framework for support for small schools
4. The criteria and process of review for small schools
5. Appendices

Listed below are a number of objectives that the authority has to balance in delivering its services. This 'balance' is not meant to dismiss or diminish the contribution of small schools which often provide the vital intra community links in rural areas.

- Recognising the role and importance that small schools can play in rural communities

- While meeting its statutory duty to achieving best value.

- Ensuring fairness in distribution of resources.

- While accepting that it costs far more on a per pupil basis to operate small schools

- Taking decisions in the context of the overall picture for all children in the Borders.

- While respecting the passionate commitment of some communities to maintain the status quo, often in the face of significant declines in school rolls.

- Initiating change in the best interest of the service.

- Dealing with school communities' concerns arising from the inevitable changes in the way education is taught and delivered

The fundamental principles of the policy seek to meet these objectives by:
- putting the interests of children first
- supporting headteachers and school staff to deliver an education that will prepare our children for an ever more complex and competitive world, meeting the four competencies that are guiding the development of the A Curriculum for Excellent
  - Successful learners
  - Confident Individuals
  - Responsible Citizens
  - Effective Contributors

- establishing a clear and fair framework to support and review schools that meets the authority's legal duty to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education

The implementation of the policy will be taken forward through 'practice points' which are identified in the document and listed in appendix 1. Appendix 2 contains references to a number of Council policies and national initiatives relevant to this policy. Appendix 3 comprises a list of small schools as at January 2007;

2. Policy Context

The pattern of primary school provision in the Borders was established more than 100 years ago to serve a different age, with a primarily rural population. Since then there has been enormous change in lifestyles and in the teaching environment.

Over the past 20 years this change has accelerated and further changes to school life are inevitable. Scottish Borders is one of only three areas in Scotland to forecast significant continuing growth in the under 15 population, however this growth is primarily taking place in the region's vibrant towns and larger village settlements and some remote rural areas are forecast to see continuing decline.

There are also significant changes in the way schools operate, due in part to the Devolved School Management regime and more recently to McCrone (a national agreement to deliver 'A teaching profession for the 21st century), both of which have increased management and administrative duties for headteachers. In addition a multitude of new initiatives, the need for headteachers to develop and implement an ever-increasing raft of policies, together with changing legislation all put considerable pressure on schools. The effect of these measures is amplified in small schools. All of these initiatives will be beneficial to our children but all (albeit to different degrees) consume non-teaching/management time for headteachers.

Another very significant change arises from the statutory requirement for local authorities to ensure a continuous process of quality improvement in schools. This has resulted in changed roles for the former school advisers. Their roles are now focused on driving improvements in quality - an absolute necessity - but pastoral and supportive duties no longer form part of the quality improvement officers' role. The quality improvement framework refocuses responsibilities for headteachers, which again in small schools consumes proportionately more time. This has a stronger impact on small schools where the previous support framework helped compensate for the professional isolation of perhaps just one, two or at most three teachers working together.

The lack of space and poor facilities within many of our schools also brings additional pressure. As stated earlier, the majority of our small schools were built in a different age and while the buildings have been maintained to an acceptable standard, some lack space for fundamental activities while other schools have far too much space for the reduced number of pupils in their catchment area.

The Council has an approved policy (School of the Future Model – Primaries) detailing the space and standard of accommodation required for primary schools and a comprehensive school asset strategy is in place to start addressing this. In line with the Scottish Executive requirements, this

will entail an asset-based review of all schools. In the Borders this will be undertaken through a rolling three-year programme and a review of small schools will be undertaken on the same cycle.

- The principal objective of the asset review is to identify needs and determine the priorities for investment.
- The principal objective of the small schools review is early identification of issues that may threaten the viability of these schools and where possible take action to address any potential threats.

While larger schools also face growing challenges, they generally have a more comprehensive infrastructure of support (staffing, resources and premises) than small schools and as the funding allocation for resources is largely based on pupil numbers, larger schools also have more flexibility in the way they use their devolved budgets.

Efficient Service

Few can argue that in terms of efficiency operating fewer, but larger schools, is the optimum solution but this ignores the rural realities and attractions to some families of life in the Borders. Although the revenue costs related to a single school may be considered marginal, when compared to the discretionary spend of the department's overall budget, failure to redress an imbalance in resources can impact upon a large number of pupils.

3.   Small Schools in a Borders Setting

Defining a Small School - Practice Point 1

The general definition of a small primary school across the United Kingdom is one with less than 200 pupils. This however is not relevant for the Borders where the average size of a primary school is 120 pupils.

- The authority's considered view is that a small school for the purposes of this policy should be defined as comprising no more than three composite classes with a maximum of 75 pupils.

  A list of the schools that come into this category will be published in August of each 'review year'.

Other issues examined when defining the size of a small school for the Borders included:

Single-teacher schools

There is much excellent work undertaken in one-teacher schools and they provide a close nurturing environment but they do face increasing and significant challenges.   The level and nature of the challenges will vary but they include:

For pupils
- Meeting the full curriculum when taught in a single class that may have up to 19 children, ranging in age from 4½ to 11

- Insufficient social interaction with children of their own age and/or gender
- Involvement with the same teacher for the duration of primary schooling
- Insufficient opportunities for team interaction - particularly sports
- Less resources or space than larger schools - this is generally true for a whole range of sports, arts and games facilities
- Less money to spend on books and supplies etc
- Huge cultural change for pupils moving from a school with under 19 pupils to a secondary school that could have over 1,000 pupils.

For teachers
- Ever increasing management and administrative burdens falling on a class-committed headteacher
- Isolation - the lack of contact with other teaching professionals to provide the constructive challenge of a critical friend
- The difficulty in delivering the full curriculum across up to five or seven year groups in one classroom
- The reliance on supply staff to cover their teaching commitments when they need to attend courses, conferences and network groups - a consequence of the changing curriculum and initiative driven education environment

For the authority
- It is increasingly difficult to attract headteachers, teachers and support staff (for both permanent and supply posts) to small schools, which can lack the facilities and opportunities of larger schools and may be in remote locations.

Minimum size for a one-teacher school - <u>Practice Point 2</u>

For many years the policy in the Borders has been that a one-teacher school should face a review if its roll dropped to 13 (or fewer) pupils. This takes into account the concept that three or four pupils at each stage (or developmental year groupings i.e. P1- P3, P4-P5 and P6-P7) is the minimum number required to provide adequate cognitive development and effective personal and social development. This will continue as part of the rolling three year review cycle.

Pupil age profile of one-teacher schools - <u>Practice Point 3</u>

In some parts of the Borders, single-teacher schools only offer education from P1 to P5, thereafter the children transfer to their nearest larger school for their P6 and P7 years. This provides an attractive mix to parents of a local school for the early years and the chance for pupils to benefit from the broader opportunities. This help in the transition from primary to secondary.

- Any single-teacher school that provides P1 to P7 education will be asked to consider if it wishes to change its age profile and transfer P6 and P7 pupils to a larger school. If the majority of parents want to explore this further, a statutory consultation will be undertaken.

Page 17

- Should parents in schools that already transfer pupils at P6 wish the authority to consider reversing this transition process, then this can be explored through the review and statutory consultation process.

4.   Support Framework for Small Schools

The authority's principle of support is based on providing an appropriate level of support for all schools based on need.   Until now levels of support have been largely allocated on a per pupil basis, working towards equality in resource allocation. It is now acknowledged that this is insufficient to maintain small schools but it must be recognised that it will place additional costs on to small schools.

The introduction of all these elements will be on a phased basis as funding permits. But when bidding for new resources, support for small schools will be given a high priority.

Additional management time for headteachers - Practice Point 4

The Education Executive has agreed a formula to increase management time for all headteachers. In small schools the extra management time will provide an additional teacher to cover the headteacher's class commitment.

Management time for small school has been increased to
- 1.5 days a week for 1 teacher schools
- 2 days a week for two and three teacher schools

Non teaching support - Practice Point 5

It is acknowledged that small schools need additional non-teaching support, although one effect of this will be to raise their cost base.   Support will initially cover additional office staff for administration and janitorial time.

- All small schools will have non teaching staff on site throughout the school day.
- All small schools will have a janitor on site for ½ day each week.

Professional support for headteachers in small schools - Practice Point 6

As discussed in section 1 of the policy, headteachers in small schools face additional pressures from a huge number of factors that are amplified by their relative isolation and lack of professional support on a daily basis.

- The primary professional support team will
  - advise on new teaching initiatives for multi stage teaching

- promote and facilitate clustering, whereby small schools will work together to develop relevant policies and bid for additional funding
- encourage sharing of best practice

4. Review of Small Schools

Small Schools Review - <u>Practice Point 7</u>

The small schools review will be an open and inclusive process and should not be confused with the formal statutory consultation that is required to explore changing a school's status, its location or closure. Early exploration of roll forecasts, changing catchment areas or non-traditional methods of operation through the committee process indicates a proactive approach intended to help sustain the school.

- Small schools will be reviewed on a rolling three year programme, beginning in August 2007 so that as appropriate, and when possible, proactive measures can be taken to help sustain small schools whose future might otherwise be in jeopardy.

  This timescale will now be in line with a asset review of all schools.

The Principles of the Small Schools Review Process - <u>Practice Point 8</u>

- For every trigger point listed below evidence will be required of a trend - rather than a short term or single year factor.

  - This evidence (and the trend) will comprise a mix of historic and forecast data, looking up to five years ahead.

  - Parents, staff and community members will be invited to participate in the process. They will have access to all evidence or material put forward by the department and may challenge the information provided or submit their own data to be considered.

  - For school rolls forecasts (in line with the Council's approved methodology for roll projections) all likely housing development for the next five years will be taken into account. Additional factors, such as the re-introduction of the rail line, will also be considered.

Trigger points - <u>Practice Point 9</u>

A number of consistent trigger points for review have been developed. A school will normally face a review if it meets two or more of the points listed below.

It is important to reiterate that a 'review' is not a statutory consultation on closing the school.

- A small school will be reviewed if:

- Its status changes from
  - a four to a three teacher school - so becoming a 'small school'
  - a three to a two-teacher school
  - a two to a one-teacher school

- Its school roll fall is *forecast* to fall below the minimum size (13 pupils) in the next three years.

- If its operating cost is three or more times higher than the SBC average for all schools. When considering average costs, the additional funding provided for small schools through the GAE allocation will be taken into account.
- If the school needs urgent and unavoidable investment which, based on the number of pupils on the school roll, is considered disproportionate.   The definition of disproportionate investment would be more than £11,000 per pupil for a single project. (The £11,000 limit will rise in line with the BCIS tender priceinflation index).

- If the school is operating at an occupancy level of 45% or less. The Accounts Commission recommended in its 'Room for Learning' Report that local authorities should consider alternative arrangements for schools whose occupancy falls below 60%. The lower threshold recommended as a trigger for the Borders, recognises the disproportionate effect that just one or two pupils leaving a school can have on a small school's roll.   Occupancy levels will be determined in line with the Council policy, approved in September 2006 on school capacity.

- If more than 40% of parents in the catchment area choose to access another school by placing requests.   The primary schools manager and the school's quality improvement officer will be asked to report on reasons behind the trend in outward placing requests and recommend steps to halt the decline in school roll.

- If there is a significant decline in pupil performance.
  This will initially be referred to the Authority's Joint Quality Assurance body for consideration who will report back to the committee on their findings.

Preliminary Assessment - <u>Practice point 10</u>

- The Assistant Primary Schools Manager will lead the review process for the department.

- The first stage of the programme will be a preliminary assessment of each small school measured against the trigger points identified in practice point 9.

- A school profile card will be drawn up by the department in August for each small school. Each school's Business Support Officer will collate and prepare the data for the schools.   Sources for information are:
  - School rolls and capacities -   Department's Policy Manager
  - Maintenance and premises issues -   Department's Asset Manager

- Financial figures: School's April Devolved School Management Statement
- Placing requests: The school's headteacher
- Attainment and achievement data: The school's headteacher and QIO

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- The profile card will be shared with the school's headteacher, staff, parent council and local elected members. School representatives will have the opportunity to challenge the information if they feel it is incorrect.

- If no trigger factors emerge, the school will not go forward for review unless this is requested by either the headteacher or parent council.

- This will be the end of the process for that year and the headteacher and parent council will be notified in writing. This is likely to be the position for the majority of small schools.

The Small Schools Committee - <u>Practice point 11</u>

- The small schools committee will comprise
  - One of the department's portfolio holders (Councillors) - who will chair the meetings
  - two senior officers from the department
  - two headteachers
  - three parental representatives

Nominations will be sought from headteachers and parents willing to join the committee for this process. The headteacher and parents will not be from schools that face review. (An invitation will be issued to all schools to nominate representatives and selection will be based on securing a cross section by geography and school size, one representative at least must be from a small school.

Committee Members will serve for one complete review cycle, from start of the process in August to its conclusion.

- The committee will also invite each school facing a review to nominate up to five representatives to attend when the review committee meets for the discussion on their school,

- School representatives will be determined by the headteacher and could include
  - Member of the non teaching staff
  - A parent or carer
  - Representatives from the parent council
  - A member of the local community - for example the Minister or representative from the Community Council
  - The local elected member
  - A pupil representative from P6 or P7 year groups

  - The attendance of the headteacher of any school to be reviewed at the review committee is mandatory. Page 21

The school representatives can present information, and participate in discussion but the final recommendation to the Director will be made by the Small Schools Committee.

- The Committee will make its recommendation to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning but as with any Council report, the final decision on the recommendations and content of any subsequent report to the Education Executive will be made by the Director, rather than the Committee.

- The Lead Officer for the Review will ensure that each member of the Small Schools Committee is given the opportunity to consider and comment on the draft of the Director's report.

- Should members of the Small Schools Committee wish to make a different recommendation for an individual school this will be included as a separate paragraph within the Director's Report to ensure elected members are made aware of diverging views.

The Review Process -   Practice point 12

- Invitations to join the Review Committee will be issued in May of each cycle.

- The review process will start in August with the issuing of the review information to schools

- The first meeting of the small schools committee will be in September.   The process would normally end by November - if however further reports are required then it may meet for a final session in either December or the following January.

- The first meeting of the committee will be to explore future options for the school. This could include discussion on:

  - School roll forecasts, future housing developments etc
  - The catchment area constraints
  - Out of area catchment requests - in and outward requests
  - Interaction of school and community
  - Potential for upgrading the school to meet School of the Future standard
  - Attainment and achievement of pupils
  - Health and safety considerations
  - Alternative schooling
  - Transport issues

  - From these topics, reports will be requested on relevant issues. Most reports will originate from within the Council but on issues such as the 'interaction of school and community' it might be more appropriate for this to be prepared by the community representatives. But whatever the subject matter of the report, the school's

Page 22

representatives will have access to all information used to prepare the report.

- The second meeting will be held within six weeks to consider the findings of these reports.

- If at this stage a clear outcome is identified, a report on the findings, which will be approved by the committee, will be sent to the Director to present a report to the next meeting of the Education Executive for consideration. Any minority or dissenting views from Committee members will be included in the report. Copies of the report will be sent to the school for staff, parents and the wider community and a copy placed on the Council website.

- If further reports are required, or the committee wishes to consider in more detail alternative methods of operation, a further meeting will be held to finalise the review before recommendations are made to the Director.

- Minutes, reports and evidence (apart from personnel data on staff and personal information on pupils))from all review meetings will be available for parents and the community

Outcomes of the review - <u>Practice Point 13</u>

The small schools committee can recommend a range of options depending upon the situation for an individual school:

Potential outcomes could include
- Maintaining the status quo until the next school review process

- Recommending a review of the catchment area to see if this could increase pupil numbers. This could only be considered if it did not weaken the viability of the school(s) in other catchment areas. This would require a statutory consultation process.

- Recommending a statutory consultation to consider changing the age profile. The support of a majority of parents would be required for tis change before a statutory consultation is undertaken.
- Recommending the school is classified as a strategic school. This classification is generally based on the distance from an alternative school, although the nature of the road to be travelled, and geographic location relative to weather conditions will also be considered.

  Strategic schools will still face a review but exploring closure would only be undertaken in exceptional circumstances.

- Asking for a report on encouraging greater use of the school buildings by the community (both by the public or if appropriate private sector users)

Page 23

- Recommending mothballing a school.
  This would only be considered if it had the support of a majority of parents and is most likely to be considered for strategic schools. A typical scenario might be if a strategic school were to experience a sharp (but short term) drop in pupil numbers,, parents might prefer that their child goes to the nearest school for an interim period, rather than be disadvantaged through lack of social interaction. This action would require Council approval and a statutory consultation and would initially be for a fixed period of two years – and would be reviewed and if thought appropriate renewed for a further two years.

- Recommending exploring a shared headship; hub and satellite or cluster model of operation. This would go beyond the current shared headship model, which has been piloted in the Borders. If recommended and approved by the Education Executive implementation of an alternative model of operation may require a statutory consultation.

- Recommending undertaking a statutory consultation on closure.
  This would only be considered as a last resort and would only arise if at least three of the following factors are met:

  - a parent council wishes this to be considered in the best interests of their pupils

  - if the school roll has declined below 13 and is either set to decline further (or there is insufficient evidence to suggest the school roll will show a sustained improvement.

  - 40% or more of parents are requesting placing requests out of a school

  - there are serious deficiencies with a school's building that cannot be resolved without disproportionate investment

  - a school's running costs are three or more times the Borders average and cannot be reduced by management action

  - it is the authority's professional view that closure is in the best interest of the pupils as the lack of peer group is impacting upon personal, social and educational development - this must be supported by clear evidence

  - the authority considers this to be in the best interest of the overall service

Statutory Consultation - Practice Point 14

A recommendation to explore a statutory consultation must be accepted by the Education Executive before being implemented.

- The consultation will go beyond the statutory requirements by
  - inviting community responses
  - sharing all consultation information with parents and the community, subject to any Data Protection restrictions.
  - inviting representatives from the school to address the Education Executive or Council meeting that considers the outcome of the consultation.

- If the Director's recommendation is not in favour of closure, or if Members decide a school should be kept open after a statutory consultation the Council will be asked to:

  - exempt the school from another statutory consultation for five years to offer the school a period of stability.

  - This exemption period might be waived, subject to Education Executive consent, in exceptional circumstances.

5. Appendices

APPENDIX 1 - Summary of Practice points

Practice Point	
1.	The size of a small school in a Borders setting is 75 pupils or less in no more than three composite classes..
2	The minimum number for pupils in a one-teacher school is 13 pupils.(
3.	The preferred age profile of single teacher school will have P1 to P5 classes but this will not be compulsory.
4.	Management time for headteachers in small schools will be increased.
5	Support staff for small schools will be increased, with office staff throughout the day and part time janitor cover.
6.	Professional support for small schools will be strengthened
7.	A rolling three year programme of reviews is being introduced to support small schools through early intervention and establish a consistent framework for review - it will be an open and inclusive process.
8.	The evidence required for the review process will be a trend rather than a short term or single year effect and will be shared with parents, staff and local communities.
9.	A school will be reviewed if it meets at least two trigger points.
10.	The first stage of the programme will be a preliminary assessment against the trigger points
11.	Small school reviews will be taken forward by a small schools committee. This will comprise senior officers from the department, head teachers and two

	parents. Each school being reviewed can nominate up to five representatives to attend and participate in the process.
12	The process of the review
13.	Suggested potential outcomes from the review- range from maintaining the status quo until the next review process, to exploring alternative models of management and as a **last resort** statutory consultation on closure.
14.	Statutory consultations will go beyond the minimum requirements and a five year exemption period is proposed for schools that are not closed following a statutory consultation process.

APPENDIX 2 - Reference sources for Council policies and national initiatives

National Policies and Initiatives
- McCrone - A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century
  http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/education/tp21a-00.asp

- School capacity levels
  Scottish Executive Circular - Measuring school capacities, November 2004
  Accounts Commission Publication - Room for Learning 1995

- Devolved School Management
  www.scotland.gov.uk

Scottish Borders Council
- Corporate Plan
  http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/council/yourcouncil/reportsandpublications/3399.html

- Education & Lifelong Learning - Better Next Steps for Schools – January 2007
  http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/life/educationandlearning/index.html

Policy paper - Roll projection methodology - Original Report - September 2003 and Primary Update March 2005

- Policy Paper - Methodology for determining roll capacities - Approved by the Education Executive September 2006

- Policy Paper - Admissions Policy - Approved by the Education Executive December 2006

- Policy Paper - School of the Future Model (Primary Schools) updated January 2007

All policy papers are available by telephone from Education Lifelong Learning Communications Team 01835 825090 or by email from ellinfo@scotborders.gov.uk

Appendix 3 – Small Schools as at January 2007

School	School Roll
Ancrum	41
Ayton	52
Channelkirk	57
Coldingham	51
Eccles/Leitholm	29
Ettrick	11
Fountainhall	28
Gordon	58
Greenlaw	73
Heriot	55
Hobkirk	25
Kirkhope	32
Lilliesleaf	61
Newcastleton	58
Reston	56
Roberton	9
Sprouston	32
St Joseph's	41
St Margarets (Galashiels)	65
St Margaret's (Hawick)	28
Walkerburn	41
Westruther	25
Yarrow	6
Yetholm	42
24 schools	976 pupils

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SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTE of MEETING of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells on Tuesday, 19 January 2016 at 11.00 a.m.

Present:-   Councillors D. Parker (Chairman), S. Aitchison (Chairman - Education Business), C. Bhatia, S. Bell (from para 3), M. J. Cook, V. Davidson (from para 2), G. Edgar, J. Mitchell, D. Moffat (from para 2), D. Paterson, F. Renton, R. Smith.,

Also Present:-   Councillors J. Fullarton, I. Gillespie, A. Nicol (from para 3)

Apologies:-   Councillors J. Brown, Mr G. Donald.

In Attendance:- Depute Chief Executive – People, Depute Chief Executive – Place, Corporate Transformation and Services Director, Service Director Children and Young People, Service Director Regulatory Services, Service Director Commercial Services, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Officer - Education, Democratic Services Team Leader, Democratic Services Officer (F. Henderson).

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2.   **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2014-2015**
     There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young People which sought approval to publish the 2014-2015 the Children and Young People's Services Standards and Quality Report. The report detailed the achievements of the children and young people during the period 2014-2015 and achievements of staff in enabling and nurturing the children and young people to achieve. There had been many successes and the Standards and Quality Report was an opportunity to reflect on how the Council were making a difference to learners, participants, service users, families and communities within Scottish Borders and sought to address how well outcome and support to individuals and communities was delivered and how to improve the quality of the work. The Service Director gave a presentation highlighting the main points contained in the report and the Committee were pleased to note the progress being made. In response to a question the Service Director advised that a lot of work had been done in planning for the arrival of refugees in the Borders and now that the families had been identified further work would be undertaken to meet their learning and other needs to ensure they had the resources they required. The Service Director and her team were congratulated for a very positive report and the strong leadership which would move the plans forward. The Chairman thanked the Parent Representatives for the work they had facilitated with Parent Councils and all the Council's partners who had had an input, including the participation by the young people themselves.

     DECISION
     NOTED the contents of the Children and Young People's Service Standards and Quality Report 2014 -2015.

OTHER BUSINESS

3.   **CHAIRMAN**
     On the resumption of the meeting, Councillor Parker took the Chair for the remaining business.

4.   **MINUTE**
     The Minute of meeting of the Executive Committee of 1 December 2015 had been circulated.

     DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

5. **EARMARKING OF REVENUE BUDGET FROM 2015 -16 INTO 2016-17**
    There had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Financial Officer which sought approval to earmark available budget from 2015/16 into 2016/17 to support the 2016/17-2010/21 Financial Plan and Corporate Transformation Programme. The report explained that the Council was preparing proposals to present the Financial Plan for 2016/17-2020/21 and an opportunity had arisen within 2015/16 to both assist bridging the Financial Plan funding gap and to support the ongoing Corporate Transformation programme by identifying surplus budget in 2015/16. Details of the proposal to earmark a total of £1.446m into 2016/17 were contained in the Appendix to the report which would allow appropriate adjustments to be made to the Financial Plan being presented to Council on 11 February 2016.

    DECISION
    AGREED the earmarking of budget from 2015/16 into 2016/17 to support the 2016/17 – 2020/21 Financial Plan and Corporate Transformation Programme as detailed in Appendix I to the report.

6. **REQUEST FOR ROAD WORKS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE COUNCILS' CAPITAL FINANCIAL PLANS FOR 2015-16 AND 2016-17**
    There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Regulatory Services which sought approval for the inclusion of the works associated with the completion of the roads within the housing development at Hislop Gardens, Hawick in the Council's Capital Financial Plans for 2015-16 and 2016-17. The report explained that the Council had a duty under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and associated regulations to complete the road works to an adoptable standard in a development where construction consent had been issued and the conditions had not been adhered to or the developer had ceased trading. The report further explained that the Council held a security to the value of £25,000 in the form of a road bond, which was lodged as a requirement of the construction consent issued for the development at Guthrie Drive, Hawick known as Hislop Gardens. The Company responsible for the development had been dissolved and the Council had to progress the works required to complete the roads to an adoptable standard. All steps had been taken to minimise the required expenditure and funding would be met by security currently lodged with the Council as part of the original approvals for the development. The cost split per financial year would be £5,000 in 2015-16 and £20,000 in 2016-17.

    DECISION
    AGREED to the inclusion of the roads works in the Council's Capital Financial Plans 2015-16 and 2016-17 with a total budget of £25,000 funded using security currently held by the Council under the relevant regulations.

7. **EDINBURGH, LOTHIANS, BORDERS & FIFE ROADS CALLABORATION PROGRAMME (ELBF PROPOSAL)**
    With reference to paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Minute of 12 May 2015, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Commercial Services which sought a decision to join a Shadow Joint Committee for a proposed Edinburgh, Lothians, Borders & Fife Roads Collaboration Programme (ELBF proposal) facilitated by the Improvement Service. The report explained that the previous recommend had been that Scottish Borders would not join the ELBF proposal at this time, in light of un-qualified and unproven benefits, but would maintain on-going discussions with other local authorities involved, to enable the Council to continue to assess the proposal. It now appeared that joining the Shadow Joint Committee would be the most appropriate way forward. In joining a Shadow Joint Committee the Council would retain the right to decide the level to which it participated in any ELBF shared roads service arrangements and retain the right to decline to participate in arrangements that the Council regarded as detrimental to roads services in the Borders. Being part of the Joint Shadow Committee was important because it allowed the Council to influence and steer the roads agenda, including ensuring it interfaced effectively with the Council's roads contracting operations undertaken by SBC roads services.

DECISION
AGREED to:-

(a)   the creation of a Shadow Joint Committee for collaborative roads services across the Edinburgh, Lothians, Borders and Fife local authorities as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;

(b)   the Council joining the Shadow Joint Committee; and

(c)   the appointment of the portfolio holder for Roads as the Council's representative, the Chairperson for Trading Operations (SBc Contracts) as the substitute.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

NEW KELSO HIGH SCHOOL
1. There had been circulated copies of a report on the New Kelso High School and the Committee agreed the recommendations.

The meeting concluded at 12 noon

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SCOTTISH LANDFILL COMMUNITIES FUND

Report by Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2 February 2016

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 **To provide an overview of the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund (SLCF) and to agree the Council's provisional involvement in the scheme for 2015/16 and 2016/17.**

1.2 The SLCF is a tax credit scheme, linked to Scottish Landfill Tax, which encourages Landfill Operators to voluntarily participate in providing funding to facilitate community and environmental projects in areas affected by landfill activity.   The SLCF replaced the UK scheme in Scotland on 1st April 2015.

1.3 SEPA is the Regulator of the Scottish scheme and responsible to Revenue Scotland.   BCCF Environmental is the Approved Body registered to receive funding generated by the scheme.

1.4 The Council has actively and successfully participated in the UK scheme since 1999 and it is recommended that we continue to facilitate a landfill community fund through participation in the new SLCF scheme.

1.5 As with the previous UK scheme, 90% of the SLCF budget will be funded from the Council's Scottish Landfill Tax liability with the additional 10% funded by the Waste Services budget as normal.   The Council will continue to bear this 10% cost provisionally for 2015/16 and 2016/17 and will forego the need for projects to identify a Contributing Third Party payment.

1.6 This report recommends the SLCF process for 2015/16 and 2016/17 only. During 2016/17 the impact of the new scheme will be assessed, particularly in relation to the Council's 10% budget commitment and any potential for the scheme processes to benefit from the use of the SBC Community Enhancement Trust.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee agrees to:**

(a) **participate in the SLCF through its Landfill Tax Liability credits for 2015/16 and 2016/17 (90% of fund);**

(b) **continue to provide the additional 10% of the fund from its Waste Services budget for 2015/16 and 2016/17; and**

(c) **consider a further report in December 2016 recommending the longer term approach to the SLCF from 2017/18 onwards.**

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Scottish Landfill Communities Fund (SLCF) is a tax credit scheme, linked to Scottish Landfill Tax, which encourages Landfill Operators to voluntarily participate in providing contributions (funding) to Approved Bodies, who can then pass the funds on to community and environmental projects in areas affected by landfill activity. The SLCF is a private scheme which generates funds which are classified as private funds as opposed to public funds. The SLCF replaced the UK scheme in Scotland on 1 April 2015.

3.2 Although the scheme was replaced on 1 April 2015, the Scottish Government expected the SLCF to be operational by "late 2015". Following continuing delays and refinements to the national scheme, the Borders scheme must now be operational before the end of 2015/16 with the first awards expected in March 2016.

3.3 Approved Bodies are only those registered by SEPA, the regulatory body responsible to Revenue Scotland for the new scheme. There are now only 14 Approved Bodies in Scotland and BCCF Environmental is the body approved to receive funds from Borders landfill site operators.

3.4 BCCF Environmental is a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee and wholly run by volunteers. BCCF Environmental has enabled some £1.3m of landfill funds (mainly from Scottish Borders Council's tax liability) to be distributed to approved Borders projects since 1999.

3.5 Under the SLCF, Landfill Operators can continue to claim a tax credit equal to 90% of any funds they agree to make to an Approved Body for projects which meet the objects of the scheme, subject to a maximum percentage of landfill tax liability. The maximum percentage, which is subject to change annually as part of the Scottish Budget process, is currently 5.6% of landfill tax liability.

3.6 As Landfill Operators are required to provide funds at the full 100% level, Landfill Operators can either bear the cost of the additional 10% themselves or require all funded projects to refund it to them through the identification of a Contributing Third Party (CTP) payment.

3.7 Under the UKLCF, the Council fully participated in a Landfill Communities Fund and enabled some £1.3m of landfill funds to be invested in the Borders. In addition to facilitating the UK scheme, the Council also showed its commitment by bearing the cost of the additional 10% via its Waste Services budget with no requirement for projects to return the 10% by identifying a CTP payment.

3.8 It is recommended that the Council facilitates a SLCF and continues to bear the 10% additional cost from its Waste Services budget for 2015/16 and 2016/17 until more is known about the key changes contained within the SLCF. A further report (by December 2016) will assess the impact of the SLCF overall and particularly in relation to the Waste Services budget commitment.

3.9 Although BCCF Environmental is the SEPA Registered Approved Body, the December 2016 report should also assess if there are any benefits to the SLCF of using the SBC Community Enhancement Trust to facilitate any element of the scheme, should SLCF Regulations allow.

4   HOW THE NEW SLCF WILL OPERATE DURING 2015/16 AND 2016/17

4.1   The SLCF has 6 **Objects** as follows:

(a)   The reclamation, remediation, restoration or other operation on land to facilitate economic, social or environmental use.

(b)   Community based recycling, re-use and waste prevention projects.

(c)   To provide, maintain or improve a public park or other public amenity.

(d)   The conservation or promotion of biological diversity through the provision, conservation, restoration or enhancement of a natural habitat or the maintenance or recovery of a species in its natural habitat.

(e)   The maintenance, repair or restoration of a building, other structure or a site of archaeological interest which is a place of religious worship, or a site of historic or architectural or archaeological interest and is open to the public.   Must be in the vicinity of a landfill or transfer station.

(f)   The provision of financial, administration and other similar services to projects that are enrolled with an Approved Body.

4.2   In the Borders, the SLCF is expected to provide the same **geographical eligibility** as the UK scheme.   SEPA considers that all landfill sites in Scotland with a valid Waste Management Licence or Pollution Prevention & Control permit are eligible including those that are closed or non-operational.   These sites may not be accepting waste deposits on a temporary or permanent basis but until a licence or permit is surrendered, the operators must continue to meet conditions and obligations.   When the licence or permit is surrendered, SEPA would consider that landfill site to be ineligible. As coverage may change over time, a postcode "Screening Tool" is available on the SLCF Website to check the eligibility of project locations.

4.3   A **key change** under the SLCF is that, in addition to being eligible to apply for Borders funds via BCCF Environmental, projects can, subject to funds being available, apply to any Approved Body on the SEPA Register. Projects can also apply to more than one Approved Body for the same project.   An Approved Body must, under the regulations of the scheme, give equal consideration to any project regardless of project location or project type.

4.4   This change may provide additional funds to Borders projects, however, it may also result in the Borders generated funds being allocated elsewhere in Scotland.   The effects of this key change will be assessed during 2015/16 and 2016/17, particularly in relation to its impact on the Council's ability to continue to bear the cost of the additional 10% where there may be potential for Council funds to be invested in other Local Authority areas.

4.5   BCCF Environmental, as the SEPA registered approved body, will be responsible for the receipt of **applications,** the formal **approval** of projects and the **award** of funds.   As Landfill Operators cannot directly fund projects and cannot control how SLCF is spent in any way, the Council will no longer operate a Landfill Working Group and awards will no longer be approved by Executive Committee.   BCCF Environmental will be fully regulated and inspected by SEPA (on behalf of Revenue Scotland) in relation to the SLCF.

4.6 BCCF Environmental has developed a range of new **application and guidance materials** and criteria and assessment processes and these are currently at SEPA awaiting approval. Six Borders' requests for funding are currently sitting with BCCF Environmental awaiting the new application materials and it is expected, subject to approval of this report, that they will be allocated funding by March 2016 (2015/16 qualifying tax year).

4.7 Once the BCCF Environmental processes are in place and they have approved the award of funds to specific projects, they will simply invoice the Council for the **release of funds**. The invoicing will include copies of all funding applications in order that the Council can be informed of the progress of the scheme, the projects supported and individual awards made. Any unclaimed funds at the end of the financial year will also be invoiced and these will be held by BCCF environmental until they are allocated to specific projects (this year-end solution is in line with previous procedures under the UKLCF as all funds must be allocated by the landfill operator within the same qualifying tax year).

4.8 As a **provisional approach** and for 2015/16 and 2016/17 only, it is proposed that the Council will continue to bear the 10% additional element (as explained at Para 3.5, 3.6 and 4.4) from its Waste Services budget until the **risks** outlined at Para 5 are more fully understood and assessed. A further report will bring forward recommendations on the longer term approach to the SLCF by December 2016.

4.9 Members should note that, included in all requests for funds made by BCCF Environmental will be SEPA **fees** of 1.82% and BCCF Environmental fees at 5.68% (total 7.5%).

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 **Financial**

(a) In 2015/16, a total of £145,000.93 has accrued to November 2015. An additional £70,000 is estimated to March 2016.

(b) The £145,000.93 consists of £130,500.84 generated through the 5.6% tax credits elements to achieve 90% of the available funds. The Waste Services budget element of £14,500.09 enhances the fund to 100%.

(c) All funds generated in the qualifying year must be transferred to an Approved Body within the same year. BCCF Environmental will ensure they invoice for all funds within the same qualifying year. Should any funds remain uninvoiced as at 31 March 2016, the 90% element will revert to Revenue Scotland. There is no carry forward facility under the scheme.

5.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

(a) Overall, although the application and decision-making processes under SLCF are different to the UK scheme, these changes in themselves present no identified risks to the Council.

(b) However, the key change identified at Paras 4.3 and 4.4 may pose a risk to the Council's Waste Services 10% element as there is the potential of funds being allocated to projects outwith the Borders.

(c) The perceived unfairness of this regulation and the effect on the 10% element, especially where the Landfill Operator is also the Local Authority, has been discussed with SEPA but to no avail. A variety of mitigation measures has also been discussed with SEPA but none have been acceptable under the SLCF Regulations. Any proposal to

request a CTP payment from non-Borders based projects only cannot be permitted on the grounds that the Landfill Operator must not set geographic conditions on what projects may or may not require a CTP payment.

(d)   As a further mitigation approach, consideration has been given to the requirement for a CTP payment from all projects (Borders and non-Borders based).   However, it is felt at this early stage, that this would have a disproportionate effect on Borders projects.   CTP payments are very difficult to achieve as they are effectively required for the purposes of paying the Council back.   Such a requirement may also impact on the achievability of local projects and the spend levels of the SLCF locally.

(d)   It is also not clear at this stage what the demand will be from projects in other areas.   Some limiting BCCF Environmental procedural factors, yet to be tested, may mitigate the risk.   For example, there is a "value for money criterion" and projects outwith the Borders may not score well on the basis of the additional costs of inspection, grant management and the burden on BCCF Environmental volunteer time, particularly in relation to overnight stays and travel, etc.   It is also expected that the invoicing process on an "as and when" basis will prove a factor when BCCF Environmental is asked about availability of funds.

(e)   Due to a range of uncertainties at this stage, it is proposed to manage the risk by recommending approval of the Council's participation in the SLCF for 2015/16 and 2016/17 only and to assess the implications in more detail as the scheme progresses and the interpretation of the regulations by SEPA are more clearly defined.

5.3   **Equalities**

There are no apparent equality impacts on the Council.   The SLCF is operated by Revenue Scotland and regulated by SEPA.   The Approved Body, BCCF Environmental, is responsible for ensuring that funded projects are fully compliant with Scottish Landfill Tax Regulations, including equality of access.   SBC holds BCCF Environmental Equal Opportunities Policy.

5.4   **Acting Sustainably**

The proposal to facilitate a SLCF will impact positively on Borders communities and the built and natural environment.

5.5   **Carbon Management**

The proposal to facilitate a SLCF will have a positive impact, particularly in relation to the new Object B and the project opportunities for community based recycling, re-use and waste prevention projects.

5.6   **Rural Proofing**

N/A.

5.7   **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals contained in this report.

6   CONSULTATION

6.1   The Chief Financial Officer, the Service Director Regulatory Services as Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Tracey Logan   Signature ....
Chief Executive

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jean Robertson	Funding and Project Officer 01835 826543

Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference:

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jean Robertson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 2 FEBRUARY 2016

Economic Development Update

1. Business:

- For the 3-month period from 1 October 2015 to 31 December 2015 the Business Gateway team assisted 34 business start-ups, of which 3 have the potential to be high growth. The advisers have delivered 20 start-up workshops and 34 local workshops with 496 attendees (this includes the Business month events).

- During the period a series of 4 Start-up workshops were held in Peebles and in Burnfoot with a total 62 attendees. This was in place of the surgeries that ran across the area over the summer, and as expected saw a significant increase in the numbers of attendees.

- **Scottish Borders Business Month** ran successfully from 1 October until 6 November 2015 with over 20 events across the area and ending with the Scottish Borders Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards. Cllr Stuart Bell launched the month with Phil Morris, founder of Kukri Sports as the keynote speaker. There were 250 attendees at the events. Events during the month covered subject areas such as Exporting, Innovation, Business Efficiency, Employment, Skills Development and Finance. To deliver this, Business Gateway partnered with Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, Creative Arts Business Network and private companies such as Douglas Home, RBS and Davidson Chalmers.

- Business Gateway Advisers have visited around 50 business affected by the flood in Hawick in December 2015, providing support and information as required. Follow up support is also being given with grant applications and business planning for those worse affected.

- Business Gateway advisers have also attended PACE events for staff at Burgon's in Eyemouth and Hawick Knitwear, where they met with 12 individuals looking to start new businesses.

- In 2015-16, the **Scottish Borders Business Fund** has received 34 applications and approved 27 grants to date valued at £81,058.98 supporting projects with a value of £174,195.05. These projects are forecast **to create 31 jobs and safeguard 42.5 jobs** with a forecast **economic impact of £696,756 GVA**.

- The **Scottish Borders Business Loan Fund** offers loans of between £1,000 and £20,000 over terms of up to three years. In 2015-16, the Loan Fund has so far received 10 applications and approved 5 loans valued at £90,004. These loans are forecast **to create 8.5 jobs and safeguard 26 jobs** with a forecast **economic impact of £327,412 GVA**.

- **Property** – 144 property enquiries have been received to date in 2015/16 which has resulted in 29 new property leases which will generate £143k in annual rental income. The current occupancy level is **93%** for the portfolio of industrial units, yards and shops. Three offices of four have been let at the Horsemarket Business Hub, Kelso, and one office has now been let at Waverley Chambers, Galashiels Transport Interchange. The following sales continue to be in hand: one unit (Jedburgh); plus one EU funded plot at the extension to Whitlaw Road Industrial Estate, Lauder, and one plot at the extension to Pinnaclehill, Kelso. The following sales are now progressing: one office (Jedburgh): two plots of land (Selkirk).

- **Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive** - **SERI Scheme** – The SERI Scheme has been put on hold by Scottish Government. 9 places had been secured up to that point. It is not yet clear whether this programme will continue.

2. Regeneration:

- **Galashiels Town Centre** - The Galashiels Town Centre Coordinator has progressed a number of actions:

  - ➢ **25 Shop front improvement grants** totalling £47,000 have been approved to date, supporting 27 properties.

  - ➢ The **Galashiels Town Trail Map** – popular with visitors to the town, this leaflet is almost fully distributed and a reprint is planned.

  - ➢ The Chamber of Trade **'Shoppers Map'** is progressing and is hoped to be available soon.

  - ➢ **Borders Railway Ambassadors Pilot** was very successful with positive feedback from visitors. A total of 11,115 people were assisted in the 9 weeks of the pilot. Enquires tended to be tourism (51%) and transport related (41%). Steam trains brought very high levels of demand for information as standard trains immediately prior to and post the steam train carried steam train spectators. Planning is underway to repeat the Ambassadors in 2016.

  - ➢ **Pedestrian signage** improvements are being considered by the Road User Consultation Group; these are aimed at visitors and encourage movement around the whole of the town and to Old Gala House.

- **Selkirk Business Improvement District (BIDS**) – The project is currently being reviewed after the project manager left in December 2015. The Steering Group is aiming to push the project forward with a new project manager. The timescales for the BIDS process are also being reviewed.

3. Tourism & Events

- **Tourism support –**

  ➢ Tourism officers from Edinburgh, Midlothian and the Scottish Borders are exhibiting at VisitScotland EXPO in April 2016. Three spaces have been booked for the Borders Railway and the appointments diary is currently being listed for international buyers. Itineraries are being developed for use by Tour Operators.

  ➢ A dedicated Business Gateway advisor for the Borders Railway has been appointed and is working closely with the tourism officer, ScotRail and tourism business networks in both Midlothian and the Scottish Borders.

  ➢ The year of "Innovation, architecture and Design" has just begun. The Council will be supporting the 2016 design awards, followed by a "10 best buildings" of the last 100 years project. The launch is due to be in February 2016 hosted by Abbotsford House.

  ➢ New visitor information signage has been installed on the Canongate in Jedburgh.

  ➢ 7stanes Community Interest Company (CIC) will cease trading on 31 March 2016. From 1 April 2016 the future promotion of the 7stanes trails will be managed by Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES). Despite considerable efforts the Company has been unable to generate sufficient revenue to make it viable in the long term. FES has the resources and expertise to provide full marketing support to the project and a new marketing strategy is currently being developed. FES will provide details on all the trails, including updates on riding conditions, on their website. The website will also include free downloadable trail maps, ensuring that visitors have access to all the information they need for each of the trails.

- **Event support –**

  ➢ The following events have provided feedback on their economic impacts (EI) during 2015;

    Tour of Britain - estimated EI £307,000
    Enduro World Series, Tweedlove – estimated EI £594,612
    Borders Book Festival - estimated EI £1,362.300
    Selkirk MTB Marathon - estimated EI £69,210
    Tour 'o' the Borders - estimated EI £732,398
    Club Lotus - estimated EI £216,500

4. Funding:

- The **LEADER Programme** is open to 'Expressions of Interest' and the Programme Coordinator and Facilitator are now working with potential applicants. The Local Action Group is expecting the Scottish Government to publish application forms and guidelines in February 2016, and to launch an online application portal in April 2016. The Scottish Borders LEADER launch programme will include a series of funding workshops planned to take place in rural communities during 2016.

- The new **Scottish Borders, East Lothian and Fife Fisheries Local Action Group**, known as the **Forth FLAG**, is still awaiting an announcement of the value of funding allocated to Fisheries Local Action Groups in Scotland. The new Group, which is the decision-making body for European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) local development applications, met for the first time on 13 January 2016. It is proposed to employ an EMFF Programme Coordinator, based in Eyemouth, to work across the three areas supporting the development of projects and applications.

- The Scottish Borders is the pilot area for the launch of '**Pub is The Hub**' in Scotland. Since 2001 Pub is The Hub has worked with over 500 rural licensees in England and Wales, helping them to diversify their businesses through offering a range of additional services including retail shops, lunch clubs, library services and post offices. The Scottish pilot was launched on 20 January 2016 at The Lodge at Carfraemill, where the Scottish Government announced a £30,000 grants fund to support publicans' investment in diversification projects. Pub is The Hub's Scottish adviser will work closely with the Business Gateway service, and grant recommendations will be considered by a sub-group of the LEADER Local Action Group.

5. Low Carbon Economic Strategy

- **Domestic Heat Pump Training –** The Economic Development team worked closely with Borders College and Skills Development Scotland to deliver a 4 day BPEC training course covering the installation and maintenance of both air and ground source heat pump systems in November 2015. 5 individuals successfully completed the course. Partners are to meet in February to agree next steps and potential future course provision which can support Low Carbon skills development for Borders businesses.

- **Langlee District Heating Project –** The Council has engaged a consultant to identify potential district heating options for Scottish Borders Housing Association, Waverley Housing and Council properties in the Langlee area of Galashiels. This work builds on the Heat and Power Plan which was produced as part of the Easter Langlee waste project. This will be a pre-feasibility study which can be used by the partners to access external funding to undertake a full technical and financial feasibility assessment of the preferred options for both Housing Association properties and the new Langlee Primary School.

- **Climate Resilient Communities –** this joint project between the Council and Dundee University is fully funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The project aims to engage communities in discussions around climate change vulnerability and to develop methods of increasing the resilience of climate disadvantaged groups. The project is working in Peebles, Hawick and Newcastleton and has focussed initially on flood vulnerability, especially relevant following the flood events in late 2015. The project runs until May 2016.

Bryan McGrath, Chief Officer Economic Development, tel 01835 826525.

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DIGITAL SCOTLAND SUPERFAST BROADBAND ROLL-OUT - UPDATE

Report by Corporate Transformation & Services Director

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2 February 2016

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1 **This report provides an update to elected members on the progress that is being made in delivering the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband Programme in the Scottish Borders.**

1.2 Digital connectivity is critical to the economic development and competitiveness of the Scottish Borders. Scottish Borders Council has contributed strongly to the roll-out of the Scottish Government's Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) programme, providing £8.4M over two years to help extend the roll-out as far as possible in the Scottish Borders.

1.3 To date, 70 new superfast broadband cabinets have been installed as part of the roll-out, enabling the provision of new services to over 17,500 premises in the Scottish Borders. The roll-out will continue until the end of 2017, aiming to serve approximately 94% of all the premises in the area. The Scottish Government has also put in place the Community Broadband Scotland (CBS) programme to support those communities and locations where the DSSB roll-out will not reach.

1.4 Although good progress is being made with the DSSB programme, there is a range of challenging issues still to be addressed in relation to providing superfast broadband services across the Scottish Borders. These issues present a significant impediment to allowing all communities to access the Broadband services in an equitable way. It is proposed to raise these issues with the Scottish Government when the South of Scotland Alliance meets the Deputy First Minister on 8 February 2016.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee:**

a) **Welcomes the progress made on delivering the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme;**

b) **Notes the range of issues affecting the delivery of superfast broadband in the rural areas of the Scottish Borders; and**

c) **Asks the South of Scotland Alliance to discuss the superfast broadband connectivity issues raised in this report with the Deputy First Minister when they meet him on 8 February 2016.**

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Digital connectivity is critical to the economic development and competitiveness of the Scottish Borders. It is crucial for the delivery of private and public services and in meeting consumer, business and visitors' needs and expectations.

3.2 The Council's aspiration is that wherever someone is located in the Scottish Borders, they should be able to access superfast broadband for business or personal use. The Council recognises that this aspiration is still some way from being fulfilled, even though good progress is being made in many parts of the area. There is still a clear disparity between the high levels of digital connectivity in more densely populated areas, compared with more rural areas like the Scottish Borders. The Council is working with its partners in the South of Scotland Alliance to raise this issue at the highest levels of government.

3.3 Scottish Borders Council has contributed strongly to the roll-out of the Scottish Government's Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) programme, providing £8.4M over two years to help extend the roll-out as far as possible in the Scottish Borders. However, this will cover less than 94% of premises in the Borders, which means around 6% of premises, mainly in remoter rural areas, will not be covered by Superfast Broadband. They may only have access to slower broadband services, or have no broadband access at all.

3.4 The additional £8.4m investment from Scottish Borders Council was agreed in 2013. The investment was made to enable an increase from the 75% Government funded coverage across the area to as many additional premises as possible. The Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme is due to increase superfast broadband coverage to about 93.6% of premises in the Scottish Borders.

4 SUPERFAST BROADBAND PROGRESS

4.1 The roll-out of the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband Programme is now well underway across the Scottish Borders. The first new superfast broadband cabinet went 'live' in the summer of 2014 and since then a number of localities have been upgraded to fibre broadband. The programme continues to deliver on a phased basis and further areas will be upgraded over the next two years, bringing coverage in the Scottish Borders to around 94% of all premises by the end of 2017. At the moment 70 new superfast broadband cabinets have been installed as part of the roll-out, enabling the provision of new services to over 17,500 premises in the Scottish Borders. This work is complemented by the commercial roll-out that BT Openreach has undertaken in the larger towns in the area, latterly in Hawick and Kelso.

4.2 It is recognised that providing the superfast broadband infrastructure is just one element of supporting our local economy. The Council and Scottish Enterprise are also working to encourage local businesses to make the most of this new digital connectivity in their business models. A number of projects are planned to help businesses learn more about how digital connectivity can enhance their productivity and business opportunities.

4.3   For instance, the 'Digital Boost' programme will offer services for small to medium enterprises, to provide them with advanced digital advice. Through Business Gateway, it will offer them development of their technical ability through services that will include: digital health checks, online guides, webinars, workshops and one-to-one specialist support at a level not currently available to them. This national programme started with the first workshop in the Scottish Borders on 19 January 2016.

4.4   The DSSB Fibre To The Cabinet (FTTC) roll-out will reach the majority of all domestic and business premises. However, many properties will not be served by this programme. Recognising this, the Scottish Government has also put in place a complementary programme, Community Broadband Scotland (CBS), which has been established to support communities to identify and deliver their own superfast broadband solution in those areas that will not be served by the main DSSB Programme. It aims to encourage and support the development of successful and sustainable community broadband projects to deliver superfast broadband connectivity through the use of innovative technologies and business models, the sharing of knowledge and experiences, and through levering in additional funding.

4.5   It was positive to note that the Scottish Government made an additional commitment of £2.5 million, along with £9 million of EU funds, to Community Broadband Scotland, on top of the £5 million that it had previously allocated. This will support the provision of superfast broadband in the most rural areas of Scotland. Effective delivery of the Community Broadband Scotland Programme will go some way towards this aim, along with other technologies including satellite broadband. However, officers are concerned about the scale and complexity of this task and the capacity of communities to deliver these complex technology projects.

4.6   Parts of the Scottish Borders are also eligible for a pilot project to provide Superfast Satellite Broadband to certain postcode areas. This pilot is being run by Avanti, and has received funding from the UK Government to target up to 1000 customers across the South of Scotland, Aberdeenshire and parts of Northern Ireland.

5   BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY ISSUES

5.1   Although there is significant progress with the Superfast Broadband roll-out, there are a number of related issues which have caused concern. Officers are concerned about the lack of information from British Telecom on the download and upload speeds of the areas already covered, or to be covered, by the DSSB roll-out. The exact details of premises in exchange areas which will be covered by the provision of superfast broadband only becomes clear once cabinets are activated. It is recognised that more information is being provided by British Telecom, however it is still limited. It is proposed that this issue is raised with the Deputy First Minister when he meets with the South of Scotland Alliance on 8 February 2016.

5.2   It has been noted that additional resources have been made available by the Scottish Government to further extend the delivery of Superfast Broadband. Again, the South of Scotland Alliance plans to discuss with the Deputy First Minister how the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway will benefit from this new funding allocation.

5.3   Community Broadband Scotland (CBS) is working with community groups to develop projects for providing broadband solutions in the areas outwith the Superfast Broadband roll-out programme. However, officers are concerned about the limitations of this initiative.

Page 49

5.4 The Scottish Government is using CBS as its main instrument for facilitating the provision of Superfast Broadband in premises in the most rural areas of Scotland. It is understood that this programme will support 16-18,000 premises across Scotland, out of a total of approximately 120,000 premises that will not be served by the Superfast Broadband Programme. This means that it is likely that a significant number of premises will remain without superfast broadband access across Scotland, especially in rural areas like the Scottish Borders. There is a need for a national solution to this issue, for a programme to cover the remaining 5-6% of premises in the Scottish Borders (and other areas of rural Scotland). Again, it is proposed that this issue is raised with the Deputy First Minister when he meets with the South of Scotland Alliance on 8 February 2016.

5.5 The existing CBS programme has been facing complex problems in encouraging rural communities to undertake projects. To address these issues, CBS is developing an aggregated approach that brings a number of rural communities together to provide a critical mass of premises that can then form the basis of a commissioning exercise. Currently such a strategic programme is being developed within the South of Scotland for the Tweeddale, Ettrick and Yarrow, Eskdalemuir and Newcastleton areas.

5.6 Significant expectations and burdens are placed on communities to manage and sustain these projects. It is clear that communities need to have good capacity, leadership and skills to do this, meaning that only some communities will be able to take on these projects. There are also significant levels of revenue and capital funding required, to be provided by these communities in addition to the funding support from CBS. This could be difficult for communities to secure. This issue has already arisen with the project mentioned above, where revenue funding to support the development and planning stage of the project is not available from CBS and cannot be easily identified from local organisations. It is proposed that this issue should be raised with the Deputy First Minister when he meets with the South of Scotland Alliance later in the month.

5.7 Apart from the CBS provision it is also recognised that additional support is to be made available by the UK Government to households and businesses in remoter rural areas to take up satellite broadband. However, it is acknowledged that satellite broadband is not an ideal solution because of the limitations in the capacity of superfast broadband that can be provided.

5.8 Moving into the future, there are concerns about ensuring that the Scottish Borders can benefit from future digital network improvements. In particular, it is important that key industrial areas are connected to ultra-fast broadband to provide a level playing field for local companies to compete on. It is proposed that this issue should also be raised with the Deputy First Minister when he meets with the South of Scotland Alliance.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 **Financial**

There are no direct financial costs as a result of the recommendations of this report. The Council has already committed £8.4M of capital funding to the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband roll-out in order to extend that programme to cover as many premises as possible in the Scottish Borders. However, it is clear that other programmes, particularly Community Broadband Scotland, need to have additional revenue funding available to help make their planning and delivery stages. This is an issue that the South of Scotland Alliance should raise with the Deputy First Minister when they meet on 8 February 2016.

Executive Committee 2 February 2016

6.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

There is a reputational risk to the Council if the DSSB Programme does not deliver to as many households as possible. This risk has been mitigated by on-going involvement by Council officers in the programme management of the roll-out. Scottish Government and COSLA are also involved in managing the roll-out contract to ensure that the public funding involved is used as efficiently as possible, thus ensuring that as many premises as possible are served by the technology. It is important that the proposals from the South of Scotland Alliance are reinforced in order for the potential benefits of these changes to be realised for the Scottish Borders.

6.3 **Equalities**

It is anticipated there are no adverse impacts due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religious/belief arising from this report.

6.4 **Acting Sustainably**

The roll-out will contribute to the sustainability of local businesses and communities as it will facilitate the delivery of digital services and digital business opportunities to a much greater number of premises across the area. For instance, this could help reduce the need for travel and reduce vehicle emissions.

6.5 **Carbon Management**

The Superfast Broadband rollout could reduce the need for travel and have a positive impact on carbon emissions.

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

While this report does not propose any new or amended policy, the superfast rollout will improve digital connectivity in many rural areas. However, there remain significant challenges in providing good, modern broadband services to all the rural areas of the Scottish Borders.

6.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation arising from this report.

7 **CONSULTATION**

7.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments incorporated into the report.

Approved by

Rob Dickson   **Signature** ……………………………………
Corporate Transformation
and Services Director

Author(s)

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Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference: Item 8, Scottish Borders Council, 26 June 2013

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BORDERS RAILWAY BLUEPRINT - UPDATE

Report by Corporate Transformation & Services Director

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2 February 2016

1   PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1   **This report updates elected members on the progress being made in delivering the Borders Railway Blueprint and other railway related project activity.**

1.2   The new Borders Railway represents a once in a generation opportunity to provide a step-change sustainable improvement in the Scottish Borders economy, and particularly in the economies and welfare of some of our disadvantaged communities. However, there is no guarantee that such an uplift will occur on its own.

1.3   In recognition of that, the Council along with its Borders Railway Blueprint partners is implementing a comprehensive programme of activities to promote economic development through strategies for business development, inward investment and tourism, as well as promoting greater accessibility to labour markets and education and training. The programme has been developed to provide the optimal environment to realise these positive outcomes for the Scottish Borders economy and local communities.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   **I recommend that the Executive Committee:**

    a)   **Welcomes the major commitment being shown by the Council and its Borders Railways Blueprint partners towards maximising the economic benefits of the new railway to the Scottish Borders; and**

    b)   **Requests that the Corporate Transformation and Services Director submits further update reports to the Committee on a regular basis and that such reports provide monitoring information on the financial investment being made by the Council and Partners in delivering the Blueprint Strategy.**

Executive Committee 2 February 2016

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   The reopening of the Borders Railway is identified in the Scottish Borders Economic Strategy 2023 as a key opportunity and strategic priority. Now that the Borders Railway has been successfully opened the emphasis has shifted to ensuring that the economic impact is spread as widely as possible. As the largest investment in infrastructure for the Scottish Borders in a generation the Council and its Community Planning Partnership partners are working with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and ScotRail to maximise the positive impact on the economy.

3.2   In November 2014 a document entitled "Borders Railway – Maximising the Impact: A Blueprint for the Future" was published by the 'Blueprint Group' of partners comprising Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Government, Scottish Borders, Midlothian and City of Edinburgh Councils, Transport Scotland, ScotRail and VisitScotland. The document sets out the ambitions of the partners "to realise fully the economic benefits of the new Borders Railway", particularly to stimulate the growth of businesses, generate employment and boost tourist visitor numbers.

3.3   The Blueprint is structured around three key themes; Great Locations for Working and Investing, Great Communities for Living and Learning, and Great Destinations to Visit. Using these themes the Blueprint Leadership Group has established a more detailed programme of activity and investment, and the Leadership Group meets regularly to oversee the implementation of that programme.

3.4   This report provides an update on progress with delivery of the Borders Railway Blueprint. An infographic showing overall progress is attached at Appendix 1. It follows a report to Scottish Borders Council in April 2015 which approved the Blueprint governance structure, action plan projects and the Council's contribution to the financial deal.

4   DELIVERING THE BLUEPRINT

4.1   The Blueprint document recognises that it is not enough to assume that economic development will naturally result from the provision of the new railway, but that a strong proactive approach is essential. A number of specific actions have been identified in relation to each of the themes. The progress against these is outlined below.

Great Locations for Working and Investing

4.2   Central Borders Business Park – The overall vision is to create a high amenity business park that will attract businesses to invest in the area, and to allow our indigenous businesses to grow in modern office and business premises. Work is underway by Scottish Enterprise and the Council to bring forward the first phase of the development. This will deliver new high quality office space and serviced plots on land owned by the Council opposite the new Tweedbank Station. As currently envisaged this phase of the project, which is being led by Scottish Enterprise, would deliver an access roadway with serviced plots with an initial provision of approx. 1000m^2 of business space on one plot. The remaining plots would be marketed for private sector / business development. A vision document, funded by the Council and Scottish Enterprise has been developed by Page Park Architects to provide a framework for the future development of the Central Borders Business Park. This includes the potential long term redevelopment of the existing industrial area to better meet the needs of modern businesses.

4.3   Borders Railway Inward Investment Prospectus - An online Inward Investment Prospectus and promotional film went live in August 2015. The newly created website www.bordersrailwayprospectus.com contains a wealth of information for prospective inward investors as well as an interactive map of over 100 sites and premises in the railway corridor. The Prospectus was launched by the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Cities and Investment in Edinburgh in December 2015. This event promoted new marketing material and targeted private sector investors and developers. The website has been funded by Scottish Borders, Midlothian and City of Edinburgh Councils.

4.4   Borders Railway Inward Investment Response - Following the launch of the Prospectus and discussions between City of Edinburgh Council's Invest Edinburgh team and Midlothian and Scottish Borders Councils, a joint approach has been agreed to promote inward investment and economic development in the railway corridor. An Inward Investment Project Manager is being appointed to work with the Councils and other Blueprint partners for an 18 month period to provide and establish a focussed approach to attracting inward investment. This will establish an up to date, dynamic database of sites and buildings that are readily marketable, create a lasting network of contacts across the public sector agencies and private sector investors, and ensure that the Borders Rail corridor is known to be 'open for business'.

4.5   Borders Railway Investment Fund - The new Scottish Local Authorities Business Loan Fund – 'Business Loans Scotland' will be used to deliver a planned £1million finance mechanism for business investment in the Railway corridor when it is launched later this year. It is now likely that the new fund will not be available until April 2016, and interim options for business loans will continue, using the Council's existing Scottish Borders Business Loan Fund.

Great Communities for Living and Learning

4.6   Housing Land/ Development - This is a priority area to be addressed now that the Borders Railway is operational and developers and investors can see the impact it is having on travel patterns. Scottish Government facilitated a meeting of senior planners from Scottish Borders and Midlothian Councils in September 2015 to discuss the strategic role of the railway in creating a new 'development corridor' for Scotland The railway provides a major incentive for housebuilders, employers, retail and commercial interests to locate in the Scottish Borders.

4.7   Modern Apprenticeships, Skills and Training - The new railway provides ready access to education and training at Borders College, Heriot Watt University's Borders Campus, Edinburgh College and Queen Margaret University. It also provides much improved access to a greater range of labour markets in Edinburgh and Midlothian. There is already feedback from Borders College that some students from Midlothian are using the train to attend courses in Galashiels, rather than traveling into the city. Early discussions have taken place with Skills Development Scotland to understand the skills impact of the Borders Railway, and the potential for investment in enhanced apprenticeships and hospitality training schemes.

4.8   Scope Out Potential Feasibility Work for Extending the Line - The scoping of the feasibility study to explore the possibility of extending the Borders Railway project beyond Tweedbank towards Hawick and Carlisle is being discussed with Transport Scotland.

4.9   Town Centres – At a local level, the Town Centre Coordinator in Galashiels has established working partnerships with town organisations in order to improved tourism experience in Galashiels, increase footfall in Galashiels, improve the street scene and maximise business development in the town. A total of 27 shop front improvement grants totalling £47,000 have been offered to improve the street scene and give Galashiels a more presentable face to the visitor and shoppers. The Galashiels Town Trail has been used as the basis for a visitor map of the town and proved very popular with people arriving by train. It is also distributed through many tourism leaflet dispensers.

4.10   The work of Energise Galashiels has promoted a number of community led initiatives to improve the town. Shop window displays in empty properties and the tidying up of vacant shops have been particular successes. The group is promoting the town to visitors in partnership with other Borders towns, and through new events such as the '100 Bands on the Borders' and Doors Open Day. The group are planning further new events for 2016.

4.11   The opening of the Borders Railway was important for Galashiels and efforts were made to capitalise on this, particularly the piloting of the Borders Railway Ambassadors. These were based mainly at the Galashiels Transport Interchange and Tweedbank station. Enquires tended to be tourism (51%) and transport related (41%). Steam trains brought very high levels of demand for information as standard trains immediately prior to and post the steam train carried steam train spectators. Tweedbank was busier than Galashiels on a broadly 60/40 split. Visitor feedback highlighted the need for a textile retail offer in the town and facilities for children.

4.12   Develop walk/ cycle paths into wider network - Projects are progressing led by Scottish Borders Council to deliver 'active travel projects' and touch screen information points at key stations, funded by the Scottish Government/ Transport Scotland Smarter Choices grants. A touch screen information point has been installed at the Galashiels Transport Interchange, and further screens are planned at Tweedbank Station, Stow Station, Melrose, Abbotsford and Hawick. The development of walking and cycle path connections in Scottish Borders is complete, with links between Clovenfords, Melrose, Abbotsford House and the Borders General Hospital all included. Signage and information is available at Stow, Galashiels and Tweedbank stations to inform visitors of the various short and long distance routes available for walking and cycling.

Great Destinations to Visit

4.13   Tourism remains one of the strong economic sectors in the local economy. The Borders Railway provides a great opportunity for a step change improvement in the sector.

4.14   Great Tapestry of Scotland – The project to develop a building to permanently house and display the Great Tapestry of Scotland is one of the key elements of the Blueprint Programme. The Project Governance structure has been established covering the general principles of how Scottish Borders Council will manage the design, cost control and reporting procedures throughout the design and construction phases. The Council appointed the various consultants required to inform the overall project design. The planning application for the development has been approved and the outline design process is complete. Work to prepare the final tender package is almost complete, with the project going out to tender shortly. Early enabling works have been undertaken on site to address wildlife issues and the project remains on programme for opening in 2017.

Page 56

4.15   Steam Train Experience - ScotRail delivered a six week pilot project from September to November 2015, with steam trains running from Edinburgh Waverley to Tweedbank three times a week. The pilot had 100% occupancy, with 6,200 passengers visiting the Borders. Abbotsford House, Melrose Abbey and the County Hotel in Selkirk organised an add-on experience for those travelling on the steam train and this also proved to be extremely popular. A full economic impact assessment is underway to help inform options for 2016 so that decisions can be made in February 2016.

4.16   Borders Railway Tourism Development Programme - A new Borders Railway 'Business Opportunities Guide' was launched in October 2015 via Business Gateway. This highlights new business opportunities for the tourism sector. The launch of the guide is complemented by the appointment of a part-time Tourism Business Adviser to work with the Councils and other Blueprint partners in providing direct support to tourism businesses. The Tourism Business Advisor will provide one-to-one and group business support.

4.17   Visitor Marketing Programme - the first phase of the VisitScotland led marketing campaign went live in August 2015, targeting markets in the UK, Germany and North America. This includes outdoor, radio and digital advertising. A blog page highlighting attractions along the route and directing visitors to destination webpages is available at www.visitscotland.com/bordersrailway ScotRail has also just received approval for a visitor experience pilot with a national tour operator that will take visitors on day-long tours throughout the area. Officers are seeking to ensure that this includes a Hawick / Selkirk cashmere angle following the successful Future Hawick pilot in December 2015.

4.18   Communications - under the leadership of Scottish Enterprise the Blueprint Communications Group developed a core script with key messages that was used for the opening celebrations. VisitScotland worked with partners to deliver a Media Day to showcase the region in advance of the opening weekend. 93 media reps were hosted on a special press preview train, generating 273 pieces of coverage and a total audience reach of 51 million. This helped ensure #mybordersrailway was trending on UK Twitter, with a potential audience reach of 29 million.

Operational Issues

4.19   A total of 126,000 passengers used the railway in its first month of operation (September 2015), and an estimated 350,000 passengers used the service in the three months to end November 2015. These rates are much higher than predicted rates of usage. On that basis a conservative annual projection would be in the region of one million passengers: in comparison with the pre-opening projection of 647,000 passengers per annum.

4.20   There have been some well-publicised concerns regarding the lack of sufficient rolling stock at times, which has caused significant inconvenience for passengers. This has been raised directly with the train operator on a number of occasions. This is a Scotland wide issue and not simply a Borders Railway issue. The train operator has sought to address this issue as far as possible, but there is recognition that across the rail industry in the UK there is a lack of available rolling stock. This problem will take some time to resolve nationally due to the lead in times for delivery of new carriages. The Council will continue to lobby wherever possible for the resolution of this issue.

4.21   As part of Network Rail's contract a limited amount of signage was provided which, whilst adequate, has been the subject of some concern from rail users. Therefore, there is a programme being undertaken by the Council to augment the signage in the vicinity of the stations. The use of Tweedbank has been significantly higher than forecast and the car park has been at capacity on many occasions. Network Rail and ScotRail are considering the implications of this situation.

5   NEXT STEPS

5.1   Looking forward to the coming year, targets in 2016 include the construction commencing for the Great Tapestry of Scotland Visitor Centre, led by Scottish Borders Council, and the Central Borders Business Park at Tweedbank, led by Scottish Enterprise. Other important investments include the development of a visitor experience pilot by ScotRail

5.2   Visitor marketing activity will continue in 2016, linked to a Borders Railway showcase at VisitScotland EXPO in April 2016. A new Steam Train Experience is being planned by Transport Scotland/ScotRail. New work streams being opened up in 2016 will include stimulating private sector housing development, and support for workforce skills development. Finally, the Council is leading on scoping further feasibility work around the extension of the Borders Railway line towards Hawick and Carlisle.

5.3   At local level in Galashiels, attention will turn to improvements to marketing the town as a place to invest, a similar Borders Railway Ambassadors proposal subject to funds being available, improved information on shopper numbers, spending and business performance. There will be a focus on additional marketing to visitors and shoppers eg Galashiels Shoppers Map and better online information. Support will be given to proposals for a Business Improvement District following the announcement by Scottish Government ministers in December 2015.

6   IMPLICATIONS

6.1   **Financial**

a)   The Blueprint Group has identified a programme of implementation activity and established costings for most items. In many cases the relevant partners have agreed to financial contributions for specific items. The programme also includes opportunity for bids to be submitted for appropriate projects to a £10m fund provided by Scottish Government through Scottish Enterprise, and managed by the Blueprint Group. There is no time deadline for submission of bids, rather it is for projects to come forward over the next few years. Potential opportunities in Scottish Borders could include the proposed Great Tapestry of Scotland building and the Central Borders Business Park.

b)   There may be opportunities to link some of the Blueprint activity to the City Region Deal that is currently being developed jointly with other Councils in South East Scotland. Officers will work with partners to establish the potential of these opportunities over the coming months.

C)   In order to keep elected members up to date with progress on the Railway Blueprint and related projects it is proposed that further update reports are submitted to the Committee on a regular basis. These future reports will also provide monitoring information on the financial investment being made by the Council and Partners in delivering the Blueprint Strategy.

Page 58

6.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

There is a fundamental risk that the Scottish Borders economy as a whole, and the local economies of communities close to the railway, experiences little or no economic growth as a consequence of the opening of the Borders Railway. The planned actions of the Blueprint partners, both collectively and on an individual level, mitigate this risk in the short to medium term. Further planning and scenario development activity will also help to mitigate this risk over the long term.

6.3 **Equalities**

An initial Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and it is anticipated that the Blueprint will assist the Council to meet the Equality Duty. The Blueprint investments are expected to deliver a number of positive impacts for equalities groups, particularly as a result of enhanced connectivity to and from stations, and from new employment, skills training and business opportunities. We will continue the impact assessment process as we progress this work.

6.4 **Acting Sustainably**

The opening of the Borders Railway, and a focus on the economic opportunities arising from this, is a major strand of the Scottish Borders Economic Strategy 2023. This major infrastructure investment has the potential to substantially aid the sustainability of the economy in the Scottish Borders. A core principle of the Railway Blueprint is to stimulate sustainable economic development which will deliver benefits for the environment in supporting a 'modal shift' from car to train, and in connecting communities to new work, learning and leisure opportunities.

6.5 **Carbon Management**

The Borders Railway provides for a major shift of transport mode from the private car, and this should show an overall reduction in carbon emissions. All Blueprint infrastructure projects, including new buildings, will be designed to deliver cutting-edge low carbon outcomes. Construction methods will use current low carbon principles, and the brief for new developments will include the potential for on-site renewable energy generation. In addition, any major construction projects will require to be screened for Environmental Impact Assessment, which will highlight any environmental sensitivities associated with the proposals

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

Rural proofing is not required as this report does not relate to new or amended Council policy or strategy. However, it is expected that the Blueprint investments will have a regional economic and social impact that reaches far beyond the immediate corridor of the new line, benefiting surrounding rural areas.

6.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation arising from this report.

7   CONSULTATION

7.1   The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the report.

Approved by

Rob Dickson   Signature …………………………………
Corporate Transformation
and Services Director

Author(s)

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Background Papers:
Previous Minute Reference: Item 9, Scottish Borders Council, 2 April 2015

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Douglas Scott can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Douglas Scott, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA Tel: 01835 825155, email dscott@scotborders.gov.uk

BORDERS RAILWAY BLUEPRINT

By working with a range of partners, including Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise, we will deliver actions to maximise the full economic benefits.
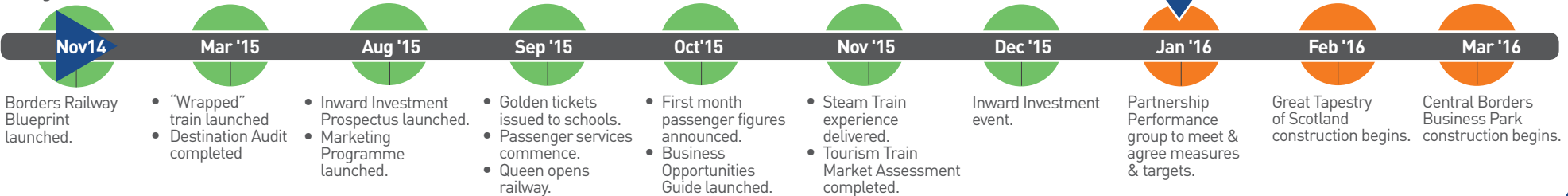
Benefits

- Population growth
- More jobs
- Inward investment
- Tourism growth
- Improved perceptions of area

Key Milestones

Nov14 — Borders Railway Blueprint launched.

Mar '15
- "Wrapped" train launched
- Destination Audit completed

Aug '15
- Inward Investment Prospectus launched.
- Marketing Programme launched.

Sep '15
- Golden tickets issued to schools.
- Passenger services commence.
- Queen opens railway.

Oct'15
- First month passenger figures announced.
- Business Opportunities Guide launched.

Nov '15
- Steam Train experience delivered.
- Tourism Train Market Assessment completed.

Dec '15 — Inward Investment event.

Jan '16 — Partnership Performance group to meet & agree measures & targets.

Feb '16 — Great Tapestry of Scotland construction begins.

Mar '16 — Central Borders Business Park construction begins.

Passenger numbers

319,369 up to 21 Nov 2015
647,000 Annual Target

Transport Scotland Baseline Evaluation 2015

Households
- **95%** aware of new line
- **80%** anticipate using the line (mainly for leisure)
- Commuters: **70%** travel by car to work;
- **50%** commute to Edinburgh

Businesses
- **96%** aware of new line

Attitudes	Scottish Borders	Midlothian
Impact of railway on £ and customers	63% +ve	23% +ve
Impact of railway on employees	45% +ve	15% +ve

Media Coverage

VisitScotland worked with ScotRail to deliver a Borders Railway **Media Day** on 4th Sep to showcase tourism and investment opportunities. This was a major 'team Borders Railway' effort with teams from the Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, ScotRail, local councils and Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) helping to create a strong story for Scotland and the UK.

- **93** media hosted on the day
- **273** pieces of coverage
- **70** UK national press stories
- Total audience reach of **51 million**
- #MyBordersRailway trending on UK Twitter with potential audience reach of **29 million**

Programme highlights

A new **Inward Investment Prospectus** and promotional film has been developed to provide a wealth of information for potential investors around availability of land, grants, support etc. as well as information about living, learning and working along the route of the Borders Railway. **http://bordersrailwayprospectus.com/**

A new **Visitor Marketing Programme** has been developed by VisitScotland to promote the Borders Railway and Edinburgh-Midlothian- Borders destination to Scotland, UK and International markets.

This includes radio, outdoor and digital campaigns. **http://visitscotland.com/bordersrailway**

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