
HAWICK AND EAST BERWICKSHIRE MEMBER WORKING GROUPS

Report by Executive Director EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

17 April 2018

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report proposes the establishment of two new Working Groups to consider the economic challenges and opportunities in Hawick and Eyemouth and East Berwickshire.**
- 1.2 As part of the recent budget announcements, it was highlighted that short-life elected member Working Groups would be set up for Hawick and the Eyemouth and East Berwickshire areas to consider economic issues and opportunities in those parts of the Scottish Borders.
- 1.3 The Working Groups will have advisory powers, offering advice and guidance to the Executive Committee based on the analysis they undertake. Local elected members will form the core of the Working Groups, which will both be chaired by Cllr Rowley, Executive Member for Business and Economic Development. The Groups will also seek to involve other local stakeholders.
- 1.4 The new Groups should meet as soon as possible to agree the format of their meetings, their terms of reference and the topics that they want to focus on. It is envisaged that the Working Groups will be another positive force for change, working alongside the localities focused Area Partnerships.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee:**
 - (a) Agrees to recommend to Council that the two new Working Groups should be established as soon as possible;**
 - (b) Agrees to recommend to Council that business people and other local stakeholders should be co-opted onto the new Working Groups in line with local member expectations; and**
 - (c) Asks the Executive Director to present appropriate progress reports to Committee, as agreed with the Chair of the Working Groups.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As part of the recent budget announcements, it was highlighted that short-life elected member Working Groups would be set up for Hawick and the Eyemouth and East Berwickshire areas to specifically consider the issues and opportunities facing businesses and the economy in those parts of the Scottish Borders. This is part of the Council's proactive response to the challenges faced in these areas.

4 PROPOSED WORKING GROUPS

- 4.1 It is proposed that the new Working Groups are set up as sub-groups of the Council's Executive Committee. The Working Groups will have advisory powers, rather than decision making powers. They will offer advice and guidance to the Executive Committee based on the information they collect, and analysis they undertake, over the coming months.
- 4.2 The membership of the Working Groups would have local elected members at their core. There will be the six local elected members on the Hawick Working Group and the three local elected members on the Eyemouth and East Berwickshire Working Group.
- 4.3 It is suggested that a further two or three elected members from other parts of the Scottish Borders could also be involved in the Working Groups. They would bring added perspectives from other localities and potentially be able to help tackle key topics that the Working Groups may identify, such as planning or roads and transport.
- 4.4 It is proposed that both of the Working Groups would be chaired by Cllr Rowley, Executive Member for Business and Economic Development. It is also proposed that the Working Groups are empowered to co-opt local business people and other local stakeholders into the Group in order to foster new ideas and innovative thinking in relation to the issues being addressed. The Working Groups will reach out to a wide range of stakeholders in the business, community and third sectors.
- 4.5 It is proposed that the new Groups would be called: the Hawick Economic Development Group (HEDG); and the Eyemouth and East Berwickshire Economic Regeneration Group (EEBERG).
- 4.6 The new Groups should meet as soon as possible to agree the format of their meetings and how often they need to meet. The initial meetings of the Working Groups would also agree their terms of reference and the topics that they want to focus on. It is suggested that the Groups should seek to identify the key issues facing the local economy and businesses in their area; identify opportunities and assets that can be harnessed; and that through dialogue with stakeholders and partners, then identify innovative actions and priority projects that could be developed to address issues and take advantage of opportunities.
- 4.7 In Hawick, there is already a robust plan, in the form of the Hawick Action Plan, which the Working Group could use as a starting point to update and expand on. There is no similar plan in the Eyemouth and East Berwickshire area, but there the Working Group could build on the work undertaken for the Eyemouth Vision exercise in 2014/15 and also the recent Area Partnership workshop on Economy, Skills and Learning. It will also be important for that Working Group to consider the potential economic opportunities and impacts from the proposal to open a railway station at Reston.
- 4.8 It is envisaged that the Working Groups will be another force for positive change, working alongside the localities focused Area Partnerships. There is a key opportunity over the coming months to ensure that the needs and

opportunities of the economy in these two areas of the Scottish Borders are highlighted. This information and thinking can then be fed into the work being taken forward on the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency and the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

- 4.9 The proposals agreed by the Executive Committee will be presented to the next meeting of Scottish Borders Council for final approval.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications with this report. However, the identification of key activities and priority projects by the Working Groups may require potential financial commitment from the Council and other partners. This will be dealt with in future reports, as appropriate.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

It is clear that the economies in Hawick and East Berwickshire face particular challenges. There are also clear opportunities to be worked on. By establishing the new Working Groups, the Council is being proactive in identifying the economic risks in these areas. The Council will have to work in conjunction with stakeholders and local partners to address the recommendations that come forward from the Working Groups.

5.3 Equalities

It is anticipated that Equalities Impact Assessments will be required in relation to individual projects as they are identified in order to ensure that there are no adverse impacts due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religious/belief arising.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

The intention behind the Working Groups is to help make the economy of these areas more sustainable. This may be achieved by improving connectivity, investing in business infrastructure, increasing the level of local skills and promoting the tourism offering.

5.5 Carbon Management

It is likely that some of the actions proposed by the Working Groups could have a positive impact on carbon emissions, particularly where those actions lead to the redevelopment of ageing or vacant industrial properties.

5.6 Rural Proofing

The Working Groups will be encouraged to consider the issues affecting the rural areas around Hawick and in East Berwickshire.

5.7 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.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR and the Clerk to the Council are being consulted and any comments will be reported verbally at the Committee meeting.

Approved by

**Rob Dickson
Executive Director**

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: None

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