

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
26 APRIL 2018
APPENDIX I

OPEN QUESTIONS

Questions from Councillor Robson

To Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Locality Services

1. Can the Executive Member advise whether there is a policy for charging for pest control in both domestic and commercial situations and if that policy has been either introduced or changed in the last twelve months?

Reply from Councillor Aitchison

The Council does have a charging policy for both domestic and commercial premises. The policies have been in existence for many years. Domestic charges are increased in line with the Council's fees and charges annually.

The commercial premises charges were reviewed in January 2018 to better reflect the cost to the Council.

A list of all fees and charges for 2018/19 can be found here:

https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20052/environmental_problems/1111/pest_control

In 2017/18 the income generated for Pest Control was:

Domestic Premises	£27,377.80
Commercial	£ 9,444.60
Commercial Contracts (Farms)	£50,732.00
Total	£87,554.40

Supplementary

Councillor Robson asked whether the Executive Member would agree to meet with him to discuss the implementation of the policy as there seemed to be some inconsistency in its application. Councillor Aitchison advised that together with the appropriate officer(s) he was happy to have such a meeting,

2. Can the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Locality Services advise whether he or one of the Council's Directors has met the Citizens Advice Bureau since 29th March and what issues were discussed?

Reply from Councillor Aitchison

I can confirm that a planned meeting took place earlier this week. This was chaired by the Service Director for Customer & Communities and was attended by three representatives from the Borders Citizens Advice Consortium, a board member, a manager and a treasurer as well as other officers from the Council.

The meeting was extremely productive and discussions centred on the agreement to extend the existing contract between the Council and the Consortium for the delivery of money and welfare advisory services on behalf of the Council. A process on how this will be done was agreed as well as how the Council and the Consortium can work together on a longer term vision for the partnership.

There is a further meeting planned for next week and regular meetings, as agreed, will take place going forward.

Supplementary

Councillor Robson asked the Executive Member to keep Members informed of progress and to look to reinstate the £11k cut in funding given the added pressure on CABs following the changes to welfare benefits. Councillor Aitchison advised that as policies changed there was a need to ensure there was a “fit for purpose” service with better collaborative working, which was the aim of the meetings. He undertook to keep Members advised of progress.

Question from Councillor Laing

To the Executive Member for Business & Economic Development

An economic impact report by Cycling Scotland published in February found that cycling travel made a total contribution to the Scottish Economy of between £596m and £774m.

The “We are cycling” website describes cycling in the Scottish Borders as “a delight for the confident tourist.”

Tourism is a growing and essential contributor to the Borders economy.

What is the council doing to expand cycle tourism in the Borders to open up cycling to a wider population and to maximise the potential from this cycling boom?

Reply from Councillor Rowley

The Scottish Borders has a long-established and substantial leisure cycling offer on natural trails as well as world-class mountain biking at the 7stanes sites at Glentress, Innerleithen and Newcastleton. The natural assets of the area provide a wonderful cycling playground and there are a range of cycle friendly services.

The Scottish Borders Cycle Tourism Strategy aims to boost the Scottish Borders economy and accelerate the growth of cycling from both an events and tourism perspective.

Scottish Borders Council hosts and manages the cycle Scottish Borders dot com website specifically for cyclists. In addition to this, we regularly run social media campaigns through Visit Scotland and will be investing in a campaign in 2018 to highlight the opportunities for adventure cyclists and gravel cyclists.

We continue to support major local events including the Tour of the Borders, Tour de Lauder and Tweedlove. That support takes the form of advice, provision of services and direct financial support.

We will continue to try and secure the opportunity to host stages of the Tour of Britain, which is the UK’s biggest professional cycling race, over the coming years. The economic impact in one day of the Tour of Britain at Kelso in 2017 was £430k with an attendance of 32,000 people over the length of the route. This race secures an outstanding opportunity through live television broadcasts to promote the Scottish Borders. The Tweedlove Festival in 2017, which runs over two weeks, attracted over 15 thousand visitors with an economic impact of £704k. The Borders Triathlon Series is closely linked with Live Borders cycling programme and this regularly attracts 1200 athletes to the region, of which a staggering 82% are visitors from outwith the Scottish Borders area.

As well as promoting cycling to visitors the Council is working with the Government funded Smarter Choices programme and promoting cycling to residents and other groups traditionally reluctant to cycle. The Council is also working closely with Sustrans to secure funding for multi-use paths that link communities such as the recently developed Tweed Valley Cycle Path using the old railway line between Peebles and Innerleithen, which

is being expanded to Walkerburn, and the Clovenfords, Gala to Tweedbank Old Black Path route.

We believe further cycle route development should play a key role in the new opportunities offered through the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency and Borderlands projects over the coming months & years.

Supplementary

Councillor Laing advised that it had been brought to her attention that poor signage was discouraging people from recommending the area and asked what the Council could do to address this. Councillor Rowley advised that he was happy to look into this but highlighted the separate website and app that were available.

Question from Councillor S. Hamilton

1. To Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Locality Services

With recent media attention highlighting the distressing cases of livestock worrying can the Executive member explain what action is being taken by SBC to help alleviate this plight which is faced by the Borders farming community?

Reply from Councillor Aitchison

The Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953 is the relevant legislation which deals with sheep worrying and is the remit of Police Scotland. Scottish Borders Council do have an agreement with Police Scotland that in such cases a Dog Control Notice will be served on the owner of the offending dog as an interim measure after Police Scotland have submitted a report to the Procurator Fiscal.

2. To Executive Member for Business & Economic Development

Riverside Rock brings hundreds of visitors to Jedburgh on an annual basis who spend/do/stay in the area. Events like these are of vital importance to the Borders economy and add significantly to our vibrancy and appeal to visitors.

Can the Executive Member advise what efforts are being made to ensure the Scottish Borders is seen as an attractive place to hold events which boost the local economy and how do we support events that make the Borders an even better place to live, spend and draw visitors into our area?

Reply from Councillor Rowley

Scottish Borders Council has an agreed Strategic Events Plan 2014-2020, which is ambitious and proposes targeting support towards events that have the greatest regional and national impact. The approach aims to maximise financial leverage from EventScotland and other partners, as well as maximising social, cultural and environmental benefits. The coordination and management of the Events Plan is led by the Council. However, successful event delivery requires a partnership approach with ambitious event organisers and national agencies as well as local businesses and communities.

The Scottish Borders hosts a number of successful events ranging from the Borders Book Festival, Borders Heritage Festival and Borders Arts Fair, to sporting and outdoor events such as Melrose 7s, Tour of Britain and Tweedlove.

The Council works with partners to grow existing events and bring new, exciting events to the area. The support provided by the Council to event organisers is wide ranging. It can include financial support; event development advice; advice on traffic management procedures; support for marketing and promotion; local business development; as well as advice on safety and other matters.

For larger events, Emergency Planning resources are also available to manage events, particularly where there is a need for close working between event organisers, the Council and the emergency services.

In 2017 Economic Development helped to fund 9 large events including the Borders Book Festival, The Tour of Britain and Tweedlove. The funding support totalled £98,000 with additional funding received from Event Scotland, Creative Scotland & Museums and Galleries Scotland. The value of the in-kind support provided for these events from traffic management and economic development is estimated at £74,500. The estimated overall economic impact of the events supported was £6 million and the total number of attendee's was estimated at over 110,000.

In addition to the larger event support, the Community Grant Scheme approved 13 event related applications in 2017/18, with £35,455 awarded. The Festival Grants Scheme supports the Common Ridings and Festivals. This has an annual spend of £85,110.

I am certain that the Scottish Borders is a great place for festivals and events and we should relentlessly promote our twin advantages of being accessible from the south and close to audiences in the central belt, particularly with the opportunities from the Borders Railway.

Supplementary

Councillor Hamilton asked if the Executive Member would be prepared to meet with the organisers of Riverside Rock and he confirmed that he would be happy to do so.