

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
EILDON AREA FORUM

MINUTE of the MEETING of the EILDON
AREA FORUM held in the Council Chamber,
Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells
on 13 November 2014 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:- Councillors B. White (Chairman), V. Davidson, G. Edgar, B. Herd, D Parker.
Community Council representatives:- R. French (Newtown St Boswells), J. MacKenzie (Stow), Ian Purvis (Galashiels & Langlee), M. Crausaz (Ettrick & Yarrow), T. Cotter (Lilliesleaf, Ashkirk and Midlem), G. Easton (Selkirk and District);
Inspector A. Hodges (Police Scotland), J. Douce (Scottish Fire & Rescue),
Apologies:- Councillors S. Aitchison, M. Ballantyne, I. Gillespie, J. Mitchell, J. Torrance; Oxtou & Channelkirk and Lauderdale Community Councils.
In Attendance:- SBC Neighbourhood Area Manager (Eildon), Assistant Engineer, Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

Additional Community Councillors - 2

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. The Chairman varied the order of business as shown on the agenda and the Minute reflects the order in which the items were considered at the meeting.

MINUTE

2. There had been circulated copies of the Minute of 14 August 2014.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

PARTNER UPDATES

3. Jeff Douce of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) handed out a briefing paper and gave a summary of operational activity undertaken by SFRS within the Eildon Area during the period 1 September to 11 November 2014 and answered Members' questions. Work during the period included 14 secondary fires, involving grass/bushes, rubbish and bonfires, and response to 7 Road Traffic Collisions. With regard to work on fire safety seasonal themes included student, electrical and chimney safety; older/vulnerable persons; festive safety; safety at home; and fire and alcohol. Inspector Hodges gave a verbal report on the main areas of activity for Police Scotland over the recent two months. He confirmed that officers continued to respond to reports of indiscriminate and dangerous parking and were focusing attention around school areas. He emphasised the importance of feedback from the public and the value of partnership working with local businesses and the Council to control parking, with the Licensing Board in respect of alcohol misuse and with the National Farmers Union to monitor and provide alerts in respect of rural theft. After further discussion of the issues raised the Chairman thanked Mr Douce and Inspector Hodges for their attendance.

**DECISION
NOTED**

OFF-STREET PARKING/PAY AND DISPLAY GALASHIELS – TRAFFIC REGULATION

4. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Commercial Services seeking approval of the proposed amendments to The Scottish Borders Council (Off-Street Parking Places) (Galashiels) Order 2002. Gary Haldane, Assistant Engineer Traffic Management, was in attendance to present the report. He referred to the recent Galashiels Inner Relief Road (GIRR) works and construction of the Transport Interchange which had affected the off-street car parks within the town. The proposed amendments to reflect the changes in size and location of the car parks were shown in on a map appended to the report. The amendments included were to the extent of Stirling Place Car Park, the relocation of Stirling Street Car Park and the extent of High Street Car Park. Removal of Car Parks at B & M Bargains, the Bus Station and Huddersfield Street had also been included in the Order. Mr Haldane reported that no objections or adverse comments had been received as a result of either the statutory consultation or the public advertisement of the proposals. Members discussed the proposed amendments and gave them their approval.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the proposed amendments to The Scottish Borders Council (Off-Street Parking Places) (Galashiels) Order 2002.

NEIGHBOURHOOD OPERATIONS REVIEW UPDATE

5. The Service Director Neighbourhood Services, Jenni Craig, was in attendance to give a presentation jointly to the Area Forum and to the Community Council Network. Mrs Craig explained that the Council had agreed, on 30th January 2014, to review Neighbourhood Operations which formed part of the Neighbourhood Services section within the new Corporate structure. The two main aims of the review were: to deliver efficient services and enhance biodiversity whilst continuing to meet the prioritised needs of the communities served by Scottish Borders Council; and to contribute towards the Council's Business Transformation agenda whilst delivering efficiencies. Neighbourhood Operations included grounds maintenance, burials, street cleansing, public conveniences and rapid response. As well as enhancing biodiversity in the way open spaces were managed the Council would work to support communities to realise their aspirations and work with third parties to generate revenue and capital income. Under the Community Empowerment Bill the Council would identify sites for potential allotments and community orchards. Mrs Craig handed over to Project Manager, Jason Hedley, who gave further details about the opportunities that had been identified. He showed slides of large areas of open space grasslands that had been managed in a different way, creating diverse habitats that did not require frequent cuts. Future management options were being looked at for third party land and there were potential sales of Scottish Borders Council owned land where sites were surplus to operational need. Other areas being looked at were a change in provision of public toilets, grass maintenance within towns and cemetery income. The benefits of the review were increased biodiversity, improved service efficiency, locally prioritised and agreed service standards and an opportunity for community empowerment. Information on grounds maintenance was digitally held by the Council on maps that would be available for use by communities in the future.
6. With regard to the progress of the review Mrs Craig advised that once a workable position was attained, following consultation with Community Councils, local interest groups and Ward Members, the proposals would be taken back to Area Forums for decisions. In answer to questions from Community Council representatives with regard to the extent of efficiencies needed, Mrs Craig explained that although further savings would have to be made the redesign of services had already delivered about £150k of savings. With regard to public toilet facilities there may be opportunities in some areas for the Council to work with third party organisations/businesses with the aim of securing their future provision. The ensuing discussion focused in particular on the management of areas of grassland owned and/or currently maintained by the Council. It was pointed out that the availability to local

communities of GIS information showing land areas in question would be an effective way of identifying maintenance work that was perhaps unnecessary. There may also be opportunities of attracting inward investment for the continued management of land in a different way which would both increase biodiversity and enhance the public's enjoyment of the area. The Chairman thanked the officers for their attendance and for the interesting presentation.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation

NEIGHBOURHOOD SMALL SCHEMES AND CAPITAL, REVENUE AND PAY PARKING WORKS

7. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Neighbourhood Services seeking approval for the proposed new Neighbourhood Small Schemes and to update the forum on Quality of Life fund projects and Roads Capital and Revenue Works. Neighbourhood Area Manager, Craig Blackie, advised that four schemes had been requested by the Eildon Members under the Small Schemes budget:- construction of a circular, masonry raised flower bed at Burnmill, Lauder (£1,900), provision of a timber bench in Croft Road, Lauder (£150), a new community notice board for Yarrow Feus (£500) and plant shrubs on the elevated banking in Newtown St. Boswells (£1,400). Members agreed to the proposed schemes. Mr Blackie went on to refer to the Appendices to the report. Appendix A listed previously approved Small Schemes and indicated that, with the approval of the above schemes the remaining small schemes budget for 2014/15 was £33,680. Appendices B & C to the report gave an update on the Roads Capital and Revenue Works. Previously approved Quality of Life projects were listed in Appendix D. This indicated a remaining Quality of Life budget of £17,184. However Mr Blackie advised that there were several projects that had been put forward for consideration under this budget heading which were currently being processed. In response to a question from a Community Councillor about the Quality of Life Fund Mr Blackie explained that this was being used for environmental projects, supporting community groups/ initiatives, Christmas lighting or the type of things that would generally support the community. Suggestions for schemes could be put forward for consideration through local Ward Members or direct to himself.
8. With regard to the Small Schemes budget Members agreed to the proposal to delegate authority to the Neighbourhood Manager (Eildon) to allocate the remaining funds for suitable schemes, subject to consultation with and approval by at least five Members of the Eildon Area Forum by email. It was clarified that if agreement could not be reached by email the scheme(s) would be taken forward for discussion and a decision at the next meeting of the Area Forum. Also brought to the next meeting would be a report on the schemes that had been approved under delegated authority. In response to questions from Members, Mr Blackie offered to enquire and pass on further details about particular works listed on the Revenue and Capital Works Programme detailed in Appendix B to the report. He also agreed to pass on a query about the continuing poor condition of the road surface on the B709 at the Gordon Arms, and the need for masonry repairs at Tushielaw Bridge.

DECISION

AGREED

(a) to APPROVE the following Neighbourhood Small Schemes for implementation:-

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|--------------|---|---------------|
| (i) | Install a circular, masonry raised flower bed, Burnmill, Lauder. | £1,900 |
| (ii) | Supply a timber bench, Croft Road, Lauder | £150 |
| (iii) | Install a new notice board, Yarrow Feus | £500 |

(iv) **Plant shrubs on elevated banking, Newtown St. Boswells** £1,400

(b) **to delegate authority to the Neighbourhood Manager (Eildon) to allocate the remaining funds of £33,680 for the current financial year to Small Schemes, subject to consultation with all elected Members of Eildon Area Forum, and approval by at least five of those elected Members, by email; and**

(c) **to NOTE the update on Quality of Life, Roads Capital & Revenue works and previously approved Small Schemes as detailed in the Appendices to the report.**

EILDON AREA FORUM SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

9. There had been circulated copies of the results of a survey distributed amongst those attending the last meeting of Eildon Area Forum which took place in Stow Town Hall, on 14 August 2014. The purpose of the survey was to gather opinion on the Area Forum and whether it should continue in the current format. There were 19 attendees at the meeting. Ten surveys were completed and indicated that those who expressed an opinion thought that Eildon Area Forum had a role to play and should continue. 60% of those attending were doing so for the first time. Of those that completed the survey most were members of the public (40%) whilst Scottish Borders Councillors, Community Councillors and Council Officers each made up 20%. Many favourable comments were made about the venue with 90% feeling that it was suitable. There were however conflicting comments about the acoustics. All of those who responded felt welcome and that they were encouraged to participate. 75% thought the items on the agenda were of relevance to them and ideas were suggested for future agenda items. All of those who responded made positive comments in response to the question as to whether the Area Forum was worth having and no suggestions were made as to whether this could be replaced with something different. In conclusion it was noted that the overall results of the survey were positive. It was acknowledged that not all agenda items would be of relevance/interest to all those attending and that this would vary between meetings. The survey did identify that attention should be paid to the seating arrangements to ensure good sound quality for everyone.

DECISION

NOTED the results of the Eildon Area Forum Satisfaction Survey.

OPEN QUESTIONS

10. There were no open questions.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL SPOTLIGHT

11. (a) Newtown and Eildon Community Councillor, Roger French, drew attention to accumulations of leaves and berries at various points in Newtown St Boswells which were a potential hazard and which required removal. Mr Blackie advised that maintenance and removal of leaves in the main Council car park would be carried out when it was empty between Christmas and New Year. He agreed to pass the other matters raised to the foreman.
- (b) Stow Community Councillor, Jack MacKenzie, raised the question of who would be carrying out repairs to the A7 once the Borders Railway work had been completed. Councillor Edgar advised that officers had been monitoring the condition of the road and were in discussion with the contractors involved with the associated railway work, with a view to them carrying out repairs.
- (c) Lilliesleaf, Ashkirk and Midlem Community Councillor, Tom Cotter, referred to continuing local concern about safety at the junction of the Midlem Road with the

A699. Councillor Edgar explained safety measures that had recently been put in place by the Council at the junction, including 'Slow' markings on both approaches of the A699 and horse warning signs. The road junction sign on the Selkirk side of the junction had also been moved further from the junction to improve its visibility.

- (d) Galashiels and Langlee Community Councillor, Ian Purvis, drew attention to the Scottish Borders Festival of Walking which was to be hosted by Galashiels in September 2015. It was suggested to him that an application for funding for the event could be put through the Community Grant Scheme.

**DECISION
NOTED**

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

12. It was suggested that an update be requested from Network Rail for the next meeting together with representation from Economic Development to inform discussion on economic activity connected to the opening of the railway. Also scheduled for the next meeting was a presentation from the Borders Sport and Leisure Trust. At the following meeting it was suggested that new ScotRail operator Abellio be invited to present the proposals for the Borders Railway and that consideration also be given to the plans around the Borders Railway Opening Celebrations. A further agenda item suggested was for a representative of SEPA to give a presentation around the management of waterways and flood prevention.

**DECISION
NOTED**

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13. It was agreed to change the scheduled date for the next meeting, at the Volunteer Hall, Galashiels, to Thursday, 19 February 2015 at 6.30 pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.15 pm.