

FIT FOR 2024 – Review of Area Partnerships, the Community Fund and next steps:

Last year, Scottish Borders Council asked Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) to undertake a review and consultation of Area Partnerships arrangements with a range of stakeholders – with a report being presented to Council on 27 08 20. You can see the report at:

<https://scottishborders.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MId=5138&Ver=4>, which gives full details of the findings and the next steps to be undertaken.

As part of the Council's response to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, and from the findings of the SCDC report - Area Partnerships and communities can now make recommendations to SBC by the end of January 2021 about how they would like their Area Partnership and Community Fund to operate in the future

These recommendations will then go out for further public consultation that will take place in Feb 2021 - Tweeddale Area Partnership will need to decide how they wish to make recommendations. At the end of the public consultation, a report will go to Council in March 2021.

During the pandemic, five Community Assistance Hubs (CAH's) were set up and have worked well with communities, Community Councils and Resilient Community Teams. We need to continue to build on the ways that we have been working in partnership which best suit local towns/villages. The findings from the SCDC Report, together with the benefits and experience of the Covid-19 response should be considered as part of the work the Area Partnerships.

Here is a summary of the main points of both reports:

Review Findings – Area Partnerships

- Area Partnerships have yet to realise the level of community engagement and involvement that was envisaged when they were established
- Community Councils and other community groups should be involved in shaping Area Partnerships going forward
- Improved community engagement, support to enable a wider range of people to attend the meetings, agenda setting, meeting structure and ways in which the meetings are facilitated, separate operational and governance are all required
- Each locality should agree and establish a way to consider improvements to the Area Partnerships and develop recommendations to reflect their local circumstances
- This work may include Elected Members, Community Councillors and additional members, this needs to be agreed by each Area Partnership
- The opportunity for those attending to say what they would like to be covered at the next, and future, Area Partnership meetings
- In some areas, there is not enough community capacity building support to sustain local activity

Review Findings – Community Fund:

- Most found the application process, administration of the Community Fund, criteria of the fund and support from officers to be positive.
- Improved transparency of the grant making process, including decision making, along with publicity about which grants are available is needed.
- Village Halls, Community Council and Festival Grants should remain ring-fenced for the time being

Based on these findings and other stakeholder feedback - immediate changes have been made to the Community Fund from 1 September 2020:

- Changes to maximum grant bids

- Multiple applications will now be accepted
- Exceptional projects over £30k can now be submitted
- These new arrangements will be reviewed after one year

Each Area Partnership may also:

- Allocate their Fund to different schemes, priorities and timescales
- Use their Community Fund as a match funding mechanism if required

Proposed actions and next steps for the development of Area Partnerships and the Community Fund:

- The SCDC report to be shared as widely as possible seeking thoughts/comments/ideas
- Each Area Partnership establish a way to review the findings and make recommendations at a local level for further public consultation in February 2021
- A report by the Service Director of Customer and Communities will then take a report to Council in March 2021
- It is envisaged that this model will develop and evolve differently within each locality

Some suggested questions in regards to developing these recommendations:

Tweeddale Area Partnership

- Do you want to form a sub group to make recommendations – this may include Elected Members and Community Councillors or any other stakeholders, but needs to be agreed within each Area Partnership.
- Or, do you want to have a general discussion and make recommendations at the Tweeddale Area Partnership on 19th January 2021
- Do you want the Area Partnership to be a Council committee in the future or a community meeting
- What should be the role, remit and purpose of future Area Partnerships meetings
- If the meetings were not a Council committee, what would the governance model be, what will the membership look like, and who would Chair etc.
- When would you want to meet – evenings or otherwise
- How do you want to progress the Tweeddale Locality Plan & Action Plan
- What support do you think you would need to progress the development of Area Partnerships

Tweeddale Community Fund:

- The criteria, assessment and decision making arrangements for the Community Fund – do you want to change the criteria, decision making or consider convening a funding panel to assess applications
- Festival Grants, Community Council and Village Hall grant levels – you may change or increase the funding allocation using the Community Fund in order to do this
- Are there community projects from the Tweeddale Locality Plan & Action Plan that could be funded from the Community Fund
- Do you wish to undertake participatory budgeting at a local level using third parties and a sum from the Community Fund – this could focus on a specific priority for Tweeddale
- Use the Community Fund as match funding to apply for other funding, or to supplement community projects