

Community-Led Planning in Berwickshire

Report of the BAPPMWG to BAP

Keith Dickinson (Chair of Working Group) 1st June 2023

1. Purpose

To report back on the progress of the Working Group in completing its Terms of Ref and to make recommendations on the future arrangement in supporting Berwickshire communities to develop and deliver Community-Led Plans.

The working group propose that the term Place Making should be replaced by the Community-Led Planning and this term is used throughout this report.

2. Background & Introduction

The [Terms of Reference and formation of a Working Group](#) was agreed by the Berwickshire Area Partnership at its meeting on 3rd March 2022. The Group, which was based on an early proposal from community groups in Berwickshire in October 2021, was the first of its kind in the Borders and has provided a model adopted in other localities. In summary, the purpose of the Group was to:

- Research & Develop the best approach to Community-Led Planning for Berwickshire
- Encourage input from across Berwickshire communities – rural and urban
- Make recommendations back to the BAP on the future approach to Community-Led Planning in Berwickshire

An [interim report from the Working Group](#) was presented to the 9th June 2022 Meeting of the BAP and confirmed the membership of the working group – following invitations to all communities and community groups. The report set out the progress of the Group and:

- confirmed the membership of the Working Group, to which local elected members were added
- proposed common principles and an inclusive approach enabling all communities – that wished to do so – to “opt in” to the community-led planning approach.
- set out next steps in terms of further engagement with communities, assess their support needs and identify resource to meet those needs.

3. An Inclusive Approach

The “opt-in” approach rejected the notion that the Area Partnership should prioritise communities for support in developing plans for their place. This inclusive approach – open to all communities – has since been taken-up across all other localities in the Borders.

Community representatives from the Group held a range of community meetings across Berwickshire to set out the advantages of Community-Led Planning and to gain an understanding of the support requirements. Berwickshire Association of Voluntary Services – now incorporated within Borders Community Action (BCA) – also held a series of briefings and workshops for communities and groups interested in finding out more.

All areas in Berwickshire (including the 21 Community Council areas) have now either expressed an interest in developing a community-led plan or are actively in the process of doing so.

4. Supporting Materials

In support of this approach, the Group has developed materials to assist communities in developing plans, in particular:

- diagrams setting out an over view of the approach and the use of the Place Standard and



Community-Led
Planning Diagrams.ppt

- a suggested template for a Community Led Plan.



BAP Community-Led
Plan Guidance 2.docx

5. Resourcing Community-Led Planning

As part of the engagement with communities, the Working Group asked for feedback on the type of support that communities needed in order for them to be able to lead on the development of plans for their communities. Understandably, one of the main concerns that communities have is the capacity to be able to take-on the work of engaging with all parts of their communities in developing a plan and driving it forward and, in particular they identified a need for:

- **Additional dedicated support** – to work with communities in the development of their plans
- **Funds** – to provide for associated training, expenses, materials and workshops
- **A Peer Group Support Network** – to establish and grow a group of contacts of those involved in leading the development of plans for their communities and enable, information sharing, developing knowledge skills and providing a forum for requesting and offering help and advice.

These needs formed the basis for a successful funding application in March this year – via Borders Community Action – for £83,600 to fund a dedicated officer (based in the BCA), for one year (2023/24), to support communities across the Eastern Borders and with a specific initial focus on supporting Community-Led Plans for communities in the Duns and District and Coldstream and District. The application was funded from the SBC Community Engagement budget (see 6 below). The evidence of need provided from the engagement done by the Working Group was critical to its approval. Included in the award is funding of £35,000 to enable facilitation, training, expenses, materials and workshops.

The intention is to expand the range of communities supported and the duration of the support through an additional bid for Shared Prosperity Funding which wasn't available at the time of the BCA application.

The dedicated support officer will work alongside and complement existing staff from Borders Community Action as well as officers from Scottish Borders Council and South of Scotland Enterprise (SoSE).

6. Funding

A separate paper on this agenda (the Report on the BAP Neighbourhood Support Fund 2023-24 and its Appendix 1) highlights funding opportunities currently available to support communities. However, there are perhaps 2 key strands of revenue funding which are available in the immediate term – across the Borders – to support the development of Community-Led Plans:

- **Community Engagement Fund** – SBC hold a one-off Community Engagement Fund of £110K intended to support the process of developing Community-Led Plans across the Borders and to plug the gap in funding until the Shared Prosperity Funding is in place. Of this, £83,600K has been awarded to the BCA project outlined in 5 above. This award was made on the basis that it supports communities not only in Berwickshire but also in the Cheviot locality and that it provides a model which can be scaled-up using Shared Prosperity Funding to cover communities across the Borders and over a longer period of time – subject to demand. The balance of this fund is being used informally by SBCs Community Engagement Team to support communities that wish to hold engagement events – i.e. for hall hire, facilitation, materials and catering.
- **Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF)** – The Council’s allocation of the SPF was set out in a [report to Council on 30th March](#) and includes a “Place and Communities” allocation of just over £2m over the next two financial years. The purpose of the Place and Communities funding allocation is to enable “*places to invest in and restore their community spaces and relationships and create the foundations for economic development at the neighbourhood level.*” Of this Communities and Place allocation, £300K has been earmarked to support communities in developing Community-Led Plans. However, there is some flexibility and this earmarked figure will be kept under review.

The fund has yet to be opened for applications but this is expected within the next few weeks. An announcement will be made via the local media and through communications with all Community Councils and Area Partnerships and via the Community Engagement Team.

As per the 30th March report (see para 4.3 of that report), applications will be considered by an Place Partnership Advisory Panel chaired by SBC’s Director of Community Resilience and including Borders Community Action, Borders College, Registered Social Landlords, South of Scotland Enterprise, Live Borders and Chamber of Commerce. At present – and other than through those organisations listed – there is no community or Area Partnership representation on the panel. This serious omission fails to build on the community-led activity that has been developing over recent times.

The expectation is that these funds will complement other sources of funding to both develop and deliver on Community-Led Plans.

7. Procurement Framework

SBC, working with Borders Community Action, community representatives and South of Scotland Enterprise, has put in place a [procurement framework](#) to help communities to access expert objective support to help develop their plans. The framework effectively provides a pool of organisations with the necessary expertise, experience and capability to support communities to develop their plans and associated business cases. This framework – which is unique in Scotland – provides a simple route for communities to procure support, whether it is for a small one-off piece of facilitation or a larger piece of work to support the community to develop a plan end to end. The procurement “heavy lifting” has been done at the outset, allowing communities to choose a consultant that suits their needs and chosen way of working. There are two parts to the framework: The first offers support for communities in developing their plans; and the second offers support for those communities that need technical support to develop complex business cases or investment plans.

8. Where do we go from here?

While the Working Group has largely completed the brief set out in its Terms of Ref, we are still at the beginning of a journey in supporting our communities in the development of their plans and there are a number of continuing challenges for BAP to consider, including:

- Providing continuing oversight on – and co-ordination of – the development of community-plans in Berwickshire
- Endorsing – and providing constructive feedback on local place plans on – Community-led plans with a view to:
 - ensuring that plans are robust and effective
 - making linkages with other similar projects in other communities which might enhance funding opportunities and enable better use of resource
 - identify a pipeline of priority projects for Berwickshire that can be delivered when suitable funding opportunities become available
 - incorporating themes and actions in the wider Berwickshire Locality Plan and wider Borders Community Plan
- Strengthening engagement of the [Community Planning Partnership](#) (including SBC, NHS Borders, Police Scotland, Fire & Rescue, SoSE, Housing Associations, BCA) in supporting communities in both developing and delivering their plans
- Ensuring that resources and funding are optimised in support of Berwickshire communities and working with staff from Borders Community Action, SBC and SoSE to enable this – and to ensure that access to funds and resources is open, fair and transparent to communities.
- Seeking greater involvement in the Place Partnership Advisory Panel established by SBC at its meeting on 30th March 2023.
- Identifying emerging themes across Community-led plans and ensuring that they feed into:
 - a single refreshed Locality Plan for Berwickshire which is based on a foundation of Community-Led Plans
 - the Community Plan for the Borders
 - the formation of Service Plans and Strategies of Public Service Providers
 - the [South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership's Delivery Plan](#)
- Moving toward a single comprehensive plan for Berwickshire – *the* Berwickshire Locality Plan – incorporating all relevant statutory sector plans (e.g. there shouldn't be separate NHS Berwickshire Locality Plan).
- Strengthening the role of Area Partnerships as the forum that owns the Berwickshire Locality Plan, ensuring that it reflects the needs, ambitions and priorities of Community-Led Plans and monitors its delivery.
- Linking in with the Borderlands-related development of an Eyemouth Town Plan which will may also incorporate surrounding communities.

9. Recommendations

It is recommended that BAP:

- Note the good progress made by the Working Group
- Address the challenges above by either:
 - Continuing with the Working Group – with modified Terms of Reference, or
 - Incorporate the activity of the Working into the Core agenda of the BAP
- Agree that, once in post, the BCA Place Officer (appropriately supported by SBC officers) become the focal point for reporting to the Working Group and BAP on progress with place making in Berwickshire
- Recommend that SBC, explicitly, include community stakeholder participation on the Place Partnership Advisory Panel