

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
BERWICKSHIRE AREA FORUM

MINUTE of the MEETING of the
BERWICKSHIRE AREA FORUM held in the
VOLUNTEER HALL, DUNS on 26 February
2013 at 6.30 p.m.

- Present:- Councillors M. Cook (Chairman), J. Campbell, J. Fullarton, J. Greenwell,
D. Moffat, F. Renton;
Community Councillors:- Abbey St Bathans, Bonkyl and Preston – David
Morrison, Ayton – Rob Boyd, Chirnside – Dave Arran, Cocksburnpath – Pauline
Hood, Coldingham – Norman Wood, Coldstream and District – Martin Brims,
Eyemouth – Neil McMurdo, Foulden, Mordington and Lamberton – Howard
Doherty, Gavinton, Fogo and Polwarth – Janet O’Kane, Gordon and Westruther –
Diana Findley, Grantshouse – Kym Bannerman, Greenlaw and Hume – Mrs Hazel
Paxton, Hutton and Paxton – June McGregor, Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham –
Colin Hewat, Reston and Auchencrow – Logan Inglis, Swinton and Ladykirk –
Robert Sloan; Helen Longmire (Duns Presbytery).
- Apologies:- Lynne Craighead (Burnmouth CC); Philippa Wetton (BAVS).
- In Attendance:- Head of Corporate Governance (I. Wilkie), Democratic Services Officer
(F. Walling), SB Local Area Manager (D Silcock).

Members of the Public:- 22

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions followed from the local Members, those officers present, and representatives of Community Councils.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

MINUTE

2. There had been circulated copies of the minute of 6 December 2012.

**DECISION
APPROVED the minute for signature by the Chairman.**

SB LOCAL SMALL SCHEMES

3. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure seeking approval from the Area Forum for three proposed small schemes which had been requested for consideration by the Berwickshire Members. With reference to recent email correspondence with Members the SB Local Area manager put forward two further small schemes for consideration:-

Street nameplates for Ayton	£2100
Floral display (using perennial plants) – Guards Road, Coldstream in preparation for 500 th Anniversary of Flodden	£1150

Members were advised that should these schemes be approved there would be £1800 remaining in the Small Schemes budget for the financial year 2012/13.

DECISION

APPROVED the following small schemes:-

- (a) repaint the railings at the Village Hall, Allanton; £235
- (b) purchase material for pottery tiles to install on the flower planters at the primary school, Chirnside; £582
- (c) repair metal bench at the telephone exchange, Paxton. £48
- (d) street nameplates for Ayton; and £2100
- (e) a floral display (using perennial plants) – Guards Road, Coldstream for 500th Flodden Anniversary. £1150

EXTENSION OF WAITING RESTRICTION – DUNS INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

4. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure proposing an amendment to the Scottish Borders Council (The Borders Regional Council) (Various Streets, Duns) (Regulation of Traffic) Order 1996. The report explained that Scottish Borders Council had recently been made aware of continuing difficulty in vehicles accessing and egressing some businesses due to parked cars on a section of road that was currently not restricted. The proposals sought to alleviate the problem by extending existing parking restrictions. The section of road over which the proposed extension of waiting restrictions applied was shown on a plan appended to the report as Appendix A and a draft schedule as Appendix B.

DECISION

APPROVED the extension of the Traffic Regulation Order to extend the existing loading and waiting restriction, as per the plan and draft schedule included respectively as Appendices A and B to the report.

BUDGET 2013/18

5. The Chief Financial Officer, David Robertson, was in attendance to give a presentation on the Scottish Borders Council Budget 2013/18. Handouts were circulated and Mr Robertson outlined the main headlines of the financial strategy which formed the 5 year revenue and 10 year capital plan. The Council would continue to invest in business transformation, service reviews and efficiency projects to deliver long term financial and service benefits. There would be investment in infrastructure with a £191m capital programme. The Council would maximise income while keeping fees and charges to service users at an affordable level and Council tax would be frozen at 2007/08 levels for the sixth successive year. Unallocated reserves of £5.6m for 2013/14 would be maintained in line with the assessed risk register. The presentation went on to look at the Council's funding, the highest proportion of which was Revenue Support Grant from the government. However the number of households at January 2013 had increase by over 300 giving an increase in the income from Council Tax. With regard to the Revenue Budget proposals Mr Robertson outlined the budget pressures and how it was proposed these would be funded, further details being given about the Council's transformation projects, business efficiencies and rationalisations. The presentation then moved on to look at the Capital Budget Proposals 2013/23 where the Council had approved a programme of £191m over the next 10 years. Mr Robertson summarised the proposed capital projects, details of which were included in the document circulated. With regard to anxiety surrounding the removal of the SB Warden's Service the Chairman advised that this would be mitigated by redirecting £20k back into each area to give flexibility to the Neighbourhood Services.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

A LOW CARBON ECONOMIC STRATEGY FOR THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

6. The Economic Strategy Co-ordinator, Louise Cox, was in attendance to give a presentation on the development of a Low Carbon Economic Strategy for the Scottish Borders. The reason for the presentation being brought to the Area Forum was that the draft strategy had been issued for a 12 week public consultation period which would end on 26 April 2013. Ms Cox explained that there was a need for development of a Low Carbon Economic Strategy due to the introduction of emissions reduction legislation, the economic/job opportunities presented, rising fuel prices and also the generally accepted view that the climate was changing and there would be a higher incidence of extreme weather events. The objectives of the strategy would address individuals, businesses, renewable energy projects, buildings, transport and Infrastructure, skills and education and adaptation and resilience. Ms Cox went on to give some examples of actions put forward through the strategy. It would become important to draw down maximum Scottish Government funding to support home energy advice and to pursue the establishment of the Scottish Borders Woodfuel Forum. Options should be investigated for public transport shuttles between major employers and key towns. It was proposed that there should be support for the delivery of a programme of low carbon training opportunities with Borders College. Also of huge importance would be to support the development of community resilience action plans, to cover transportation, essential supplies, medical needs etc. The draft strategy had been considered by Scottish Borders Council on 31 January 2013 before the launch of the consultation on 1 February. The consultation process would involve the Area Fora, Community Councils, Community Planning Boards and other key partners, as well as individuals. It was hoped that, following any revision brought about through consultation, the document would be presented to Council for approval in June 2013, with ongoing development of the action plan and a full review of the strategy after 3 years. Among the key questions that should be addressed in the strategy were whether the low carbon objectives were appropriate, whether the actions and timescales were feasible, what opportunities for local businesses may be presented and consequently what the implications were for education and training needs in the Borders. Ms Cox advised that the full consultation document was available to view on the Scottish Borders Council website. In the ensuing discussion Members referred to the relevance and importance of individual responses and actions in the drive towards a low carbon economy.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN RELATION TO RENEWABLE ENERGY IN BERWICKSHIRE

7. The Chairman introduced to the meeting Ian Aikman (Major Applications, Review and Enforcement Manager) and Charles Johnston (Principal Planning Officer) who were in attendance to give a presentation on Windfarm Development in Berwickshire. Mr Aikman began by giving some statistics and maps showing the current situation in Berwickshire with regard to commercial windfarms. There were a total of 324 turbines approved, generating 720.5MW electricity plus between 75 and 125 turbines off shore generating 875MW. Six sites for 119 turbines were currently subject to public inquiry/appeal with eight applications lodged for a further 85 turbines. In addition the Department were dealing with screening opinions and scoping opinions for windfarm developments as well as processing applications for smaller turbines related to the Feed In Tarriff Schemes. Mr Aikman explained where all this information could be accessed on the Scottish Borders Council website. He went on to outline the process by which determinations were made. These were required to be in accordance with the development plan (Consolidated Structure Plan 2001-2018 and Local Plan 2011) unless material considerations indicated otherwise. Material considerations included Scottish Planning Policy, Web based Planning Guidance, Supplementary Planning Guidance, views of consultees, planning history and legitimate public concern or support provided these were expressed on relevant planning matters. Non material interests included protection of private interests, personal circumstances of the applicant, moral considerations, ownership of the site, issues governed by other legislation and title issues. The key planning issues to consider were landscape character impact, visual impact, traffic of

access problems, residential amenity, associated infrastructure impact and impact on the natural or built environment.

8. Mr Johnston explained further about “small scale turbines” and the way in which applications were processed. To speed up the process the Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Wind Energy 2011 was being updated to give the document elevated status against which to assess applications. This had been prepared with the assistance of a Technical Advice Note prepared by Consultants. A draft would go to the Planning and Building Standards Committee in April before being issued for a 12 week consultation. The main component parts of the SPG and the methodology by which applications were assessed were outlined. Also of relevance was the preparation of a new Local Development Plan (LDP), this review of all our settlement plans and policies being an ongoing process on a 5 year cycle. The timetable set out provided for consultation on the proposed LDP in Autumn 2013, consultation on the proposed modifications in the summer of 2014 and adoption of the new LDP in Autumn 2014. Probably the main review challenge within the LDP was that of Policy D4 – Renewable Energy. As part of extensive work being carried out by independent consultants to provide some major background studies for the review of Policy D4 there had been questionnaires and public opinion surveys on a wide range of issues relating to wind turbines. Taking into account the information from the consultants the intention was for the Department to present a proposed LDP for consideration by full Council at the end of Summer 2013, and to follow this with a 12 week public consultation.

9. In the discussion that followed many of the points made related to Scottish Government policy on wind energy, with strength of feeling about the number of turbines in the Scottish Borders and Berwickshire in particular. Mr Aikman advised that the Scottish Government had provided additional funding to Councils in those areas, including the Scottish Borders, where there was a high concentration of applications for wind turbines so that a robust assessment of impact and response was ensured. The value of the prescriptive report on ‘Berwickshire landscape and visual guidance on wind turbines’ was recognised, which was available on the Council’s website. With regard to Policy D4 Mr Aikman emphasised that current applications could be judged only against the existing policy but that Policy D4 would change and evolve through the review of the LDP in response to other issues as these became recognised. In response to a question about how many wind farm applications refused by Scottish Borders Council went on to be approved on appeal Mr Aikman advised that of the eight major schemes turned down by the Council, that had subsequently been appealed, the Council had lost the first five and won the last three. The decisions on two further schemes were awaited. The officers were thanked for their helpful presentation and were given a round of applause.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

OPEN QUESTIONS

10. No questions were asked.

DECISION

NOTED

COMMUNITY COUNCIL SPOTLIGHT

11. There were no reports from Community Councils considered on this occasion.

DECISION

NOTED

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

12. The following agenda items were suggested for future meetings:- Welfare Reform and Self Directed Support; Housing; Fuel Poverty; Working in Partnership (SBC/NHS/Third Sector); Relocation of Duns Primary School; Public Transport Review; Police and Fire Service Reform; Waste Strategy; VisitScotland; and the Community Council Review (following the Working Group's report to Council in Autumn 2013). In further discussion the importance was stressed of having representatives at the Area Forum from the Police, NHS Borders and the Third Sector, in order to build a voice for Berwickshire.

DECISION

NOTED the suggested agenda items.

The meeting concluded at 8.45 p.m.