

## **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL** **BERWICKSHIRE AREA FORUM**

MINUTE of MEETING of the BERWICKSHIRE  
AREA FORUM held in the PRIMARY SCHOOL,  
EYEMOUTH on 7 May 2013 at 6.30 p.m.  
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- Present:- Councillors M. Cook (Chairman), J. Campbell, J. Fullarton, D. Moffat, F. Renton, Inspector B McFarlane, PC S Jacobs.  
Community Councillors:- Cocksburnpath – Pauline Hood; Coldingham – Rhona Goldie; Coldstream and District; Edrom, Allanton and Whitsome – Trixie Collin; Eyemouth Town Council – Neil McMurdo; Foulden, Mordington and Lamberton – Howard Doherty; Gavinton, Fogo and Polwarth – John Marjoribanks; Gordon and Westruther – Diana Findley; Grantshouse – Kym Bannerman; Hutton and Paxton – June McGregor; Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham – Colin Hewat; Reston and Auchencrow – Logan Inglis.
- Apologies:- Councillor J. Greenwell.
- In Attendance:- Clerk to the Council, Democratic Services Officer (P Bolson), SB Local Area Manager (D Silcock), SBC Asset Manager (D Richardson), Assistant Road User Manager (R Yates), Network Manager (B Young).

Members of the Public:- 4  
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### **CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

1. The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting and referred to the recent death of Ged Hearn, paying tribute to the service given by him to the local community and to Berwickshire.

### **MINUTE**

2. There had been circulated copies of the Minute of 26 February 2013. There was a query about the detail included in the Minute and whether all questions and answers could be recorded as part of the narrative in the Minute. It was explained that a verbatim Minute was not taken, with any narrative being included in support of the decisions, as the purpose of the Minute was to record the decisions of the meeting. Under the "Open Questions" item on the agenda, questions could be asked at the time or submitted in advance. In addition, detailed written responses could be requested should this be required.

### **DECISION**

**(a) APPROVED the Minute for signature by the Chairman; and**

**(b) AGREED to include more detail in the narrative of the Minute as appropriate.**

### **PRESENTATION – WELFARE REFORM**

3. Mr Alasdair Scott, Welfare Benefits Officer, was in attendance to give a presentation on the Welfare Reform Act and how this would impact on the Scottish Borders, with particular information relating to the Berwickshire area. Mr Scott explained that the timetable for the Welfare Reform implementation had already begun, and that from April 2011, there had been a reduction in rates of Local Housing Allowance from 50<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> percentile for Private Tenants and increased deductions for non-dependents. Other changes included the Shared Room Rate being extended from under 25s to under 35s since January 2012 and Incapacity Benefit being replaced by Employment Support Allowance. The impact of these changes meant that 1500 cases within the Scottish Borders would fall into the reduction in rate for Local Housing Allowance, resulting in over £430k per annum in

benefit reduction; 203 cases would be impacted by the increased deductions for non-dependents; 49 cases would be affected by the shared room rate extension (£61k per annum in reduced benefits); and more than 1,760 people would no longer qualify for the Employment Support Allowance than previously claimed Incapacity Benefit, these people now being required to find work. The meeting was advised of the introduction of the Scottish Welfare Fund, how this impacted on the service Scottish Borders Council provided and the associated budget pressures. Discussion took place regarding the application of the Social Sector Size Criteria (commonly referred to as the Bedroom Tax) and how this was expected to impact on the Borders, with approximately 1,100 households affected. The presentation explained that the total additional cost to these households could be in the region of £500k per annum and that this increased pressure on household budgets could potentially cause an increase in rent arrears and demand for discretionary help. It was also highlighted that a lack of appropriately sized accommodation to meet the needs of the Borders, as in all other Local Authorities in Scotland, was a cause for concern. The presentation noted that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme was being altered and highlighted the impact of these changes for Berwickshire area and for Scottish Borders Council in terms of numbers affected, financial burden and changes to the administration of the Scheme. The presentation also explained that the new system was expected in 2014/15, with current Council Tax Benefit claimants automatically transferring. The presentation highlighted further changes within Welfare Reform, including a reduction in Local Housing Allowance of between £2.41 and £5.77 per week and Discretionary Housing Payments.

4. A Benefits Cap of £500 per week for couples and £350 per week for single people would be introduced in June 2013, affecting 20 households in the Borders. Also in June, Disabled Living Allowance (DLA) would be replaced by Personal Independence Payments to people aged between 16 and 64. The presentation explained that there were 1,785 claimants of DLA in the Berwickshire area and that the reduction of 20 percent for the national budget was expected to result in further financial hardship for claimants, reduced income to Social Work Care and Health services, and a significant increase in demand for support and advice. The presentation noted that it was anticipated that Universal Credit would be introduced in the Borders in February 2014, with a Local Support Services Framework in place from October 2013. The presentation informed the Forum that a comprehensive training programme would also be in place to enable relevant staff to understand Universal Credit and any potential risk to vulnerable people. Further changes in respect of Personal Independence Payments would require an increased level of support for both claimants and carers during the claim, review and appeals processes. The presentation also noted that all Local Authority staff would be required to operate under a new Single Fraud Investigation Service to be introduced in April 2014 and that a review of the arrangements for this was currently underway. Mr Scott reiterated that anyone looking for advice or assistance should contact SBC on 0300 100 1800 and it was suggested that the presentation relating to Welfare Reform be uploaded to the Council's website and that Community Councils could create a link to this data from the Community Council's own website. Discussion centred around the anxieties benefit claimants may have regarding the changes; work moving between the Department of Work and Pensions and the local authority; the reduction in benefits and the budgets available to provide support; and the assessments for benefits.

## **DECISION**

**(a) NOTED the presentation; and**

**(b) AGREED to upload the presentation to the Council's website to enable Community Councils to create a link to access the information from their own websites.**

## **SPEED LIMIT REVIEW 2012**

5. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure on proposals to amend existing speed limit Orders in Cockburnspath, Allanton, Houndwood and Westruther and to introduce a speed limit Order to take account of a recent region-wide Speed Limit Review. The report explained that Scottish Borders Council was required to set local speed limits in

situations where local needs and considerations deemed it necessary for drivers to adopt a speed which was different from the national speed limit and noted that a Speed Limit Review had been carried out by officers within Scottish Borders Council and the Police during 2012, in accordance with Government guidance and with adherence to Statutory Consultation procedure. Following this Review, a total of twelve lengths of road were agreed to be recommended to be subject to adjusted statutory speed limit, five of which were in the Berwickshire area and currently subject to the National Speed Limit. The report noted that only Cockburnspath and Cove Community Council (CCCC) had commented during the statutory Consultation to the effect that, although welcoming of the proposal to introduce a 40mph speed limit on the specified stretch of road, CCCC queried the absence of a 30mph or 40mph speed restriction to the south of the existing limit on the C130. The report explained that this was due to there being no direct frontages on to the road and also, that for a speed limit to be effective, it needed to be credible with correctly placed signage. The report noted that further consideration could be given to the introduction of such a speed limit in the future, to coincide with the development of new properties for which planning permission had already been granted. Further discussion took place regarding specific lengths of road where residents were concerned that speed limits were not being adhered to and it was acknowledged that in some cases, this identified an enforcement issue. Community Inspector Brian McFarlane informed the Forum that, in addition to the speed camera vans, radar guns were also used by the local Police force and training on the use of this equipment had now been rolled out to all Police officers who would be carrying out speed checks. Some Community Councils were unsure how the consultation process for Speed Limit Reviews was carried out and how the views of the local communities were taken into account. The Chairman informed the Forum that the first step was for the local community/Community Council to approach their local Elected Member or appropriate officer of the Council to identify perceived problems related to existing speed limits. These areas of concern would then be investigated and would be subject to the formal two stage consultation process, following which a report would be presented to the Area Forum for consideration. It was noted that these consultations were advertised in the local press but that consideration could be given as to how this might be developed further to ensure that Community Councils are made aware of consultations well in advance of any closing dates.

#### **DECISION**

**APPROVED an amendment to The Scottish Borders Council (Various Roads) (40mph speed limit) Order 2004 and the Scottish Borders Council (The Borders Regional Council) (Restricted Roads) Order 1985 to allow:**

- (a) the introduction of a 40mph speed limit in Cockburnspath;**
- (b) extension of the existing 30mph speed limit in Allanton;**
- (c) extension of the existing 30mph speed limit in Westruther;**
- (d) the introduction of a 30mph speed limit at Houndwood; and**
- (e) the introduction of a 30mph speed limit in Foulden Newton.**

#### **MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S ROADS ASSET – BERWICKSHIRE AREA**

6. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure seeking approval for the proposed allocation of additional Capital funding for resurfacing works within the Berwickshire area. The report explained that the Council had agreed on 28 March 2013 to consult with Area Forums to determine schemes for road surfacing works within their own areas. Berwickshire was allocated £315,000 and the report (Annex A) detailed those works that had been identified as priority schemes. The report identified an increase in the Road Condition Indicator for Scottish Borders Council since 2008 and noted that this indicated a worsening of road condition, with around 40 percent of the roads network requiring investigation or maintenance treatment. The

Council's Asset Manager, Mr D Richardson, was in attendance and clarified a number of points raised by Members and Community Council representatives. Mr Richardson explained that SBC officers with specific professional expertise assessed works required using standard criteria and a report identifying a list of priorities was then presented to the Area Forum. There was a general consensus that it would be helpful to have all the detailed figures available in one report to enable Forum members to have a comprehensive overview of spending in relation to resurfacing works in the Berwickshire area. It was agreed that future reports would include detail of projects that had already been allocated funding as well as additional schemes being proposed. The Council's Asset Manager answered questions relating to specific stretches of road and explained that it was the Forum's decision to amend the Programme of Additional Capital Works – Berwickshire Area should they consider that priorities had changed.

### **DECISION**

**AGREED the following Asset Programme of Additional Capital Works for carriageway surfacing in 2013/14 for the Berwickshire Area:-**

	<b>Estimate</b>
(a) <b>A6105 Ninewells – Chirnside</b>	<b>£80,000</b>
(b) <b>DC4/5 Old Duns Road, Coldstream</b>	<b>£45,000</b>
(c) <b>DE17/6 Harbour Road, Eyemouth</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
(d) <b>C97 Eccles Road, Birgham</b>	<b>£30,000</b>
(e) <b>C109 Hoprig Road, Cockburnspath</b>	<b>£40,000</b>
(f) <b>A6089 North of Byrewalls</b>	<b>£30,000</b>
(g) <b>D26/6 School Road, Cockburnspath</b>	<b>£20,000</b>
(h) <b>D97/5 Queens Row, Greenlaw</b>	<b>£20,000</b>

### **OPEN QUESTIONS**

7. (a) Concern had been raised at the Berwickshire Safety Panel meeting regarding the termination of the SBC Wardens Service and information was requested in terms of how the gap in this service would be filled. The Chairman advised that the Warden Service had been extremely useful within the Berwickshire area. Mr Silcock explained that while elements of the warden service would continue within Neighbourhood Services, there would no longer be a specific Warden allocated to each Area from financial year 2014/15. A further £20,000 of funding for each Area Forum had been included in Neighbourhood Services budget and it would be up to each Area Forum how this was spent. It was noted that local communities sometimes found it difficult to identify who they should contact within the Council to resolve issues, and the Warden was often their first point of contact. The Council could still be contacted via the 0300 100 1800 telephone number. The Chairman reminded the Forum that local communities and Community Councils were offered the opportunity to make their views known and only six out of eleven Community Councils had done so in this case, but they could still write to the Leader to make their views known.

### **DECISION NOTED.**

- (b) Concern was raised regarding the timetable for Berwickshire Area Forum meetings, and in particular, the night chosen for meetings to take place. The Chairman acknowledged that the Forum meetings did conflict with some Community Council meetings but advised that a number of considerations were taken into account when scheduling meetings, including availability of Members and Community Council representatives, location of suitable venues and other commitments, and suggested that it would not be possible to avoid a conflict of meetings. It was agreed that the meeting schedule would be reconsidered and that other options would be investigated further.

### **DECISION**

(a) **NOTED; and**

(b) **AGREED to consider the schedule for Berwickshire Area Forum meetings to examine the possibility of moving the meetings to an evening which did not conflict with Community Council meetings.**

**COMMUNITY COUNCIL SPOTLIGHT**

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

**DECISION  
NOTED**

9. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

(a) Mr Silcock advised that there was currently £48,000 available for small schemes for the enhancement of towns and villages and asked the Forum to contact him directly with suggestions for schemes to be considered.

(b) In addition to items carried forward from previous meetings, the following agenda items were suggested for future meetings:- Neighbourhood Services, Food Poverty, Bulk Purchase and Consultation on the Director of Public Health's Annual Report. A further two short presentations have been offered by NHS Borders - Suicide Prevention and Promoting Healthy Weight. As these would be made by the same officers, it would be prudent to include them both on the same agenda.

**DECISION  
NOTED:**

(a) **the availability of £48,000 currently available for small schemes for the enhancement of towns and villages; and**

(b) **the suggested agenda items.**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

10. With reference to paragraph 10(b) above, it was noted that the date of the next meeting of the Berwickshire Area Forum would be advised in due course once further investigations had taken place into suitable dates/venues.

**DECISION  
NOTED.**

*The meeting concluded at 8.45 p.m.*