

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
TEVIOT AND LIDDESDALE AREA FORUM

MINUTE of the MEETING of the TEVIOT
AND LIDDESDALE AREA FORUM held in the
LESSER HALL, HIGH STREET, HAWICK on
16 April 2013 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:- Councillors G. Turnbull (Chairman), A. Cranston, Z. Elliot, S. Marshall,
D. Paterson.
Community Councillors C. Levell, R. Knight, I. Robson, M. Short.
Inspector C. Wood (Lothian and Borders Police).

Apologies:- Councillor R. Smith.

In Attendance:- Head of Corporate Policy, Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

Members of the Public:- 6

CHAIRMAN

1. In his welcome and introduction the Chairman advised that the business associated with Management of the Council's Road Asset would be considered at the next meeting, so item 5(b) was therefore withdrawn from the agenda.

MINUTE

2. There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 19 February 2013.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Minute for signature by the Chairman.

3. With regard to paragraph 10(a) of the Minute of 19 February 2013 the Chairman explained that he would be inviting the Executive Member for Economic Development, and officers from that section, to a future meeting of the Forum to advise Members of current activities that may be of relevance to Hawick.

DECISION

NOTED.

WELFARE REFORM – IMPACT FOR THE BORDERS

4. Head of Corporate Policy, David Cressey, was in attendance to give a presentation to raise awareness of Welfare Reform Changes and the impact on clients, the Council and its partners. Mr Cressey was accompanied by other members of his team, Bruce Hastie and Gary Murdie, who were available to answer questions both in the meeting and at a confidential help desk set up to give assistance in response to individual enquiries. In addition to the presentation a briefing note was introduced which set out the main changes, the proposed timetable for the phased introduction of the changes, and frequently asked questions. Copies of the briefing notes and leaflets were available for members of the public to collect at the meeting. The presentation summarised the changes to benefits and for each change noted the impact in terms of numbers of cases affected and consequent reduction in benefit coming into the Borders. Also referred to were changes within the Council and its services to address and respond to the reforms. From April 2013 the Scottish Welfare Fund had been set up for a temporary period of two years. The Fund would be administered by local authorities who would each receive an agreed allocation from the Scottish Government. The fund would offer grants or in-kind support in the form of Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants. Also, from April 2013, Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced by a Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Mr Cressey went on to explain that Universal Credit (UC), a major feature of the Welfare Reform Act, would begin

to be rolled-out nationally from October 2013. The aim was to simplify the benefits system by bringing together several working age benefits into a single streamlined payment to help claimants and their families become more independent. It was anticipated that UC would “go live” in the Borders in February 2014 and that a related local Support Services Framework would be in place from October 2013.

5. In conclusion, the presentation described how organisations in the Borders were working in partnership to prepare for the changes and to provide support where required. The structure of the Scottish Borders Welfare Reform Programme was outlined which was headed by the Community Planning Joint Delivery Team. Following the presentation Mr Cressey and his team proceeded to answer questions. With regard to the requirement to submit applications for UC online, Members were pleased to hear officers confirm that Scottish Borders Council planned to set up facilities in public buildings and contact centres to help with on-line applications. However no additional funding was being provided from the Department of Work and Pensions to assist with this. Particular concern was expressed about the probable local impact of the under-occupancy issues, where there would be benefit reductions in cases where households had more bedrooms than they needed. In response to a question about the risk of abuse of the payment system arising from UC being paid to one member of the family Mr Cressey advised that there was a facility to change the person to whom payment was made if circumstances justified this. He added that the question of how vulnerable families would manage the payment changes was unknown at present but that it was anticipated that the requirement for all support services would increase. The Council had set up a new contract with the Citizens Advice Bureaux who would be providing a broad-ranged service to provide general support, with complicated cases being passed on to the Council's Welfare Benefits Officers. The Chairman thanked officers for their attendance.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

INTRODUCTION OF ONE-WAY OPERATION, D14-3, HORNSHOLE BRIDGE, NEAR HAWICK

6. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure presenting a proposal to introduce The Scottish Borders Council (Hornshole) (One-Way) Traffic Regulation Order 2013. Assistant Road User Manager, Robbie Yates, was in attendance to present the report. He explained that visibility to the right was severely restricted for drivers emerging onto the A698 (Hawick to Denholm) from the westernmost arm of the D14-3 at Hornshole. It was considered that the prohibition of vehicles using this link to access the A698 would reduce the risk of accidents occurring. The proposal was to prohibit the exit of vehicles via that link as per the plan included as Appendix A to the report and draft schedule included as Appendix B. Members recognised public concern about safety at this road junction and agreed with the proposal for a traffic regulation order to address this.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the introduction of the Traffic Regulation Order, to prohibit the movement of traffic from the north-east to the south-west of the westernmost arm of the D14-3 south of Hornshole Bridge, as per the plan and draft schedule attached to the report.

SB LOCAL SMALL SCHEMES

7. There was, tabled at the meeting, a spreadsheet updating Members on the position regarding Small Schemes approved within 2012/13. This indicated that the works connected with all but one scheme had been completed and that there had been no underspend of the budget available for Small Schemes within the Teviot and Liddesdale area for the financial year 2012/13. It was noted that clarification was awaited as to whether there was additional money available for use in 2013/14. However, with reference to paragraph 9(c) of the Minute of 19 February 2013 it was agreed that any additional

money available for Small Schemes would be divided 50:50 for use in the two Hawick wards.

DECISION

AGREED that any additional money available for Small Schemes in the Teviot and Liddesdale area be divided 50:50 for use in the two Hawick wards.

OPEN QUESTIONS

8. (a) A question was asked by Mr Hope, Chairman of the 2014 group, in connection with the 500th Anniversary of the Battle of Hornshole in 2014. There were plans to erect a life-sized monument outside Drumlanrig Tower. Mr Hope asked if it would be possible for the tall advertising board there to be re-sited to enable a clear view of the monument and to avoid the advertisement taking respect away from the commemorative structure. Members agreed in principle to the request, providing a suitable alternative location could be found for the advertising board. The Chairman asked Mr Hope to put his request in writing so that this could be investigated with officers.

DECISION

NOTED

- (b) A member of the public asked if Inspector Wood could give her views on how the single police force was operating, particularly in respect of the single call centre. Inspector Wood advised that it was the number 101 non emergency number that was new, rather than the call centre itself which had been operating for some time. She was not aware of any issues connected to its operation. She added that there were the same number of police officers on front-line policing as before the re-structure of the force. There were also set dates for senior officers to be involved in policing on the street.

DECISION

NOTED

- (c) Mr Tait advised that permission had been granted for the day of the Farmers Market in Hawick to be changed from a Friday to a Saturday and that this would be happening with immediate effect.

DECISION

NOTED

COMMUNITY COUNCIL SPOTLIGHT

9. Mrs Short, from Hawick Community Council, reported that the apparent demise of the Hawick town twinning arrangement had been raised at a Community Council meeting. In consequence, a meeting had been set up to include all those interested and involved from the town in the hope that this could be revived. Mrs Short also advised that Hawick Community Council had looked at a date at the end of April to hold the Annual Spring Clean-up in the town. However there would be obvious advantages if Burnfoot Community Council and volunteers from other organisations could be involved on the same day. Members explained their intention to set up a date for the annual clean up but pointed out that, for equipment to be provided from Clean Up Scotland, more notice may be required. It was unanimously agreed that the best option would be for Community Councils and everyone to be involved on the same day. With more notice Inspector Wood indicated that she could also involve school eco-committees through the locality police officers. After further discussion it transpired that the most suitable date for the clean-up would be Sunday 19th May. The Chairman asked the representative from the press if the date could be advertised in the Hawick News.

DECISION

(a) NOTED the report

(b) AGREED that the Annual Spring Clean-up be held on Sunday 19th May with a 10 am start.

10. Mr Knight, from Burnfoot Community Council, reported that the Common Riding Concert would be held on 16 May and the Burnfoot Carnival on 13 July. He also advised that the Community Resilience Plan was being taken forward.
11. Mr Robson, from Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Water, advised that Community Resilience Plans were being taken forward also by his Community Council. However, due to the area involved there would be three separate plans to cover the three valleys. The main topic for discussion at the recent meeting was the closure of Martin's Bridge and the management of the diversions that had been put in place. It had been suggested that there had been some abuse of the diversions and that some timber lorries were coming through. The Chairman offered to raise this with the Timber Transport Group and Inspector Wood agreed to request that officers give the areas some attention. Mr Robson added that work on the bridge appeared to be moving very slowly and he was concerned that the closure would extend beyond the proposed period.

DECISION

NOTED the reports.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12. Agreed that the next meeting be held on Tuesday 21 May 2013.

The meeting concluded at 8.10 pm