

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
TEVIOT AND LIDDESDALE AREA FORUM

MINUTE of MEETING of the TEVIOT AND
LIDDESDALE AREA FORUM held in the
LESSER HALL, HAWICK on 18 June 2013 at
18:30.

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

Apologies:- Mr I Robson

In Attendance:- Neighbourhood Area Manager (A. Finnie), Democratic Services Team Leader,
Democratic Services Officer (J. Turnbull).

Members of the Public:- 2 in attendance.

AWARDS

1. In his welcome and introduction, the Chairman informed the Forum that Mr Ian Landels had been awarded the British Empire Medal for services to the community.

MINUTE

2. There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 21 May 2013.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Minute for signature by the Chairman.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION

3. Councillor S Bell, Executive Member for Economic Development, thanked the Forum for the invitation to attend the meeting and introduced Mr B McGrath, Head of Economic Development & Environment. Mr McGrath advised that the Economic Development Team were aware of the economic pressures and external pressures in the Teviot and Liddesdale area. 2.8% of the population in the Scottish Borders received Job Seekers Allowance this figure rose to 3.9% in Teviot and Liddesdale area, where 9% of those unemployed were young people, as opposed to 5.9% in the Scottish Borders region. Development activity had dropped since 2008 and was still at a low level. CAP and Welfare Reform would also affect the local economy. Mr McGrath discussed the New Economic Strategy which would be one of the tools used to attract new initiatives into the area. The Strategy had four aims:-
 - Creating the conditions for business to compete;
 - Building on assets e.g. environment, road and rail infrastructure;
 - Developing the workforce of the future;
 - Providing leadership, which was an important role not only for the Council but for Area Forums too.

4. Mr McGrath advised the Forum of the initiatives in place to encourage growth. There was the Business Gateway which provided a team of advisors to assist and give advice to businesses. In addition, the Scottish Borders Business Fund had last year provided £100,000 worth of grants to businesses. A pilot loan scheme had also been introduced. The Council were the largest owner of commercial premises in the area and continued to invest, providing new plots for business e.g. Burnfoot South Industrial Site, which had attracted expressions of interest. There would be employment opportunities with the Borders Railway and Next Generation Broadband would improve digital connectivity for businesses. Youth unemployment was being addressed by working closely with the Borders College and Heriot Watt University. The Local Textiles Business' Training Initiative was providing apprenticeships. The Council had accessed funding to run a youth employment scheme which would enable businesses to employ young people for six months to provide valuable work experience and increase their employability skills. The Council provided funding to VisitScotland to market the Scottish Borders. Stage 1 of the Cycling Tour of Britain in September would pass through Hawick and throughout the year there were events at Wilton Lodge Park and Heart of Hawick. In 2014 the Homecoming/Return to the Ridings and Hawick 500th Year events would increase visitors to the town. Mr McGrath ended the presentation by highlighting the Council's priorities for 2013/14: to continue to provide support for businesses; Next Generation Broadband; to promote business opportunities around the Borders Railway and increase youth employment.
5. Following the presentation, Councillor Bell and Mr McGrath proceeded to answer Members' questions. Members felt that rates were too high for many businesses, particularly those located on the High Street. It was explained that setting the rateable value was not the Council's responsibility. It was essentially the rental value which determined the rateable value, if this decreased then this would lower the rateable value. The Shopjackets scheme was praised and it was noted that it had improved the High Street. However, the Council was unable to commit budgets to any extension of the scheme; the Small Business Grant Scheme was, however, still available. Locating an abattoir in Hawick was discussed but would prove an economic challenge, it might be possible if local farmers came together and worked in a co-operative. However, this had been tried in Galashiels and had not been successful. It was requested that economic development recognised the requirement for a flood prevention scheme for employment land in Newcastleton. Members were concerned at the number of uninhabitable buildings in the town and enquired if there were any initiatives that could be implemented to encourage renovation. Councillor Smith advised that he would be arranging a meeting for all Hawick Members before the end of the month.
6. It was reported that the Scottish Government had launched a £10 m regeneration fund. Officers were presently putting together schemes which matched the criteria. A list of potential bids would then be taken forward for a decision by councillors. Bids had to be made by 28 June 2013. The projects had not been finalised but officers were aware that Hawick had areas of deprivation. The Chairman thanked Councillor Bell and McGrath for their attendance.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

SB LOCAL SMALL SCHEMES AND CAPITAL & REVENUE WORKS.

7. With reference to paragraph 14(b) of the Minute of 21 May 2013, there had been circulated a report by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure seeking approval for the proposed upgrading of the access road to Denholm Cemetery. Members were reminded that at the last meeting of the Forum they had requested that an external quotation for this work be obtained. They were advised that the specification and the timing of the works had been changed to enable an amended price of £2,100 to be tabled for consideration. The works would still be provided through SBC Contracts. A question was asked regarding the painting of white road lines in Eildon Road and it was noted that this would be brought back to the August meeting of the Forum for a decision. The Chairman reminded Members to submit their suggested schemes to Mr Finnie as soon as possible.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to approve the upgrading of the access road to Denholm Cemetery at a cost of £2,100; and
- (b) to request that the costs for road white lining in Eildon Road be submitted at the August meeting of the Forum.

OPEN QUESTIONS

8. Mr Tait of Future Hawick enquired about the delay in the repairs to the road bridge at Knowesouth? The Neighbourhood Area Manager would investigate and report back to the Chairman.

DECISION:

AGREED that the Neighbourhood Area Manager investigate the delay in the repairs to the Knowesouth road bridge.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL SPOTLIGHT

9. Mr Robson from upper Tevitodale & Borthwick water was not in attendance but had expressed his disappointment at the delay in the works to Martin's Bridge. The Chairman reported that there had been delays with Scottish Water sourcing the necessary equipment.
10. Mr Levell, from Hobkirk Community Council, reported there was a slight problem with the gradient of the slabs at the bench at Bonchester Bridge. He also urged Forum members to attend the proposed wind farm meeting to be held on Thursday, 20 June 2013.
11. Mrs Short from Hawick Community Council reported that Hawick and Burnfoot Community Council had set up a sub-group to feed into the Winter Services Review and to engage in the review of Byelaws Prohibiting the Consumption of Alcohol in Designated Public Places. They had also met with the representative from resilience planning and Mansfield and Weansland would be the test area for questionnaires. Mrs Short had also attended the Royal Visit event on Wednesday.

DECISION

NOTED the reports.

URGENT BUSINESS

12. Under Section 50B(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Chairman was of the opinion that the item dealt with in the following paragraph should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency, in view of the needs to make an early decision.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL REVIEW GROUP

13. The Forum were advised that Councillor Turnbull had tendered his resignation from the Community Council Review Group. The Forum could appoint another representative. Councillor Turnbull, seconded by Councillor Smith, moved that Councillor Elliott be appointed as the Forum's representative on the Community Council Review Group and this was unanimously approved.

DECISION

AGREED the Councillor Z. Elliot be appointed as the Teviot and Liddesdale Area Forum's Councillor representative on the Community Council Review Group.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14. **NOTED that the next meeting would be held on 20 August 2013 at 6.30 p.m.**

The meeting concluded at 7.55 pm