

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
TWEEDDALE AREA FORUM
SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTE of MEETING of the TWEEDDALE
AREA FORUM SUB-COMMITTEE held in the
Council Offices, Rosetta Road, Peebles on 14
February 2014 at 11.30 a.m.

Present:- Councillors W. Archibald, C. Bhatia, G. Garvie.
Community Councillors G. Hughes, A. Stewart.
Apology:- Community Councillor R. Howard.
In Attendance:- Democratic Services Officer (K. Mason).

CHAIRMAN

1. In considering the appointment of Chairman for the Tweeddale Area Forum Sub-Committee, it was unanimously agreed that Community Councillor A. Stewart be appointed.

DECISION

AGREED that Community Councillor A. Stewart be appointed Chairman of the Tweeddale Area Forum Sub-Committee.

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2. There had been circulated copies of a note of recent meeting of representatives of Tweeddale Community Councils indicating that it had been agreed that in the current format the Tweeddale Area Forum served little purpose, and offered limited benefits to attending Community Councillors. If no changes were made to the business of the Forum it was distinctly probable that some Community Councillors would stop attending. It was considered that in the context of engaging with the general public, the format had been singularly unsuccessful. Though members of the general public had attended past meetings, sometimes in considerable numbers, they had invariably left dissatisfied. Expecting discussion on particular areas, they had left little the wiser and without any substantive discussion of an issue. It was also considered that at times the Forum had been focussed on Peebles to the exclusion of other parts of Tweeddale in relation to discussions whereas the "Forum" was supposed to be just that--- a meeting place where Communities and Councillors could discuss issues, and share views. As currently structured the Forum failed on these counts. It was considered that Community Councillors and the general public needed to be made more central to the proceedings of the Forum and Council Officials less evident. Routine presentations by Council Officials should be stopped, because in almost all cases these presentations could be circulated to Community Councils by email, and could be posted to Community websites (where they existed) or Notice Boards (where they did not) (or even filmed and put on internet video sites). Central features of any reformulated Forum should be "debate", "engagement", "community Interest". If issues raised were not debated, then there was no point in having council officials present. Debate involved more than answering one or two questions of fact. The focus of meetings should become the issues which were of particular interest to the communities.
3. The Meeting Note went on to list several issues which Community Councils would like to be considered at future meetings of the Forum. It was acknowledged that some of the suggested issues would not be appropriate. Councillor Archibald read out the remit of the Area Forums as detailed in Section XXVII of the Council's Scheme of Administration. Councillor Garvie opined that there was a need for Community Councillors to extend an element of trust to Elected Members, and for an acceptance that Community Councillors could not be involved in every matter - but that a sensible balance and a mutual respect could be achieved as was already the case in community council meetings at which Elected Members attended in an *ex officio* capacity

4. In noting that, legally, Community Councillor Members of the Forum did not have voting rights it was considered that a way forward might be for Community Councillors to be asked for an indicative show of hands (to be recorded in the minutes) before the Elected Members came to a decision on a matter, although it was noted that this would only be to relevant items on the agenda.
5. Reference was made by Messrs Stewart and Hughes to some presentations which had been heard at previous Area Forums and considered that communications relating to the presentations being available on the Council's website might be a better way forward for communicating. Alternatively appropriate literature might be made available for those attending prior to the commencement of the Forum.
6. Discussion took place in relation to the venues for meetings of the Forum and it was considered that, of the four normal Forum meetings per annum, two of these be held in Peebles one elsewhere in Tweeddale East and the remaining meeting elsewhere in Tweeddale West. Also, the Court Room in the Rosetta Road premises, Peebles should normally be no longer used for Forum meetings
7. It was considered that Open Questions should be an item early on the agenda.
8. It was considered that special meetings could be held as and when required.
9. It was considered that there be a time limit for the business and meetings should be stopped after two hours.
10. During the Community Council Spotlight, rather than raising random issues, Community Councils should be invited to have slots on a rolling basis at Forum meetings to present matters of relevance within individual Community Council Areas.
11. In discussing additional Area Forum representatives, suggestions were made that (a) Dr K Forman, Parent Council Representative Member of the Council's Education Committee be invited to become a representative; and (b) that the Head Teacher of Peebles High School be contacted regarding the Forum with a suggestion that a senior pupil interested in local government be nominated by the School to be a representative on the Forum.
12. Discussion ensued over setting up pre-agenda planning meetings with the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Forum and the Chairman of this Forum Sub-Group. It was agreed that the first of these meetings would be held on Thursday 20 February 2014 at 10.00 a.m. in the Members' Room, Council Offices, Rosetta Road, Peebles.

DECISION

- (a) **AGREED that a pre-agenda planning meeting of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman of the TAF and the Chairman of the TAF Sub-Group be held on 20 February 2014 at 10.00 a.m. in the Members' Room, Council Offices, Rosetta Road, Peebles and that future pre-agenda planning meetings of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman of the TAF and the Chairman of the TAF Sub-Group be held 2/3 weeks before the agenda for the Forum was issued, to determine the relevance of presentations suggested by Council Officials and other items of business.**
- (b) **AGREED to RECOMMEND to the Tweeddale Area Forum that :-**
 - (i) **Community Councillors to be asked for a show of hands before members voted (to be recorded in the minute of the meeting), although it was noted that this would only be relevant to certain items of business;**

- (ii) in relation to presentations by Council officials and by officials from other public bodies that specific information be made available on the Council's website(or the relevant other public bodies websites) and/or appropriate literature might be made available or displayed prior to the commencement of the meeting;**
- (iii) of the four normal Forum meetings per annum, two of these be held in Peebles one elsewhere in Tweeddale East and the remaining meeting elsewhere in Tweeddale West. Also, the Court Room in the Rosetta Road premises, Peebles should normally be no longer used for Forum meetings;**
- (iv) open questions should be an item early on agendas;**
- (v) special meetings could be held as and when required;**
- (vi) there be a time limit for the business and meetings should be stop after two hours;**
- (vii) rather than raising random issues, Community Councils should be invited to have slots on a rolling basis at Forum meetings to present matters of relevance within individual Community Council Areas;**
- (viii) Dr K Forman, Parent Council Representative Member of the Council's Education Committee be invited to become a representative; and (b) that the Head Teacher of Peebles High School be contacted regarding the Forum with a suggestion that a senior pupil interested in local government be nominated by the School to be a representative on the Forum; and**
- (ix) future meetings of the Sub-Committee be held as and when required.**

The meeting concluded at 12.30 p.m.