

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTES of Meeting of the SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE held in COUNCIL
HEADQUARTERS, NEWTOWN ST
BOSWELLS on Thursday, 26th March, 2015
at 10.00 am

Present:- Councillors G Logan (Chairman), W Archibald, K Cockburn, A Cranston,
I Gillespie, A J Nicol, R Stewart and J Torrance.

Apologies:- Councillors S Mountford.

Also Present:- Councillor G. Turnbull.

In Attendance:- Service Director Neighbourhood Services, Neighbourhood Area Manager
(Eildon), Strategic Community Engagement Officer, Funding and Project
Officer, Clerk to the Council, Democratic Services Officer (P. Bolson).

1. **MINUTE**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of Meeting of 26 February 2015.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

2. **MINUTE.**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of Meeting of 26 February 2015.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

6. **FUNDING AVAILABLE TO COMMUNITY COUNCILS.**

With reference to paragraph 6(b)(iii) of the Minute of 29 January 2015, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Strategy and Policy presenting information on the funding which was accessed by, and available to, Community Councils. Miss Malster, Strategic Community Engagement Officer, presented details of the internal funding available to Community Councils from Scottish Borders Council. There were 69 community council areas in the Scottish Borders, all of which had an operational Community Council. Community Councils had access to a range of funding both from and external to Scottish Borders Council. Direct funding sources from Scottish Borders Council which were detailed in the report included annual core grant, hall hire reimbursement, Community Grant Scheme, SBC Landfill Communities Fund, Common Good Fund (where available), Local Community Path Maintenance Grant, Environmental enhancement, Small Schemes, and Quality of Life Funding. Indirect funding sources from Scottish Borders Council included Data Protection Act registration and Insurance. The funding available from Scottish Borders Council was summarised in Table 1 in Appendix 1 to the report. Also detailed in the report were external funding sources including Windfarm Grant Schemes, Awards for All, and Trusts and Foundations. Mrs Jean Robertson, the Council's Funding and Projects Officer, advised Members that for external funding applications a Community Council firstly had to have a project which required funding. Where possible, Mrs Robertson directed applicants to external funding sources first as this would be money coming in to the Borders from outside the area, and local funding was scarce. Windfarm funding could also be used as leverage for further external funding. Some Members expressed concern that some Community Councils seemed to be unaware of the various sources of funding available. Miss Malster advised that each year a letter was sent out to every Community Council about its core grant, and details of the Funding and Projects Office could be attached to this. Elected Members could also inform Community Councils of the service through a briefing paper and Miss Malster

undertook to draft a briefing paper and bring this back for consideration by Scrutiny Committee.

DECISION

NOTED the information on Community Council funding and that the Strategic Community Engagement Officer would bring a briefing paper on funding for Community Councils back to Scrutiny Committee prior to issue to Community Councils.

7. USE OF SMALL SCHEMES AND QUALITY OF LIFE FUNDING BY AREA FORA.

With reference to paragraph 6(b)(ii) of the Minute of 29 January 2015, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Neighbourhood Services on the Use of Small Scheme and Quality of Life Funding by Area Forums. The Chairman welcomed Councillor Turnbull to the meeting and advised that all the Area Fora Chairmen had been invited to attend Scrutiny Committee that day. The report explained that Small Schemes budget (Berwickshire - £48,200; Cheviot - £34,702; Eildon - £48,200; Teviot & Liddesdale - £34,702; Tweeddale - £34,702) had been available for locally identified projects since 2004. Elected Members, Community Councils and members of the public could request financial support to enable delivery of local improvement projects and initiatives from this budget. The total allocated budget across the 5 Area Fora for 2014/15 was £200,506. The Quality of Life funding (£20,000 for each Area Forum) had been available since April 2014 and was also open to Elected Members, Community Councils and members of the public to request financial support for local projects. For the two different funding schemes, some of the Area Fora had agreed, either formally or informally, to split the budgets between wards. Any projects seeking financial support were initially forwarded to the relevant Neighbourhood Area Manager, who would check whether the proposal was appropriate for funding, and if so, would price the project and bring it to Members for consideration and decision. Details of the projects funded through both schemes were given in the two appendices to the report.

4. In response to an enquiry about Small Schemes, Mr Craig Blackie, confirmed that the allocation of funding for each area had been based on road length and not population. Eildon and Berwickshire had the greatest lengths of road, hence the largest budgets. Members commented on the costs of materials and the use of local tradesmen where possible. The Service Director Neighbourhood Services confirmed that she would investigate with Procurement standards and costs of materials and whether these could be sourced/made locally. With regard to the use of Criminal Justice teams, the Area Neighbourhood Manager (Eildon) confirmed that this was always a first preference as there were no labour costs, but the availability of Criminal Justice resources within certain timeframes often could not be guaranteed. Members were further advised that where possible jobs were priced together and that towards the end of the financial year, if no specific projects were underway, the Area Neighbourhood Managers often bought in material e.g. planters, and stored these for use the following financial year, so that budget was not lost at year end. Between the two schemes, any projects which were roads or environmentally related tended to be steered towards Small Schemes Funding on an initial basis. One idea was for community groups to take on the maintenance of old flowerbeds once these had been brought up to standard with new shrubs, etc. and the schemes could be used to fund this work. The Service Director Neighbourhood Services indicated she would speak with the Registered Social Landlords about planted areas they owned to see if an agreement could be brokered.

DECISION

NOTED.

8. SCRUTINY REVIEWS AND NOTICES OF CONCERN.

With reference to paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Minute of 26 February 2015, regarding Scrutiny Reviews, the Clerk to the Council advised Members that she and the Service Director Strategy and Policy had met with the Chairman of Scrutiny the previous week to

discuss Scrutiny reviews and a framework for Notices of Concern. With regard to Scrutiny reviews, emails had now been sent out in the name of the Chairman to all Elected Members, Community Councils, and other Community Groups, requesting the submission of topics for review for Scrutiny to consider. Information had also been placed on the Council's website explaining how members of the public could also request subjects for review. Unlike before, no end date had been placed on submitting topics for review so a rolling programme of review could be brought forward. So far, the Clerk had received one topic for consideration – Religious Observance Policy – and this would be considered along with others received. Members then debated what other subjects they would like to bring forward for review in future.

6. The Clerk then asked Members to consider the value of having a “Notice of Concern” process and whether this could instead be dealt with simply by reviewing a particular area. However, Members were keen to retain some form of “marking” an Executive Committee decision for future review, even if this did not happen very often, and the Clerk undertook to look at a framework for a process.

DECISION

AGREED:

- (a) **the following areas be considered for future review by Scrutiny:**
 - (i) **Religious Observance Policy;**
 - (ii) **Faith Schools;**
 - (iii) **Enforcement of Planning Conditions and Building Regulations;**
 - (iv) **Attainment levels in schools in deprived areas;**
 - (v) **Use of Enforcement Notices on owners of dangerous buildings/structures;**
 - (vi) **Home Schooling and Non-Schooling;**
 - (vii) **Procurement Framework Agreement and the use of a Third Party to support this with contractors having to pay for this service;**
 - (viii) **Building inspection regime while property is being constructed; and**
 - (ix) **Mainstream schools and children with severe learning difficulties;**
 - (b) **that the Clerk to the Council contact the relevant Service Directors to arrange for a briefing for Scrutiny Members on each of the above subjects prior to Scrutiny deciding whether to take the subjects forward for review; and**
 - (c) **that the Clerk to the Council draft a framework for a “Notice of Concern” and bring this back to Scrutiny for further consideration.**
9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING.**

The meeting concluded at 11.15 am