

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL EILDON AREA FORUM

MINUTES of Meeting of the EILDON AREA FORUM held in the Waverley Chambers, Transport Interchange, Galashiels on Thursday, 18February, 2016 at 6.30 pm

Present:- Councillors B. White (Chairman), S. Aitchison, M. Ballantyne, G. Edgar, J. Mitchell, D. Parker, J. Torrance.
Community Council representatives:- T. Cotter (Lilliesleaf, Ashkirk & Midlem), P. Docherty (Oxton & Channelkirk), R. French (Newtown and Eildon), J. MacKenzie (Parish of Stow), J. Paton-Day (Earlston), D. Purvis (Tweedbank).
J. McLaren, Employee Director (NHS Borders), A. Girrity (Scottish Fire & Rescue Service), Inspector M. Bennett (Police Scotland).

Apologies:- Councillors V. M. Davidson, I. Gillespie, B Herd; M Crausaz (Ettrick and Yarrow), R. Kenney (Galashiels).

In Attendance:- Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

Members of public – 8 (including Community Councillors from Galashiels and Selkirk).

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman varied the order of business as shown on the agenda and the Minute reflects the order in which the items were considered at the meeting.

2. MINUTE

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of 5 November 2015.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

3. PARTNER UPDATES

3.1 Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Group Manager Andrew Girrity, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), was in attendance to present an update report which had also been circulated prior to the meeting. After giving some statistics on the Service's response and resilience activity in the Eildon area since the last Area Forum meeting, Mr Girrity went on to report on work carried out in response to the recent storms and flooding-related incidents. He explained that since December the SFRS had worked closely with partner agencies within the Scottish Borders to ensure that the correct weight of response had been available to deal with the flooding suffered by residents of the area. In addition to an Incident Support Room at the Edinburgh Operations Control being in operation, an SFRS officer was positioned in the emergency bunker at Council headquarters in Newtown St Boswells to assist co-ordinate multi agency response. In total there were 12 extra SFRS pumps and specialist teams deployed in the Scottish Borders for both Storm Desmond and Storm Frank. The report went on to refer to prevention and protection activity ongoing within the Eildon area. This was seen as a key to reducing the number of fires, casualties and losses. Mr Girrity referred to the involvement of SFRS with the Out Of Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCA) project. This would see SFRS resources being deployed along with

Ambulance crews to deal with cardiac arrests. Stations were also providing free CPR training to the public on a monthly basis to build resilience in the community and to reduce the number of people who died from cardiac arrest.

3.2 **Police Scotland**

Inspector Mike Bennett gave a summary of the Multi Member Ward Plan update for 2016 for the Galashiels and District area. The plan outlined the priorities identified by the community during the most recent consultation. The focus was to reduce crime and disorder, increase public reassurance and to keep people safe. Inspector Bennett explained the actions being taken, working with partners, to find effective long-term solutions to the greatest concerns identified by residents which were violent crime; drug dealing and misuse; inconsiderate driver behaviour; and antisocial behaviour. With regard to inconsiderate driver behaviour officers would patrol in identified locations and carry out periodic road checks to positively influence driver behaviour. Inspector Bennett commended the work being carried out by residents in Stow to improve road safety in the village. Officers continued to give attention to parking issues and, since April 2015 had issued 164 parking tickets in Galashiels and 35 in Melrose. Scottish Borders Council would welcome the arrival of the first families under the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme on 23 February 2016. No significant issues for policing had been reported in other Divisions who had already resettled families and there was no anticipated additional demand on police resources within this area. With regard to the issue of rural crime police had now secured funding and taken delivery of 200 SelectaDNA Forensic Marking Kits. The intention was to distribute these to farms at priority locations across the Borders and to monitor their effectiveness in preventing acquisitive rural crime. Looking ahead to Melrose 7s and the Common Ridings, Police were involved in the Safety Advisory Groups (SAGs) which were made up of representatives from the Local Authority, emergency services, other relevant bodies and the event organiser. SAGs provided a forum for discussing and advising on public safety at these events. Inspector Bennett answered questions in particular relating to the numbers of parking tickets issued and on the imminent dog chipping regulations. Members referred to the work being carried out by Police Scotland to reduce rural crime in the Scottish Borders and asked for more details about the forensic kits available to farmers. It was agreed that the Area Forum would benefit from hearing a presentation on action against rural crime at a future meeting.

DECISION

NOTED the updates.

4. **HOUSEHOLD SURVEY 2015**

The Chairman introduced Clare Malster, the Council's Strategic Community Engagement Officer, to give a presentation on the results of the recent Household Survey. Ms Malster explained that the biennial survey had been undertaken in 2015 in partnership with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Borders Sport and Leisure Trust, four Registered Social Landlords and Transport Scotland. Postal survey methodology was utilised with a random sample of 6,000 addresses being selected from the Scottish Borders Area. There had been 2,445 paper surveys returned and 261 responses completed on-line. This was regarded as a good level of response. Ms Malster summarised the results of the survey and compared the findings from the Eildon Area with the results from other Area Forum areas, results also being analysed by Ward where appropriate. Comparative figures from the 2013 Household Survey were included. She also referred to relevant projects within the Council's Transformation Programme which were addressing some of the issues identified in the Survey. Overall the vast majority of respondents from the Eildon area said they would rate Scottish Borders Council 'excellent' or 'good' (61.8%) although this measure had fallen slightly since the last survey carried out in 2013. With regard to waste and recycling services 77% in the Eildon area were satisfied overall with kerbside waste and recycling collection services, 76% satisfied with the service offered at Community Recycling Centres and 64% satisfied with the council communications/information on waste and recycling services. With regard to roads only 22% were satisfied with the speed of repair to local roads. The top five neighbourhood problems identified in the

Eildon area were the same as those identified in other areas namely: parking problems (45%); rubbish and litter (41%); anti-social driving (34%); unwanted callers at the door (26%); and people using or dealing drugs (25%). However 92% rated their neighbourhood as a good place to live, which was a slight increase from the figure of 89% in 2013. Copies of the full Household Survey report were available at the meeting and Ms Malster advised that the report could also be viewed on the Scottish Borders Council website.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

5. SPEED LIMIT REVIEW 2015

5.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Commercial Services regarding a proposal to amend the existing speed limits in Oxton and Melrose to take account of a recent region-wide Speed Limit Review. The report explained that in 2015 a Speed Limit Review was carried out throughout the Scottish Borders region by officers from the Council and the police. The review was carried out in accordance with Government guidance and the resulting recommendations reduced speeds on parts of the network which were currently covered by the National Speed Limit. A total of 11 lengths of road were agreed to be recommended to be subject to adjusted statutory speed limit. Two of these sites were in the Eildon area:

- (a) at Oxton – the extension of the existing 30 mph speed limit on the D5/5 from its current extent at Anvil Cottage west to Duneel; and
- (b) Melrose – the rationalisation and extension of a 30 mph speed limit on the C75 Chiefswood Road from its junction with the B6394 Abbotsford Road south to the access to Harleyburn House.

The affected lengths of road were detailed in plans appended to the report as were extracts from the relevant Draft Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). Statutory consultation on the proposals was carried out from 24 November to 21 December 2015. The only body to provide feedback was Perryman's buses expressing support of the Melrose proposal. No comments or objections were received from the public when the proposal was advertised from 14 January to 5 February 2016. Members discussed the report and were in support of the amendments.

5.2 On behalf of Etrick and Yarrow Community Council, Councillor Ballantyne passed on a concern about the way the Community Council's request, in 2014, for an extension to the speed limit at the west end of Etrickbridge village had been dealt with within the 2015 Speed Limit Review. The extension that was considered as part of the review was longer than the extension that had originally been discussed on site with the officer concerned. This longer section did not comply with the recommended criteria and consequently was not taken forward under the Speed Limit Review whereas the shorter section would have met the criteria and should have been taken forward. It was noted that the Community Council would be pursuing this matter with the Council's Network Manager. A request was made by a Member that the Network Manager also be asked to look into reasons why another proposed amendment in Earliston had not been taken forward as part of the review as had been expected.

DECISION

APPROVED the amendment to The Scottish Borders Council (The Borders Regional Council) (Restricted Roads) Order 1985 to allow:-

- (a) the extension of the existing 30 mph speed limit on the D5/5 in Oxton; and
- (b) the rationalisation and extension of the existing 30 mph speed limit on the C75 Chiefswood Road in Melrose.

6. SCHOOL ESTATES REVIEW

Councillor Aitchison explained that the Council had recently approved plans to go out for pre-consultation in March prior to a review of the school estate provision across the Borders. This information gathering exercise would be an opportunity for feedback from all stakeholders including parents, carers, pupils, staff, community councils and community groups. All the information would then be used to develop an education strategy and action plan for delivering a school estate that met the needs of everyone who used the facilities. The estate needed to provide increased educational opportunities, improved outcomes and continual improvement over the whole 3 – 18 curriculum. In response to a question from Mr Docherty (Oxton & Channelkirk,) who had been an independent representative in a previous schools review in the Scottish Borders, Councillor Aitchison gave assurance that all factors would be taken into account and there would be transparency throughout the process. He emphasised that there were no pre-conceived ideas at this stage. The results of the pre-consultation would be taken back to Council in May with a further report on the next steps being planned for August 2016 and implementation of the proposals in August 2017. Councillor Aitchison urged people to take part in local consultation which would be carried out in each of the catchment areas of the nine secondary schools. In the Eildon area there would be drop-in sessions from 3pm – 7pm on the following dates:

Galashiels Academy – 21 March
Selkirk High School – 28 March
Earlston High School – 30 March

**DECISION
NOTED.**

7. BUDGET SUMMARY

Councillor Parker gave a summary of the Council Administration's budget plans which had recently been approved. He referred to the financial challenges facing the Council which amounted to a potential funding gap of £29m over five years. He explained that in anticipation of these challenges there had been careful long term planning, mainly through the Council's Business Transformation Programme which looked at how to deliver services in a different way and how to do things better. The key areas of the budget were the protection of the library service; increased investment on roads of £0.5m per year; £400,000 additional funding towards the Hawick Flood Protection scheme; and a range of investments across services. Additional funding would also be obtained from Scottish Government through the Bellwin Scheme in relation to the excessive damage from the recent storms. In total, the revenue budget would spend £263m on council services in 2016/17 and £304m had been allocated to the ten year capital programme. Councillor Parker went on to clarify the position with regard to the estimated reduction of 130 posts required in the Council's workforce as part of the efficiencies needed. To put this in context there were currently 300 vacancies within the Council and a People Planning review would highlight areas where Early Retirement/Voluntary Severance (ER/VS) could be offered. The impact on existing staff should therefore be minimal.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

8. NEIGHBOURHOOD SMALL SCHEMES AND QUALITY OF LIFE FUND

There were tabled at the meeting spreadsheets giving updates with regard to the approved Neighbourhood Small Schemes and Quality of Life Fund projects within the Eildon Area. It was noted that any underspend or schemes not completed by 31 March 2016 would be carried forward as an ear-marked balance into 2016/17. This was due to the fact that priority needed to be given to completing schemes relating to the recent storm damage, which were being submitted under the Bellwin Scheme to the Scottish Government. These had to be completed by 30 April 2016 to be considered for Bellwin support. With regard to the Quality of Life budget Councillor Mitchell reported that the

small grant provided for the 'pop-up shop' run by Galashiels Academy had been very much appreciated.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

9. PARTNER UPDATE - NHS BORDERS

NHS Borders Employee Director John McLaren was in attendance to give a brief report and respond to any questions or issues raised. With regard to Accident and Emergency (A & E) services at the Borders General Hospital Mr McLaren reported that recent figures showed that the Department had performed above the target in terms of time taken for patients to be seen. He advised that attendance figures and performance against targets could be viewed on the NHS Borders website. He referred to the recent increase in attendance at A & E, mainly linked to the weather conditions. This was effectively managed aided by positive support from the public. Mr McLaren went on to speak about the Health and Social Care integration project which would go live in April 2016. The Eildon Project was also ongoing, which was focussing on how better to support patients at home.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

10. COMMUNITY COUNCIL SPOTLIGHT

10.1 Stow Road Safety Campaign

Community Councillor, Jack MacKenzie, gave a report on the Stow Road Safety Campaign. He explained that the Parish of Stow Community Council had been a member of the A7 Action Group for several years. A group of residents recently became concerned about road safety in the village in particular. They came to the Community Council and put forward ideas such as speed cameras, a pedestrian crossing where there was no pavement and other traffic calming measures. They had also involved parents regarding safety issues around schools. A constructive meeting and walk around had been held with Calum Kerr MP, police and the Council's Network Manager. A subsequent meeting had then taken place to look at the options and a number of actions had been progressed. Members welcomed the proactive work being carried out.

- 10.2 Community Councillor Roger French (Newtown & Eildon) raised an issue in relation to the possible extension of the Borders Railway. In view of the fact that the original line passed through Newtown St Boswells he asked if the Community Council would be involved in any future study. Councillor Parker advised that it was hoped that a workshop would be set up early in March to look at the preparation of a feasibility study to go out for consultation late spring. There would be many opportunities for local communities and the public to feed in to what would be an interactive process co-ordinated in both Scotland and England.

DECISION

NOTED.

11. OPEN QUESTIONS

There were no open questions.

DECISION

NOTED.

12. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The following items were suggested for future meetings:

- (a) Presentation from Police Scotland on rural crime prevention.
- (b) Private Water Supplies – protection and contamination issues

- (c) Mr McLaren advised that a presentation from NHS Borders on any aspect of Health and Wellbeing could be provided on request.

**DECISION
NOTED.**

13. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on Thursday 12 May 2016 at 6.30 pm at the Transport Interchange, Galashiels.

The meeting concluded at 8.00 pm