

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTES of Meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE held in Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA on Tuesday, 19 April, 2016 at 10.00 am

Present:- Councillors D. Parker (Chairman), S. Aitchison, S. Bell, C. Bhatia, J. Brown, M. J. Cook, V. M. Davidson, G. Edgar, J. G. Mitchell, D. Moffat, D. Paterson, F. Renton and R. Smith.

Also Present:- Councillors G. Garvie, I. Gillespie, A. Nicol.

In Attendance:- Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (People), Corporate Transformation and Services Director, Service Director Regulatory Services, Service Director Assets and Infrastructure, Chief Financial Officer, Clerk to the Council, Democratic Services Officer (K. Mason).

1. **MINUTE**

The Minute of meeting of the Executive Committee of 22 March 2016 had been circulated.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

2. **BELLWIN 2**

With reference to paragraph 10 of the Minute of the Executive Committee of 16 February 2016, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Depute Chief Executive – Place providing an update on the extent of damage caused by recent winter storms and the measures being taken and required to rectify this damage in a timely fashion that fitted with the Government's Bellwin Scheme. The report was a follow-up to the report taken to Executive on 16 February following the major flooding events caused by storms Desmond, Frank and other flooding in 2015/16. The report outlined the work which had been done to date in responding to the initial aftermath of storm damage and actions taken to date and also outlined the extent of remedial work still needing to be undertaken and the measures which would be required to support completion of these works within the Bellwin timeframe. A technical opinion was given on the merits of localised river gravel removal and dredging as measures to alleviate flooding risks. It was important to note that under the Bellwin Scheme the Local Authority (LA) had to meet the first portion of costs equivalent to 0.2% of the LA's total net revenue budget. In the case of Scottish Borders Council, this equated to £508k that would have to be met from reserves with the Bellwin Scheme picking up all eligible costs beyond this level. The main points of the report were highlighted by means of a powerpoint presentation by the Infrastructure Manager and the Project Manager Team Leader. They explained that the removal of gravel in localised areas could in some instances be used to manage flood risk but evidence indicated that localised gravel removal had very little impact on reducing flood levels. Enquiries had been received from a number of areas on the dredging of watercourses. The Council had computerised models for Hawick and previous experience to draw on in forming a view as to the likely effectiveness of water course dredging. While dredging appeared a straight forward solution to flooding, evidence indicated that it did not work on large rivers moving at pace, such as many of the Borders' rivers and would only help if carried out on a regular basis. During a flood event when a river was fast flowing, the water would move material downstream and deposit it in any

deeper dredged sections, filling the section back to its original level very quickly. An example was given of dredging which had reduced a river bed by 1m and this had only lasted one month before returning to the original level. Removal of gravel would not reduce the flood risk to Hawick. A presentation on flooding in Hawick was due to be made at that evening's Area Forum meeting. The Chief Financial Officer highlighted the terms of the Bellwin Scheme and of the importance of making legitimate claims only for emergency works as a result of flooding/storm damage. In discussing repairs to the wall at the Hawick Post Office depot, the Project Manager Team Leader referred to the recommendation to advance £150k of capital from the Hawick Flood Protection Project from 2018/19 into 2016/17 to deal promptly with these repairs. Members were reassured by the Chief Executive that the ownership of the depot wall and any liability on adjoining owners would be checked by Legal Services. Members were supportive of actions to be taken to find the remaining £77,535.98 for priority one schemes. The Chief Financial Officer advised that officers could look at the 2018/19 flood allocation and advance funding from there if there was no consequential impact on other projects. In response to a request by Members, Officers advised that unfortunately they did not have the same level of detail/flood modelling for other towns as they did for Hawick but could make available the information they did have for other towns at the other Area Fora.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the**
- (i) **extent and costs of works undertaken to date in response to the three major flooding weather events;**
 - (ii) **scale and extent of works that remained to be done to re-instate a wide range of damaged Borders infrastructure;**
 - (iii) **progress made to date on remedial works under the Bellwin Scheme;**
 - (iv) **recommendations made with regard to river gravel removal and dredging; and**
 - (v) **list of Short Term measures recommended for implementation in Hawick.**
- (b) **AGREED to advance £150k of capital from the Hawick Flood relief project into 2016/17 to deal with repairs to the Hawick Post Office boundary wall.**

MEMBERS

Councillors Aitchison and Paterson joined the meeting during discussion of the above item.

3. BORDERS RAILWAY BLUEPRINT

With reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of Council of 2 April 2015, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Corporate Transformation and Services Director providing an update on the delivery of the Borders Railway Blueprint and the Council's current financial contribution to key projects. The report explained that 'Borders Railway Maximising the Impact: A Blueprint for the Future' was launched in November 2014 by the First Minister. It aimed to maximise the economic benefits of the new Borders Railway connection by helping to stimulate business growth, generate employment and boost visitor numbers. The Borders Railway provided a once in a generation opportunity to support economic growth and development in the region, making the Scottish Borders a more accessible and more attractive place to do business, to visit, to live and to work. The development of the Blueprint was led by Scottish Enterprise in partnership with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, VisitScotland, Abellio ScoRail, and the City of Edinburgh, Midlothian and Scottish Borders Councils. The project was an exemplar of partnership working across the public sector in the city-region area and at a national level.

Since the launch, work had focused on developing the Action Plan to deliver the key investments and commitments made by partners in the Blueprint. The Action Plan (Annex 1) outlined project delivery across three strategic themes: Great Places for Working and Investing, Great Communities for Living and Learning, and Great Destinations to Visit. The Financial Summary (Annex 2a PRIVATE) outlined the project costs and partner budget contributions across the Programme. The Programme Manager, Borders Railway Blueprint was present, and referred to the “Hop on Hop off” Tourist Bus Service which commenced September 2015 and it was noted that Midlothian were carrying out a similar pilot. Good signage was in place at Tweedbank and if there were any gaps these would be investigated. First Bus was examining their timetables again. Members asked whether it would be possible to extend the Steam Train journeys into October but the Corporate Transformation and Services Director advised unfortunately this was not possible for commercial reasons so it was important to maximise the promotion of the experience in September to enable the economic development to continue. In response to a query, Officers undertook to check the signposting for the middle part of the cycle link from Tweedbank Train Station to Selkirk. Councillor Paterson advised that a public meeting was being held on 10 May 2016 in Newcastleton in relation to extending the railway from Tweedbank to Carlisle via Newcastleton,

DECISION

(a) **NOTED the significant progress made in developing the Borders Railway Blueprint Action Plan.**

(b) **AGREED that further reports on implementation of the Borders Railway Blueprint Action Plan would form part of the Executive Committee’s regular quarterly monitoring of the Council’s Corporate Transformation Skills.**

4. PRIVATE BUSINESS

DECISION

AGREED under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the business detailed in the Appendix to this minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 6 of part 1 of schedule 7A to the Act.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

5. MINUTE

The Committee approved the private Minute of 22 March 2016.

6. BORDERS RAILWAY BLUEPRINT

The Committee noted a report on the Borders Railway Blueprint.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am