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Eildon Area Partnership



MINUTE of Meeting of the EILDON AREA PARTNERSHIP held in Langlee Primary School, Galashiels on Thursday, 8 March 2018 at 6.30 pm

Present:- Councillors G. Edgar (Chairman), S. Aitchison, A. Anderson, K. Drum, E. Jardine, C. Penman and E. Thornton-Nicol.

Apologies:- Councillors T. Miers, D. Parker and H. Scott.

In Attendance:- Head of Economic Development & Environment, Senior Lead Officer, Education and Lifelong Learning, Service Director Assets and Infrastructure, Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

Also present:- 25 partners, Community Councillors, officers and members of the public

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Councillor Edgar, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Eildon Area Partnership and was pleased to introduce recently elected Member for Selkirkshire, Councillor Caroline Penman.

2. **FEEDBACK FROM MEETING ON 25 JANUARY 2018**

The minute of the first meeting of the Area Partnership had been circulated which included a summary of the discussion output as an appendix. The Communities and Partnership Manager referred to the general concerns, issues, challenges and opportunities raised at that meeting and confirmed that the theme identified as a priority to take forward for more in-depth discussion was Our Economy Skills and Learning. This theme would therefore be the focus for debate for the remainder of the meeting.

3. **THEME: OUR ECONOMY, SKILLS AND LEARNING**

Head of Economic Development and Environment, Bryan McGrath, provided an introduction to the theme for the evening. He drew attention to issues highlighted at recent Business Breakfasts; the main concerns related to digital connectivity, business rates, Brexit, business premises and access to people with the right skills. Opportunities for Economic Development within the Borders were recognised. Many related to tourism with mountain biking and the Tapestry being referred to in particular. Kevin McCall, Senior Lead Officer Education and Lifelong Learning, spoke about the importance of developing skills and employability in young people and the need for a partnership approach to the skills agenda. He summarised the top attributes being sought by

employers. Skilled, lifelong learners were required and he emphasised that vocational routes for young people were equally important as academic routes. The Service Director Assets and Infrastructure spoke about the recently completed outline masterplans for Galashiels and Tweedbank and drew attention to the plans displayed at the meeting. The masterplans, intended as 'vision documents' were the starting point against which the Council could begin to realise the economic potential of the Borders Railway. The Galashiels masterplan was focused on opportunities for regeneration within the town whilst the Tweedbank masterplan comprised a mixed use development of residential provision and business space in the form of the Borders Innovation Park.

- 3.2 Following the introductory talks, officers joined Elected Members, partners and members of the public at their tables for a discussion of the main issues relating to "Our Economy Skills and Learning" in the Eildon Area. A pack of information was provided at each table to aid the discussion as were post-it notes to record the emerging points. Following this first discussion period and a short break each group returned to their tables where they were asked by the Chairman to focus on the key issues raised and to discuss and identify ways of taking these forward within the Eildon area. A summary of the output of the discussions is provided as an appendix to this minute.

4. **NEXT MEETING**

Arrangements were discussed for the next meeting of the Area Partnership on Thursday 10 May 2018. It was proposed that the theme "Our Quality of Life" be the focus. The Chairman thanked those present for their attendance and advised that arrangements for the next meeting would be confirmed.

The meeting concluded at 8.35 pm

Discussion Output: Economy, Skills and Learning (8th March 2018)

Summary/Area of Discussion:

Connectivity (Digital, Transport & Travel)

Post-it Notes (incl. from 25th January meeting):

Digital

- IT Infrastructure in public buildings is poor
- Digital exclusion – IT usage needs improved to reduce social isolation
- Broadband
- Digital access increasing
- Wifi dead zones on the train journey
- Older people – digital skills gap – need an intergenerational project?
- Traditional employers fear IT skills of younger people
- Gaps in IT skills

Transport & Travel

- Rural Transport – affects transport to work, education and further afield
- Travel – Look at Moped scheme – loan/hire scheme, electric bike scheme, align to apprenticeships/transport to work scheme
- Travel – Roads safe for cycling? Cycle paths? Make use of old branch lines?
- Borders Railway – people going to Edinburgh but less visiting Borders, Textile Heritage not apparent when getting off the train. Extending route needed
- Rail and transport needs to access smaller towns where there are business premises?

“Priority” Post-its:

- Improve digital connectivity
- Explore technology to support individuals
- Transport – Reliability, acceptable, affordable, accessible. Small buses for small communities
- Sort out poor public transport timetabling – buses and trains arriving and leaving Stow at the same time, get talking to the transport providers

“Solutions/Actions” Post-its:

- Improve digital participation. Develop intergenerational work and include SBC digital participation work
- Extension of Railway. Improve connections into arterial routes – better use of branch lines, local transport hubs. Reliability of Railway
- Understanding transport needs – from employers and employees: car sharing incentives, city car club, electric charging infrastructure

Key Areas for Eildon

- **Digital participation**
- **Transport planning: rural accessibility, timetabling, understanding residents’ needs, extension of Borders Railway etc.**

Summary/Area of Discussion:

Young People

Post-it Notes (incl. from 25th January meeting):

- Pupils given access to information to help make informed career decisions
- Have talks on unusual jobs/careers in school. Database on non-typical careers
- Present good examples of role models to pupils; inspirational sessions
- Young people leave Borders after training to gain career development
- Lack of Modern Apprenticeships
- Young people need to be engaged and involved in all developments
- Young people – social space with free wifi, free food, no supervision/pubs giving over a night to young people
- Young People – vision, aspiration, ambition – Work experience with Local Fire Station – become retained fire fighters at 18
- Young People – how to support YP with no qualifications that leave school
- Young people don't engage anymore due to iphone and social media. Lack of social skills, don't make eye contact.
- Young people worried or uncertain of the future, questions raised about Brexit
- Apprenticeships – currently 460 – need to encourage. What happens at the end of the apprenticeship, where do they go?
- Landowners – opportunity to provide vocational work with large estates?
- Vocational evenings at school – holistic view of the world of work and careers, specifically in the Borders
- Increase attainment and reduce the gap
- Farming/Estate – low wages, more technical and need to make young people aware of this
- Raise aspirations, motivation to do this – business or sporting ambassadors
- Young people – what is there to keep us in the Borders post school/education? Lack of access to businesses/organisations. Employment or skills fayres needed
- Heriot Watt – What can they do to keep students in the area?
- Lack of teachers in certain subjects means young people miss out on doing what they want to do in life
- Young people leave to study and don't come back, what can we do to make them stay?
- More apprenticeships
- More opportunities for young people that don't want to go to University?

“Priority” Post-its:

- Must encourage entrepreneurship and ambition within School and College
- Develop independence and responsibility in young people

“Solutions/Actions” Post-its:

- Schools must celebrate achievement within the school eg sport, academic etc
- College needs to come into the community
- Need a shared apprenticeship scheme to support small businesses to take on MA's. Public sector is the employer and local businesses provide the skills development

Key Areas for Eildon

- **Careers advice and opportunities: inspiring/entrepreneurial people, modern apprenticeships/vocational training, support for those with no qualifications**
- **Learning opportunities across a wider range of subjects / vocations**
- **Development of social spaces**

Summary/Area of Discussion:

Future World of Work

Post-it Notes (incl. from 25th January meeting):

- Brexit – losing people leaving the country – increased job opportunities
- Horizon scanning for future employment to ensure colleges are providing the appropriate courses for young people
- Masterplans – what job/skills required to create/deliver plans. What businesses come in and what skills are they looking for?
- Local employers – bring them all together to talk about apprenticeships with local people
- Lack of trades. Training to run businesses, self employed or small businesses
- Develop hospitality and childcare sectors
- How do we value the over 50's? Upskill, encourage industries to employ
- How is the Borders household income so low when it is so close to Edinburgh with the highest?
- Increase trades by promoting in schools and promote college courses to potential students

“Priority” Post-its:

- Investment and sustainability of employment opportunities in the Borders
- Establish network to promote different career paths – make use of parents and community members

“Solutions/Actions” Post-its:

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Key Areas for Eildon

- **Impact of Brexit on local workforce**
- **Galashiels and Tweedbank Masterplans: what jobs are required to deliver Masterplans and what jobs will they bring**

Summary/Area of Discussion:

Premises/Assets (Business & Community)

Post-it Notes (incl. from 25th January meeting):

- Galashiels – nothing to do apart from the Super market and retail park
- Replicate the Melting Pot (Edinburgh) in Galashiels
- Schools become learning hubs and community spaces
- Tech start up hub, rent and rate free to give people a hand

- Lack of community facilities and intergenerational projects
- Earlston Primary School leaves a lot to be desired
- Development of Burgh Yard site
- Galashiels Academy – facilities out of date, children dislike being there. Parent sending children to other schools ie Earlston
- New community education hub
- Idea of a small business centre
- Re-invigorate old building to be used

“Priority” Post-its:

- Do we need a science park within the Borders?

“Solutions/Actions” Post-its:

- Encourage positive, fun learning environment. Must be opportunities for all ages
- Build modern, more appealing business premises
- Galashiels Tech Hub – Hook into Borders College and Heriot Watt – Practical learning opportunities linked into employment
- Start up a Tech Hub in Gala Interchange

Key Areas for Eildon

- **School Estate: condition, wider community use, promoting intergenerational projects**
- **Business/Community Hub model: tech start ups, small business centres etc.**

Summary/Area of Discussion:

Planning

Post-it Notes (incl. from 25th January meeting):

- Economy – sustainability through events and ideas through consultation
- Planning – developer contribution, not just infrastructure, used to support local apprenticeships/skills/trades
- Town centre regeneration to make the centre appealing, start-ups, attract people, hotel is needed, increase footfall in Borders towns?
- Sustain rural communities and villages – better transport, schools and facilities
- Need to decide what Galashiels is going to be
- Survival of local business needed, loss of local banks, shops and post offices
- Empty properties with absent landlords

“Priority” Post-its:

- Explore how organisations can work together to protect services eg banking at Post offices

“Solutions/Actions” Post-its:

- Regeneration of Channel Street, Galashiels

Key Areas for Eildon

- **Town and village centre regeneration: what is the future for town and village centres, how can businesses be supported or created**

Summary/Area of Discussion:

Marketing the Borders

Post-it Notes (incl. from 25th January meeting):

- Increase perception of Scottish Borders as a great place to live
- Civic pride
- Galashiels is a great gateway to the Borders
- Communication of events needs improved, no social environment in Galashiels
- Community activists tend to be from out with the Borders, need to change the “aye been” attitude, must embrace change
- Lack of Tourism facilities in Galashiels
- Selling the whole Borders as the Transport interchange and have the tourism connections to other attractions
- Good quality, affordable accommodation
- Visitor – Family packages for full days and weeks
- Value hospitality staff
- How do we sell the whole Borders package – Walking, fishing, golfing, biking, culture and events
- Mountain biking development needed as area not cycle friendly
- Utilise Rugby Heritage
- Tourism Industry is key – develop young workforce in Tourism
- Rebrand the Scottish Borders
- Promote Borders and smaller towns for businesses, no allocated space in smaller towns and villages

“Priority” Post-its:

- Develop a cycle group for cycle weeks Kelso/Glentress/Hawick/Ex railway tracks
- Outdoor activities promoted hard – walking, cycling, orienteering, fishing, golf, wildlife
- Capitalise on community spirit to develop whole Borders – Ride outs/Festivals
- Cohesive visitor offer at Galashiels Interchange

“Solutions/Actions” Post-its:

- Marketing the Borders – encourage people/families to the Borders
- Encourage businesses in – are the right skilled workforce here, what do they want?
- Tourism – Opportunities around Tapestry, business community must grasp this opportunity to make it real and genuine
- Communication – what’s on offer
- A visit the Borders App – Walking, Fishing, Golfing, Biking, History, Culture, Itinerary – Competition for senior pupils and business partners

Key Areas for Eildon

- **Invite to a future Area Partnership meeting and/or attend a future Scottish Borders Tourism Partnership/Visit Scotland event to better understand the tourism offer being presented to key audiences locally, nationally and internationally**

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