

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL SCOTTISH BORDERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL SCHEME REVIEW WORKING GROUP

MINUTES of Meeting of the SCOTTISH BORDERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL SCHEME REVIEW WORKING GROUP held in Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells on Thursday, 19 September 2019 at 6.00 pm

Present:- Councillor S. Aitchison (Chairman), Berwickshire - Councillor H. Laing, Community Councillor L. Inglis, Cheviot - Councillor E. Robson, Community Councillor M. Ladds, Community Councillor S. Turnbull (sub), Eildon - Councillor G. Edgar, Community Councillor J. Cleghorn, Teviot & Liddesdale - Councillor W. McAteer, Community Councillor J. Scott, Community Councillor P. Kerr (sub), Tweeddale - Councillor S. Haslam and Community Councillor J. Taylor.

Apologies:- Community Councillor D. Russell (Berwickshire sub)

In Attendance:- Strategic Community Engagement Officer, Chief Legal Officer and Clerk to the Council.

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Councillor Aitchison welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Community Council Scheme Review Working Group, thanking the Community Council representatives in particular for participating in the very important process to develop a Community Council Scheme that was fit for 2020 and beyond. The requirement to review the Scheme was contained in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, and those legislative requirements would need to be met. Sufficient meetings of the Working Group would take place to ensure the Scheme was reviewed in its entirety but these would be scheduled over a period of time to allow officers research time.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from Community Councillor Derek Russell.

3. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Terms of Reference for the Working Group had been drafted by the Clerk to the Council and circulated with the agenda. An extract from Section 52 of Part IV of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 which gave details of the required contents of the Scheme was also circulated at the meeting. The Terms of Reference covered objectives, method of approach, membership of the working group, quorum, scope, expectations and assumptions. Members of the Working Group considered a number of aspects including how to collect reflections on Community Councils from a variety of groups e.g. young people, older people, etc. It may also be worthwhile trying to speak to those people not involved in Community Councils to find out what they wanted. It was considered more important than ever that, due to the challenges faced by Community Councils, that they involved as wide a range of people as possible so that communities could be enhanced through their Community Council. Communicating the objectives of the Working Group out to Community Councils and the wider Borders public would be helpful in gaining responses. It was suggested that money, power and responsibility was the way to get engagement in communities. Members of the Working Group discussed the following –

- Identifying the seeds for success involved trying to get people to populate Community Councils

- Making of the Council's newspaper SBConnect which was delivered to every household in the Borders
- As pupils were being issued I-pads, there may be the opportunity to survey them through these devices and via social media e.g. Instagram, etc.
- Looking at promoting equality and inclusion in Community Councils to make them more relevant
- Consider splitting larger Community Councils into "wards" for representation
- Looking at the financing of Community Councils across Scotland to assess whether Community Councils could access more resources if they did more within their community
- Looking at greater guidance for Community Council members and also areas of best practice

AGREED:

(a) to amend the Terms of Reference as follows:

- (i) within the method of approach, include: "(d) communicating the objectives of the Working Group";**
- (ii) within the scope, include: "7. The promotion of equality and inclusion in Community Councils to make them more relevant. and 8. Funding for Community Councils."; and**

(b) to send out the Terms of Reference to all Community Councils, asking if they had any specific matters they wished to comment on or raise at this time.

4. SCOTTISH BORDERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL SCHEME 2014

Circulated with the agenda for the meeting were copies of the current Scottish Borders Community Council Scheme 2014, the Scottish Government Model Scheme for Community Councils, the Scottish Government Model Constitution, and the Scottish Government Model Standing Orders. Clare Malster advised that she had been part of the Scottish Government working group which had developed the model scheme, etc. While some aspects were great for cities, they were not so good for rural areas. Some parts of the current Scottish Borders Scheme were in line with the national model. Community Councillor Scott commented that he had found a number of areas within the current Scheme which would be helped by the model scheme e.g. objectives, consultation/validation, composition, raising the level of expectation, co-opted members, etc. Using the model Scheme as a direct comparator would be essential during the review. The Clerk to the Council suggested that members may wish to consider going through the Scheme section by section and also looking to include areas which were currently missing e.g. a complaints process. Consideration could also be given to what was included in other local authority Community Council Schemes.

AGREED to look at the Scottish Government Model Scheme as an exemplar during the review and also benchmark against other local authority schemes.

5. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members considered how often the Working Group should meet, taking account of the amount of information/research that would be required and the need to get communications out to all Community Councils.

AGREED that the next meeting of the Working Group would be held at the end of November/beginning of December 2019 and a programme of meetings developed, possibly every 2 months, depending on availability of both information and members.

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
No other items of business were raised.

The meeting concluded at 7.20 pm