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SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTE of Meeting of the SCOTTISH COUNCIL held in Via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 26th November, 2020 at 10.00 am

Present:- Councillors D. Parker (Convener), S. Aitchison, A. Anderson, H. Anderson, J. Brown, S. Bell, K. Chapman, G. Edgar, J. A. Fullarton, J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton, S. Hamilton, S. Haslam, E. Jardine, H. Laing, S. Marshall, W. McAteer, T. Miers, D. Moffat, S. Mountford, D. Paterson, C. Cochrane, C. Ramage, N. Richards, E. Robson, M. Rowley, H. Scott, S. Scott, E. Small, R. Tatler, E. Thornton-Nicol, G. Turnbull and T. Weatherston

In Attendance:- Executive Director (Corporate Improvement & Economy), Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), Chief Legal Officer, Clerk to the Council.

1. **CONVENER'S REMARKS.**

The Convener congratulated the following:-

- (a) A72 Dirtpot Corner Scheme winning a GE (Ground Engineering) Award. The scheme was designed and managed by Scottish Borders Council, alongside SBc Contracts, Albion Drilling Group, MHB Consultants and Maccaferri; and
- (b) the SBC and Supplier Development Programme winning in the Government Opportunities (GO) Excellence in Public Procurement Awards Scotland 2020. SBC were 1 of 3 finalists in 'Best Procurement Delivery' category won on Friday, 6 November 2020. SBC worked with 117 local businesses in the framework from a total of 141 companies.

DECISION

AGREED that congratulations be passed to those concerned.

2. **MINUTE**

The Minute of the Meeting held on 5 November 2020 was considered.

DECISION

AGREED that the Minute be approved and signed by the Convener.

3. **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Minutes of the following Committees had been circulated:-

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| (a) Peebles Common Good Fund | 7 October 2020 |
| (b) Local Review Body | 19 October 2020 |
| (c) Audit & Scrutiny | 22 October 2020 |
| (d) Civic Government Licensing | 23 October 2020 |
| (e) Planning & Building Standards | 2 November 2020 |

DECISION

APPROVED the Minutes listed above.

4. **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy, recommending refreshed Economic Development priorities for the Council. The report explained that identifying the Council's Economic

Development priorities was essential to the Council being able to allocate resources effectively to deliver on its priorities, and in identifying also the responsibilities of partners throughout the South of Scotland in a shared 'Team South of Scotland' approach, which optimised collective efforts. The report acknowledged both the challenging economic environment and the alignment of a number of new opportunities, which provided the Council and its partners with opportunities not only to seek to respond to those challenges, but to respond also to longstanding structural challenges in the economy of the Scottish Borders and to make good on ambitions for the region. To ensure that the Council's efforts were as effective as possible, it was appropriate to clearly identify and pursue a number of specific economic development priorities, and these priorities must now sit within a "Team South of Scotland" approach in which the Council sought to optimise outcomes by working collaboratively with partners. Five priorities were proposed and these were each supported by a rationale. Members welcomed the report and the priorities it contained which were needed at a time of major challenges and opportunities for the Borders. .

DECISION

AGREED the following Economic Development Priorities for Scottish Borders Council:-

- (a) Development and delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy for the South of Scotland through close working within the Regional Economic Partnership and partners more widely, particularly SoSE and Dumfries and Galloway Council;**
- (b) Securing and delivering The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal;**
- (c) Delivering The Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal;**
- (d) Addressing Employability, Skills, Training and Transitions;**
- (e) PLACE, including support for our communities, increasing the adaptability and resilience of our town centres, building community capacity and promoting culture and creativity through events and tourism.**

5. PROPOSED STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROTOCOL BETWEEN SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL AND SOUTH OF SCOTLAND ENTERPRISE

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy, proposing that Scottish Borders Council entered into a Strategic Partnership Protocol with South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) to assist both bodies to work collaboratively together to achieve their joint aims and for the benefit of the economy in the area. South of Scotland Enterprise formally commenced its operations on 1 April 2020. Its creation represented a major change in the economic development landscape across the South of Scotland and offered opportunities to take different and innovative approaches to the delivery of economic development across the South of Scotland. Scottish Borders Council retained economic development amongst its functions and it was considered vital that both bodies work together in a collaborative way to achieve their joint aims. In recent years, the Council had entered into partnership protocols with its strategic partners - such as Live Borders and CGI. As this had proved to be an effective tool, it was considered that it would be helpful and consistent with that approach to enter into such a protocol with the new Agency. The Convener welcomed Professor Russell Griggs, Chairman of the SoSE Board, and Karen Jackson, SoSE Director of Strategy, Partnership and Engagement, to the meeting. Professor Griggs explained the work that SoSE had been involved in with the start of the Agency being somewhat different to what had been anticipated due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. The Agency started with 10 members of staff and this had now increased to 70 with further growth over the next 3 years expected to bring this number up to between 120 and 130. The budget would also grow over this period until it reached the same per capital level as Highlands and Islands Enterprise. He advised that a permanent Chief Executive, Jane

Morrison-Ross, had just been appointed and she would take up post in February 2021. He highlighted the importance of partnership working which was vital to delivering growth for the South of Scotland and emphasised the need to ensure that the South of Scotland's voice was heard in a positive way. Councillor Bell welcomed the protocol but proposed an amendment to add a further recommendation in the following terms to ensure elected Member oversight:-

“Council asks officers to come to an agreement with South of Scotland Enterprise, and communicate back to this Council

- about how Elected Members will be kept informed and given the opportunity to discuss on at least an annual basis the progress of this partnership; and
- about all other relevant and governance aspects of an effective and continuing working relationship.”

This amendment was unanimously accepted. Councillor Rowley welcomed the news regarding the new Chief Executive of SSOE and thanked Nick Halfhide for his work as Interim Chief Executive. The Convener thanked Professor Griggs and Ms Jackson for their attendance and looked forward to welcoming them back to future meetings.

**DECISION
AGREED:-**

- (a) to enter into a Strategic Partnership Protocol with South of Scotland Enterprise in the terms detailed in the Appendix to the report; and**
- (b) that officers come to an agreement with South of Scotland Enterprise, and communicate back to this Council:-**
 - (i) about how Elected Members would be kept informed and given the opportunity to discuss on at least an annual basis the progress of this partnership; and**
 - (ii) about all other relevant and governance aspects of an effective and continuing working relationship.**

6. OPEN QUESTIONS

The questions submitted by Councillors H. Anderson and Bell were answered.

DECISION

NOTED the replies as detailed in Appendix I to this Minute.

7. 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 Appendix II to this Minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 6, 8 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

8. MINUTE

The private section of the Council Minute of 5 November 2020 was approved.

9. COMMITTEE MINUTES

The private sections of the Committee Minutes as detailed in paragraph 3 of this Minute were approved.

10. **BORDERLANDS INCLUSIVE GROWTH DEAL - BUSINESS CASE SUBMISSIONS**
Members approved a report by the Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy, detailing three business cases and two strategic business propositions to be included in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

The meeting concluded at 11.10 am

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
26 NOVEMBER 2020
OPEN QUESTIONS**

Questions from Councillor H. Anderson

1. To Executive Member for Adult Wellbeing

Can you advise us of the number of adults with learning difficulties living within Scottish Borders, the percentage tested for Covid-19, the percentage of those have tested positive and what the mortality rate is? An analysis across different types of care provision would be helpful, if possible.

Reply from Councillor Weatherston

In the Scottish Borders, during COVID, the learning disability service has had contact with 638 people with learning disabilities. The predicted population prevalence is 2.2% but the specialist service is not involved with everyone with a learning disability and there is likely to be people in our communities with a learning disability who do not have a diagnosis of learning disability (LD) and live independently. We do not collect data on this cohort of people.

- There are 3 small Care Homes for adults with learning disabilities (46 beds in total) and there is a testing available in place for those who will consent/assent to this should they become symptomatic. Testing is available for the staff teams also. Any incidences of suspected or actual COVID within this population are reported through a national portal in the care home sector. Our local data indicates that there have been 0 Covid +ve tests in these LD care homes and 0 Covid deaths.
- Adults with learning disabilities living in their own homes or within supported accommodation are only tested, along with the rest of the Scottish population, if they present with COVID symptoms. There is currently no proactive screening process in place for this client group in Scotland. Our local data from LD providers indicates that there has been 1 Covid +ve test in this population this individual has recovered. We do not collect data for this client group on Covid deaths.
- Incidences of COVID and all deaths in registered support services are reportable to the Care Inspectorate so it may be that a request could be made to them.

We ask learning disability service providers to report on a weekly basis any suspected or actual incidences of COVID within their staff or service user groups. We do not ask for this data from GPs who may be aware of other people not known to the learning disability service.

Supplementary

Councillor Anderson commented on a recent news report that the mortality rate for this group was 6 times higher than for others in the same age group and asked if there was anything more the Council could do to support them and their carers with regular testing. Councillor Weatherston advised that he would take this back to officers but he was confident that this support was already being provided.

2. To Executive Member for Sustainable Development

In November 2021 the eyes of the world will be on Scotland as we host CoP26 in Glasgow. What actions are Scottish Borders Council planning to take to mark this globally important event?

Reply from Councillor Aitchison

Councillor Anderson's question is welcome. The Council is very conscious that 'the eyes of the world will be on Scotland' during COP26.

Between 1 and 12 November 2021, the UK Government, with assistance from the Scottish Government, will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (hence COP26) at the Scottish Event Campus (SEC) in Glasgow. COP26 will be biggest summit the UK has ever hosted, and is being described as the most significant climate event since the 2015 Paris Agreement. The climate talks will bring together heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to report on progress since the Paris Agreement and to agree further coordinated action to tackle climate change.

The Council's 'Responding to the Climate Emergency Report' agreed in September identified the Council as having two fundamental responsibilities in this area:

- a) The first responsibility is to deliver a comprehensive reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and climate adaptation across the Council as an organisation.
- b) The second responsibility is to provide leadership and to influence climate action across the Scottish Borders region.

As the question implies, COP26 presents an opportunity to manifest the Council's commitment to action on Climate Change both in its organisational response and in its leadership role for the Scottish Borders.

Discussions have already taken place to explore these matters. They have involved the Leader, Executive Member for Education and me (as Executive Member for Sustainable Development). As those conversations are at an early stage, it would be premature to go into detail, but discussions relate to how the Council shows its commitment in its actions on greenhouse gas reductions and adaptation, and how it engages with the public, particularly young people, in developing its policy approach and action plan. I would hope to be able to engage members of our Sustainable Development Committee in a discussion around our engagement process as early as our next meeting on 4 December.

The broader picture and our approach action will be developed with Member engagement as we move through the Spring of 2021, and towards COP26.

Supplementary

Councillor Anderson suggested that consideration be given to talking to young people about their aspirations and suggested that every pupil be given the opportunity to plant a tree and asked that these ideas be considered by the Sustainable Development Committee. Councillor Aitchison advised that he had already talked to senior pupils at Peebles High School, was to meet senior pupils at Galashiels Academy that afternoon, and would be attending tree planting by pupils at Stow Primary School the following week. He assured Councillor Anderson that there would be an ideas session at the Sustainable Development Committee on how best to engage with young people.

Question from Councillor Bell

To Executive Member for Adult Wellbeing

During the first wave of the pandemic there was unfortunately an outbreak of Covid-19 in the Saltgreens Care Home in Eyemouth and sadly there were some deaths. This facility is run by SB Cares and since July I have repeatedly asked for Elected Members to be apprised of the outcome of internal investigations into all aspects of this outbreak.

It is important to ensure that any learning from this serious incident is taken on board by the Council and our partners.

When will a report be given to Elected Members?

Reply from Councillor Weatherston

Can I start by offering my condolences to the relatives and close family of anyone who has sadly died during the COVID 19 pandemic. But I wish to pay a particular tribute to those families whose relatives died in Saltgreens Care Home or in any other Care Home during the first wave of the pandemic earlier this year. These were challenging times for us all but they must have been

particularly challenging for anyone who could not regularly see their relatives and whose relatives died in any circumstances at this time.

The Council has applied the most robust response and recovery models available across every aspect of responding to the pandemic. We have worked collaboratively with NHS colleagues through our active participation in Incident Management Team meetings and also through our work with the Care Home Oversight Group.

At the core of this work are reviews of the action taken and in particular a focus on staff on the ground to ensure that they have the best possible guidance and support in providing care for the most vulnerable in our society. There has been a particular focus on ensuring adherence to all Scottish Government, Health Protection Scotland and NHS guidance that continues to be updated on a regular basis.

Learning lessons from the experience of our staff is a critical part of strengthening our response and providing the best care possible. I am clear that lessons have been learnt on an ongoing basis as we have developed our response to this most challenging of situations.

Officers will update members at our forthcoming briefing on 3 December in respect of not just the response at Saltgreens but also at Deanfield in Hawick and to the outbreak in Jedburgh. They will also update on the response in our schools where they have been impacted by COVID 19.

Supplementary

Councillor Bell added his condolences and asked that, while he welcomed the Members briefing, could the learning points which respected client confidentiality be made public. Councillor Weatherston advised that this would be considered after the briefing on 3 December.

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