

MINUTE of Meeting of the EILDON AREA PARTNERSHIP held remotely by Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 12 November 2020 at 6.00 pm

- Present:- Councillors G. Edgar (Chairman), S. Aitchison, A. Anderson, E. Jardine, D. Parker and H. Scott.
With 22 representatives of partner organisations, Community Councils, and members of the public.
- Apologies:- Councillor E. Thornton-Nicol
- In Attendance:- Communities and Partnerships Manager, Locality Development Co-ordinator (K. Harrow), Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

1. **WELCOME AND MEETING PROTOCOLS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Eildon Area Partnership held remotely via Microsoft teams, which included elected Members, guests attending within the meeting and those watching via the Live Stream. He outlined how the meeting would be conducted.

2. **FEEDBACK FROM MEETING ON 27 FEBRUARY 2020**

The Minute of the meeting of the Eildon Area Partnership held on 27 February 2020 had been circulated and was noted.

3. **EILDON COMMUNITY FUND 2020/21**

Assessments of four applications to the Eildon Community Fund had been circulated, plus a summary of grant funding within Eildon in 2020/21 and the source of that funding. The summary showed grant applications awarded, those under assessment and those to be considered by the Area Partnership. Also included were funding commitments to Community Councils, Village Halls and Local Festivals. Before consideration of the four pending applications, Mr Kenny Harrow outlined the process of assessment of applications to the Community Fund and the criteria used for that assessment. He advised that all applications to the Community Fund would be put forward to the Area Partnership for consideration, with officer assessment advising if the criteria had been met. He went on to give a summary of each of the following applications under consideration and confirmed that each met the Community Fund criteria.

3.1 **Walks around Stow**

This was an application from a sub-group of Stow Community Council seeking funding of £5,000 to purchase 11 self-closing gates on identified walking pathways around Stow. The proposal was an extension of the Walks around Stow initiative which aimed to identify and promote 10 pathways around Stow. The gates and installation cost £5,000 each. Mr Stuart Jeffrey spoke in support of the application and explained that Walks around Stow were actively working with local farmers and landowners to plan the 10 routes which would cross over 5 farms in total. Two routes had been mapped so far and leaflets published. Another three walks would be published by early 2021. The project was

enthusiastically supported by those in attendance. Representative of Stow Community Council referred to the importance of the Walks with Stow initiative within the wider tourism project linked to the railway station at Stow, to revitalise the area by encouraging visitors to get off the train and enjoy Stow and the surrounding area. The request for funding of £5,000 was unanimously approved.

3.2 **Café Re-Charge**

With reference to paragraph 6.2 of the Eildon Area Partnership Minute of 27 February 2020, an application for a grant of £14,404 had been received from the Community Interest Company (CIC) Café Re-Charge. The company aimed to reduce the gap between food poverty and food waste by using unsold food from supermarkets to serve in a Pay What You Can Café in Galashiels. Ms Amy Wight spoke in support of the application and explained that the café project had been due to start operating in March 2020 based at the Focus Centre in Galashiels. Due to the constraints of lockdown it was unable to open to the public, but the facilities were used to produce over 1,000 home cooked meals and food parcels for those in need over that period. During this time strong links were developed with other community groups. Due to the uncertainty around the reopening of the Focus Centre the group had negotiated a competitive lease on alternative, currently empty, premises in central Galashiels. Volunteering opportunities would be available in all aspects of the project for people across the community no matter what their age or background. The grant application was to cover the costs of a Project Manager for 12 months and seven months rent on the property. The application detailed other funding sources which included over £12,000 raised through Crowdfunding. In the discussion that followed the project was welcomed by all present and the request for funding of £14,404 was unanimously approved.

3.3 **Youth Borders**

An application for a grant of £9,198 had been received from the organisation Youth Borders to support the continuation of employment of a Membership Development Officer. The current post had funding in place until 31st March 2021. A grant from the Community Fund would continue the post throughout 2021 and to the end of January 2022. Ms Susan Hunter, in attendance to support the application, explained that Youth Borders currently had 42 members, 28 of which were in the Eildon area and included Rowlands, Beyond Earlston and TD1 Youth Hub. These members would be the primary beneficiaries of the funding. Youth Borders had found that the complexity of members' needs was increasing due to new barriers or constraints as a result of the ever changing Covid-19 picture. As these were new experiences even the most established volunteers or leaders were requiring assistance. In a discussion of the application the value and importance of the work of the organisation was recognised. There was unanimous approval of the request for funding of £9,198.

3.4 **Works +**

The organisation Works + had applied for a grant of £5,000 as a contribution towards 2021 staff salaries. Works+ was a local 'person-centred' employability organisation, employing three full time members of staff, based in the Scottish Borders. Works+ was involved in the Kickstart preparations, which would allow young people to obtain 6 months of paid work experience and then be supported for the following 6 months. Works + helped young people by confidence building; barrier removal; and by improving employability skills. Currently Works+ staff were unable to work from the Focus Centre but were working out of the Galashiels Job Centre where the connections between Job Centre staff and Works+ were growing. Mr Mark Timmins was in attendance to support the application and provide further information. He highlighted that over 170 young people had been helped to achieve a positive destination during the first 2 ½ years of operation. However he also referred to the unprecedented rise in youth unemployment currently being experienced, which was expected to peak around 100,000 in Scotland. It was vital for Works+ to continue to support young people, not just into employment, further education or training but to provide support for their mental health and wellbeing. Those present commented on the life-changing work of the organisation and gave their full

support for the application. In terms of reporting requirements following grant of funding, it was suggested that, due to the current economic situation there may be an appropriate alternative reporting measure to use rather than 'the number of young people achieving positive destinations'. Mr Harrow confirmed that this was being looked at by the Community Learning & Development Team. The application for funding of £5,000 was unanimously approved.

4. **OTHER INFORMATION AND NEWS FOR NOTING**

The following information and news, as detailed on the agenda, was noted:

- Outstanding Community Fund Applications for 2019/20 - these had been dealt with as per the report that went to Council on 27 August 2020 which also contained the evaluation of Localities Bid Fund 1&2 and Participatory Budgeting. A summary paper had been circulated with the agenda.
- The Eildon Community Fund for 2020/21 was now open - guidance and application form was on the Council's website:
https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20076/community_grants_and_funding/261/community_fund
- Community Councils - grants were being paid as normal for 2020/21
- Festival Grant Scheme – commitments re public liability and insurance were being met for 2020
- Federation of Village Halls – grants were being paid as normal for 2020/21
- VE Celebration Fund – this fund was now closed and commitments re expenses were being met
- Eildon Locality Plan & Action Plans - these plans were now published. They outlined the priorities of the Eildon area and could be the focus of a future Area Partnership meeting:
https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/download/1310/locality_plans
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – Currently, there were no formal Participation Requests or formal Asset Transfer requests being considered within Eildon. One Asset Transfer (the sale of former Ettrick Primary School building) request had been agreed since the Area Partnership last met.

5. **FIT FOR 2024: REVIEW OF AREA PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY FUND AND ACTIONS FOR EILDON AREA PARTNERSHIP**

5.1 A summary of reports to Council, on 27 August 2020, on the Reviews of Area Partnerships and the Community Fund, had been circulated with the agenda. The Communities and Partnerships Manager, Shona Smith, gave a slide presentation which highlighted the main findings of the reviews and outlined the next steps. Based on the findings of the review some immediate changes had been made to the Community Fund from 1 September 2020. As part of the Council's response to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, and from the findings of the Scottish Community Development Centre report, Area Partnerships and communities could now make recommendations to Scottish Borders Council by the end of January 2021 about how they would like their Area Partnership and Community Fund to operate in the future. These recommendations would then go out for further public consultation that would take place in February 2021. At the end of the public consultation, a report would go to Council in March 2021.

5.2 The Chairman asked for views about how Eildon Area Partnership could establish a way to review the findings and make recommendations at a local level for further public

consultation in February 2021. He referred to the suggested questions which were included in the paper circulated, as an aid to developing these recommendations. A discussion followed about the most effective and fair way of engaging with groups and communities and how to collaborate in the provision of a list of recommendations. It was accepted that a variety of ways could be used to consult with people, even through the current restrictions, including by remote meetings, email and group telephone calls. It was agreed that it would be useful if a brief communication, containing a list of the suggested questions, could be sent out to Eildon Community Councils and other partner organisations to initiate a response. It was also suggested that, as all five Area Partnerships were involved in the development of recommendations for their local area, it may be appropriate for a generic communication to encourage engagement be put out from Corporate Communications and through local media. The Chairman asked for responses within the next two weeks about how to take this forward.

6. **DATE OF NEXT EILDON AREA PARTNERSHIP - 28 JANUARY 2021**

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 28 January 2021. Suggestions for agenda items could be sent to the Locality Development Co-ordinator at kenny.harrow@scotborders.gov.uk.

7. **ANY OTHER FORMAL BUSINESS**

No items were raised.

8. **OPEN FORUM**

Heriot Community Council representative, Mrs Sue Sharp, wished to raise two matters as follows:

- 8.1 On behalf of communities in Heriot, Fountainhall and surrounding area, Mrs Sharp emphasised the need to sustain and improve the X95 bus service. This was the one and only public transport service for the local population and was the key access to Borders Railway, other public transport, medical services etc. Before the opening of the railway the X95 was a half hourly service. Frequency then dropped to hourly and was now two-hourly with no bus service on a Sunday. Mrs Sharp added that the right to public transport was highlighted within the Locality Plan. The Chairman explained that a question about this service had been raised by Councillor Harry Scott at the recent meeting of Scottish Borders Council. In the response it was explained that since the arrival of the Borders Railway, the X95 (previously operated by First Scotland East) sustained a reduction of £12k in revenue per week. In order to keep the route sustainable, changes were made based on travel patterns which were identified from data derived from the ticket machines. Since the onset of Covid-19, bus services had been under constant review and services had been reduced to cope with a reduction of patronage which was currently in the region of 40% of where it was pre Covid. Borders Buses were currently surveying their passengers in order to try and gauge what level of service that they could put back in when restrictions started to ease with a view to building services up as passengers started to return. The Council's Transport Team were in constant discussions with all operators including Borders Buses regarding the local transport network and service changes. The Team would continue engagement with communities and local bus operators including Borders Buses to ensure that all communities were served by a sustainable transport network which met the needs of the communities they served whilst remaining within the allocated budget. In further discussion Councillors recognised the importance of the X95 communication link to local communities and also emphasised the need for a Sunday bus service. It was suggested that a letter from the Area Partnership, on behalf of communities, be sent direct to Scottish Government to request an extension of subsidy post Covid. The Chairman confirmed that he would pass the views of the Area Partnership to the Transport Team.
- 8.2 In terms of the second issue raised on behalf of Heriot Community Council, Mrs Sharp referred to the Eildon Locality Plan, noting the priority given to: increase learning opportunities and skills development across a wide range of subjects and vocations and

ages; and to invest in local, sustainable employment opportunities. Mrs Sharp asked Scottish Borders Council and South of Scotland Enterprise to given consideration about how local people could benefit more from employment in the renewables sector, particularly windfarms – be that in planning, engineering, construction, maintenance etc. There was a need to create jobs in growth sectors, of which renewables was one. In the discussion that followed there was strong support for this aspiration. The Chairman confirmed that South of Scotland Enterprise was looking at the issue.

CHAIRMAN

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7.25 pm