

Public Document Pack

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTES of Meeting of the SCOTTISH COUNCIL held in Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells and via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 16th February, 2023 at 10.00 am

Present:- Councillors W. McAteer (Convener), J. Anderson, P. Brown, C. Cochrane, J. Cox, L. Douglas, M. Douglas, J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton, S. Hamilton, E. Jardine, J. Linehan, N. Mackinnon, S. Marshall, D. Moffat, S. Mountford, A. Orr, D. Parker, J. PatonDay, J. Pirone, C. Ramage, N. Richards, E. Robson, M. Rowley, S. Scott, F. Sinclair, E. Small, A. Smart, Steel, R. Tatler, V. Thomson, E. Thornton-Nicol and T. Weatherston

Apologies:- Councillor D. Begg

In Attendance:- Chief Executive, Director - Education & Lifelong Learning, Director - Resilient Communities, Director - People Performance & Change, Director - Social Work & Practice, Director - Strategic Commissioning & Partnerships, Acting Chief Financial Officer, Chief Officer Corporate Governance and Waste and Passenger Transport Manager

1. **CONVENER'S REMARKS.**

- 1.1 The Convener commented on Nicola Sturgeon standing down as First Minister and wished her well for the future.
- 1.2 The Convener congratulated Paul Hodson on making the finals of the School Cook of the Year and wished him the best of luck.
- 1.3 The Convener advised that Hilary Broach and Vicky Porteous were retiring from their Headteacher posts and wished them both a long and happy retirement.
- 1.4 The Convener thanked all those who were supporting the Doddie Weir Foundation and congratulated Scotland on winning the Doddie Weir Cup on Saturday.

DECISION

AGREED that congratulations be passed to all concerned.

2. **MINUTE**

The Minute of the Meeting held on 26 January 2023 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:-

Audit	23 November 2022
Cheviot Area Partnership	23 November 2022
Berwickshire Area Partnership	1 December 2022
Selkirk Common Good Fund	7 December 2022
Scrutiny and Petitions	8 December 2022
Audit	12 December 2022
Pension Board	13 December 2022
Galashiels Common Good Fund	14 December 2022
Chambers Institution Trust	14 December 2022
Civic Government Licensing	16 December 2022
Planning and Building Standards	9 January 2023
Scrutiny & Petitions	12 January 2023
Eildon Area Partnership	26 January 2023

DECISION

APPROVED the Minutes listed above.

4. PPP SERVICE CONCESSION FLEXIBILITIES

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Acting Chief Financial Officer considering the impact for the Council of changing the statutory accounting treatment for Service Concession Arrangements (SCAs) as set out in Finance Circular 10/2022 – finance leases and service concession arrangements. The report explained that the Scottish Government's 2022 Resource Spending Review contained details of a Service Concession Arrangement flexibility that related to the Council's PPP schools. The flexibility permitted Councils to undertake internal accounting changes that extended the period over which the principal repayment debt element of the unitary charge could be made over the life of the asset rather than the life of the contract. This change would result in a one-off credit to the Council and ongoing annual savings for a period of time. In the remaining years following the end of the SCAs, the rescheduled debt repayments continued until the debt liability had been extinguished. FC 10/2022 permitted the option for Scottish Councils to apply additional flexibility to the accounting treatment for Service Concession Arrangements (SCA) in place before 1st April 2022. The statutory guidance applied from the financial year 2022 to 2023 but permitted retrospective application as an option. If this approach was adopted, it must be applied to all service concession arrangements, leases, and similar arrangements with the exception of such arrangements where the contract would expire within five years, where it may be applied. The Council had three such arrangements in place at present, namely the original PPP scheme (3 secondary schools – Earlston HS, Berwickshire HS, Eyemouth HS), Kelso High School and the Jedburgh Intergenerational Campus. In terms of the requirements of FC 10/2022 the Council would need to show that the financial implications of the change were prudent, sustainable, and affordable over the life of the asset and explain the basis for the accounting policy change. The reason for the change needed to be disclosed, along with an explanation of the movement in both the Balance Sheet and the General Fund. Where the annuity method had been applied, narrative would explain how this method linked to the flow of benefits from the asset. Advice and support had been sourced from Link Asset Services, the Council's treasury management consultant. Members welcomed the proposal which helped to bridge the budget gap without severe cuts and helped free up funds for transformation projects. Thanks were given to the Finance team for their work on this.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) **apply, as per section 2.2 of FC 10/2022, the permitted PPP Concession flexibility in financial year 2023/24 on a retrospective basis using an annuity basis with a useful asset life of 50 years;**
- (b) **note that the flexibility being applied was consistent with current Council Loans Fund arrangements and was considered prudent, sustainable, and affordable over the life of the asset;**
- (c) **note that, by applying the flexibility, a one-off retrospective saving of £29.093m would be achieved followed by a reduction in the annual charges for a further 16 years (commencing in Financial Year 2023/24) and the continuation of the statutory charges after the SCA contracts had been repaid; and**
- (d) **allocate the £29.093m retrospective saving as follows:**
 - (i) **£9.093m contribution towards supporting the revenue budget over the first 3 years of the revenue plan from 2023/24 as detailed in 4.13; and**
 - (ii) **retain the balance of £20m in reserves to establish a £20m change fund. This fund would be deployed over the next 5 years targeted at new technology, service changes and cost reductions to ensure the Council remained financially sustainable while maintaining service standards.**

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Rowley left the meeting during the discussion on the following item of business, and subsequently informed the Clerk to the Council that he was declaring an interest in terms of Section 5 of the Councillors Code of Conduct. At the end of the item of business, the Convener advised the Members of this declaration of interest.

5. CARAVAN SITE - VICTORIA PARK, SELKIRK

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Resilient Communities seeking approval to invest in remediation and improvement work in advance of the caravan site at Victoria Park, Selkirk opening for business. The report explained that approval was being sought to allocate up to £150k from the Recovery Fund to enable remediation and development works to the site to allow it to re-open in time for the tourist season and with an aim to achieve a Visit Scotland 2-star accreditation. The caravan/camping site located at Victoria Park, Selkirk was currently operated by Live Borders, along with the Leisure Centre based at the same location. For the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in line with Scottish Government policy at the time, the site was designated as the Borders base for the gypsy travelling community. In the report to Council in June 2022 on Gypsy Traveller Site Provision, Members were advised that remediation work would be undertaken to ensure the caravan site could re-open and operate. The Victoria Park Action Group had ambitions for the future development of the site and these would form part of the place-making work which was currently being undertaken in Selkirk. Recent Community Engagement events led by the Selkirk Community and facilitated by Scottish Futures Trust had also highlighted the need to improve and upgrade the site as part of a wider set of measures to improve the riverside area and provide the infrastructure to support tourism in the town and the wider area. A summary of the key works needed to both remediate and improve the site to a Visit Scotland 2-star standard were detailed in the report which

proposed that funding of £150K was made available to enable them. Members welcomed this proposal which would help to encourage tourism in the area and provide a good foundation for further development in the future.

DECISION

AGREED to approve an allocation of up to £150K from the Recovery Fund to fund the required works to enable the Caravan site at Victoria Park, Selkirk to reopen for the new season and aim for a 2-star rating from Visit Scotland.

MEMBER

Councillor Rowley re-joined the meeting.

6. NON DOMESTIC RATES - EMPTY PROPERTY RELIEF POLICY

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Resilient Communities seeking approval for a temporary “Non Domestic Rates - Empty Property Relief Policy” to commence from 1 April 2023. The report explained that currently all Local Authorities administered Empty Property Relief on behalf of the Scottish Government. The policy was required as Empty Property Relief was being devolved by Scottish Government to Local Authorities with effect from 1 April 2023. Part 11 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gave Local Authorities the power to introduce localised schemes for the reduction and remission of Non Domestic Rates. Appendix 1 to the report contained the proposed temporary policy which had been designed to mirror the current provisions as set by the Scottish Government for Empty Property Relief and this would allow time for consultations to take place both within the Council and with external stakeholders, such as local businesses. As at 1 September 2022, 480 non domestic rates properties were receiving Empty Property Relief. It was proposed that a detailed review take place during 2023/24 and a further report brought to Council setting out recommendations for the relief from April 2024. Members welcomed the proposal and emphasised the need for extensive consultation to ensure there were no unintended consequences.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to approve the Empty Property Relief Policy, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, to come in to effect from 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2024; and**
- (b) that the Policy would be reviewed prior to 1 April 2024, with officers consulting widely over any future changes, and a report brought back to Council for further consideration prior to that date.**

7. SOCIAL WORK NON-RESIDENTIAL CHARGING

With reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of 25 November 2021, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Social Work and Practice seeking approval to pause the evaluation of impact on the introduction of a single financial assessment process, equal charge in Extra Care Housing and the introduction of equal charging in Sheltered Housing along with the 5% taper rate increase for financial year 2023/24. The report provided the background information on non-residential charging policy, specifically relating to clients in receipt of Housing Support in Extra Care and Sheltered Housing developments and all people who received a charge. Council had approved 8 actions at their meeting in November 2021 and 5 of these had been completed, details of which were contained in the appendix to the report. The Council was now asked to consider not proceeding with previous Council charging decisions and scheduled annual uplifts in light of the cost of living crisis. This was with the intention of protecting vulnerable people from

additional expenditure and related anxiety during these uncertain times. There was a reputational risk by carrying out an evaluation at this time that might not materially change the Charging Policy, but would certainly increase anxiety. Members were fully supportive of this proposal.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) pause the evaluation of impact on the introduction of a single financial assessment process, equal charge in Extra Care Housing and the introduction of equal charging in Sheltered Housing;**
- (b) pause the 5% Taper rate increase for financial year 2023/24; and**
- (c) delegate authority to the Director Social Work and Practice to keep under review and monitor planned increases in Social Work non-residential charging in future years, in the context of the ongoing cost of living crisis.**

8. DUTY OF CANDOUR ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Social Work and Practice seeking approval for the duty of Candour report for financial year 2021/22 and also for an updated Duty of Candour procedure. The report explained that the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016 introduced a Duty of Candour procedure. It applied to all organisations that provided Health Services, Care Services or Social Work Services in Scotland. Duty of Candour was a procedure that these organisations were required to follow where there had been an unintended or unexpected incident that resulted in death or harm. Each statutory body should have a procedure to manage the obligations and to publish an annual report as soon as was reasonably practicable after the end of that financial year. Sadly an adult in the care of the Council had passed away and in light of this and the application of the Duty of Candour procedure, procedures had been reviewed and changes made where applicable to ensure lessons were learned from this.

DECISION

AGREED to approve:-

- (a) the updated Duty of Candour procedure, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report; and**
- (b) the Duty of Candour report 2021/22, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.**

9. KING'S CORONATION HOLIDAY AND FUND FOR COMMUNITIES

9.1 There had been circulated copies of a joint report by the Director of People, Performance and Change and Director Resilient Communities asking Council to consider the best approach to allow employees and communities to celebrate the King's Coronation in May 2023. The report explained that His Majesty King Charles III would celebrate His Coronation in May 2023. The First Minister had confirmed, along with the other nations of the United Kingdom, the introduction of a Bank

Holiday on Monday 8 May 2023 to mark the celebration of His Majesty's Coronation. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) had not issued specific guidance to Local Authorities, leaving the decision at the discretion of each Council. The Coronation would take place on Saturday 6 May 2023. Four options were considered in coming to a conclusion on how best to mark the occasion. It was proposed that Option 2 was taken forward, and a holiday granted for Monday 8 May as an additional one-off annual leave day for staff and the public offices of the Council be closed. It was further proposed that a sum of £50k be allocated to create a King's Coronation Fund, which would be made available to each of the 69 Community Councils to host celebratory community events to mark the King's Coronation Weekend from 6 to 8 May 2023. Members discussed the proposals and unanimously agreed to support the proposed holiday for staff. However, there were strong views both for and against the provision of a Fund. After a lengthy discussion, Members were still divided on the Fund, and a Motion and Amendments as detailed below were considered. Members unanimously approved the granting of a holiday on Monday 8 May.

9.2 Councillor S. Hamilton, seconded by Councillor Pirone, moved that the recommendations in the report relating to the funding be amended as follows:-

- (b) to approve funding from the COVID19 Recovery Fund to help promote inclusion, wellness and tackle social isolation post pandemic by affording communities the opportunity to host celebratory events to mark the King's Coronation weekend. Funding will be distributed up to 30 April 2023 and will be limited to £500 per Community Council or where a Community Council is not in existence then the funding will be available to appropriate community organisations within the Community Councils boundary; and
- (c) that the Council will also provide practical help and advice for communities who wish to organise their own events. This support will include waste collection, road closures and other such advice & support."

9.3 Councillor Tatler, seconded by Councillor Anderson, moved as an amendment that "Recommendation 2.1(b) is removed and no action is taken regarding the King's Coronation Fund."

9.4 Councillor Sinclair, seconded by Councillor Thornton-Nicol, moved as a further amendment that "Recommendation 2.1(b) be removed and replaced with:

- (b) Notes that National Lottery Awards for All funding is available to support events and activities to celebrate and commemorate the King's Coronation on or around the weekend of 6 – 8 May; and
- (c) Agrees to distribute the £50k identified in this report to Foodbanks and Community Larders across the Scottish Borders."

9.5 Councillor Scott, seconded by Councillor Tatler moved that the votes be taken by roll call and this was unanimously approved.

9.6 The Clerk to the Council explained that a vote would firstly be taken in respect of Councillor Hamilton's Motion and the direct negative amendment proposed by Councillor Tatler. The winner of that vote would then be taken against the amendment proposed by Councillor Sinclair.

9.7 First Roll Call Vote

Motion by Councillor S. Hamilton
Councillor Cochrane
Councillor Cox

Amendment by Councillor Tatler
Councillor Anderson
Councillor Brown

Councillor L. Douglas
Councillor Greenwell
Councillor C. Hamilton
Councillor S. Hamilton
Councillor Jardine
Councillor Linehan
Councillor Marshall
Councillor McAteer
Councillor Mountford
Councillor Pirone
Councillor Richards
Councillor Robson
Councillor Rowley
Councillor Scott
Councillor Small
Councillor Weatherston

Councillor M. Douglas
Councillor Mackinnon
Councillor Moffat
Councillor Orr
Councillor Parker
Councillor PatonDay
Councillor Ramage
Councillor Sinclair
Councillor Smart
Councillor Steel
Councillor Tatler
Councillor Thomson
Councillor Thornton-Nicol

18 Members voted for the Motion and 15 Members voted for the amendment. The Motion was accordingly carried.

9.8 Second Roll Call Vote

Motion by Councillor S. Hamilton

Councillor Cochrane
Councillor Cox
Councillor L. Douglas
Councillor Greenwell
Councillor S. Hamilton
Councillor Jardine
Councillor Linehan
Councillor Marshall
Councillor McAteer
Councillor Mountford
Councillor Pirone
Councillor Richards
Councillor Robson
Councillor Rowley
Councillor Scott
Councillor Small
Councillor Weatherston

Amendment by Councillor Sinclair

Councillor Anderson
Councillor Brown
Councillor M. Douglas
Councillor Mackinnon
Councillor Moffat
Councillor Orr
Councillor Parker
Councillor PatonDay
Councillor Ramage
Councillor Sinclair
Councillor Smart
Councillor Steel
Councillor Tatler
Councillor Thomson
Councillor Thornton-Nicol

Note – Councillor C. Hamilton was absent from the meeting during the above vote so did not take part.

17 Members voted for the Motion and 15 Members voted for the amendment. The Motion was accordingly carried.

DECISION

- (a) **AGREEED** to grant the holiday as an additional one off annual leave day on Monday 8 May 2023 and the public offices of the Council were closed on that day. If staff were required to work on this holiday, no enhancements to pay would be given and only time in lieu would be granted.
- (b) **DECIDED:**
- (i) to approve funding from the COVID19 Recovery Fund to help promote inclusion, wellness and tackle social isolation post pandemic by affording communities the opportunity to host

celebratory events to mark the King's Coronation weekend. Funding would be distributed up to 30 April 2023 and would be limited to £500 per Community Council or where a Community Council was not in existence then the funding would be available to appropriate community organisations within the Community Council's boundary; and

- (ii) that the Council would also provide practical help and advice for communities who wished to organise their own events. This support would include waste collection, road closures and other such advice and support.**

10. AWARD OF SUBSIDISED LOCAL BUS SERVICE CONTRACT 101/102

10.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Infrastructure and Environment proposing that the Council endorse the award of the subsidised local bus service contract 101/102 (Dumfries – Biggar - Edinburgh) to Houston's of Lockerbie in order to preserve the service for the communities of West Linton and Tweeddale. The 101/102 service was jointly funded by SPT, SWESTRANS and Scottish Borders Council. Midlothian Council contributed towards departure charges at Edinburgh Bus Station. The route provided a direct link between Dumfries and Galloway and Edinburgh, including vital transport links for communities in Tweeddale West for work, education and leisure. The service was currently operated by Stagecoach Western who delivered the supported service until August 2022 at an annualised cost of £272,000, which was split as follows:-

- SPT (Strathclyde Passenger Transport) £132,140
- SWESTRANS (Dumfries and Galloway) £105,277
- SBC (Scottish Borders Council) £ 35,000

10.2 SWESTRANS carried out a tendering exercise in February/March 2022 for the renewal of the contract which returned a price of £507,940, representing an 86% increase in costs. The increase was deemed unaffordable by partners and the tendering process was closed on the basis that no sustainable solution could be found. A temporary 101/102 service contract, arranged by SWESTRANS, was agreed and put in place until 31 March 2023 to enable partners to identify a more sustainable solution. SPT carried out a further tendering exercise however detailed analysis of the bids concluded that none of these offerings were financially acceptable to the funding partners and therefore could not be recommended for award. Subsequent direct negotiations with local transport operators took place and Houston's of Lockerbie submitted a bid of £385,000 per annum for 3 years with the option to extend for another 2 years. All partners have agreed to support the award of the new contract. Members supported the proposal.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) endorse the award of the 101/102 service contract to Houston's Coaches at a cost of £385,000 per annum for 3 years (with an optional 2 year extension), effective from 1 April 2023; and**
- (b) increase Scottish Border Council's funding contribution from £35,000 to £128,333.33 per annum and reflect this cost in the annual transport revenue budget from March 2023.**

11. **DEMAND RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Infrastructure and Environment on the progress of the PINGO Berwickshire Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) Trial and proposing an extension of the pilot to 31 March 2024 at a cost of £304,000.00, the funding of which would be subject to consideration as part of the Council's 2023/24 financial planning process. The report explained that in February 2022, Scottish Borders Council allocated £320,000 of funding for a DRT pilot in the Scottish Borders. Berwickshire was identified as the area which would benefit most from the introduction of a DRT pilot and the PINGO DRT service launched in Berwickshire on 2 May 2022 and was delivered by Borders Buses. Scottish Borders Council Officers, with support from the workforce mobility project, continued to work closely with Borders Buses and the routing company to develop the service. It was clear from the data analysis of trips to date that PINGO had enabled many of the key target groups to access transport. The service remained popular amongst all users, particularly under 22s who accounted for 40% of all trips. The PINGO service was widely recognised by other local authorities as being a leading example of how DRT could perform particularly in a rural area. A consultant's report was being prepared for Scottish Borders Council which would detail the economic benefits that had arisen in the Berwickshire area out of the PINGO trial. In order to fully realise the potential that DRT could have in rural areas it was recommended that the Berwickshire PINGO Pilot be extended for a further 12 months. Members were very supportive of the pilot and looked forward to the outcome in the hope that this type of service could be provided in other areas of the Borders. Mr Sharp-Dent advised Members that a public transport network review was being undertaken and the future use of demand responsive transport was being looked at as part of this, along with bus/train connections.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) **note the progress of the PINGO Berwickshire pilot to date; and**
- (b) **extend the pilot for a further 12 months at a cost of £304,000.00, the funding of which would be subject to consideration as part of the Council's 2023/24 financial planning process.**

12. **OPEN QUESTIONS**

The questions submitted by Councillors Thornton-Nicol, Anderson and Smart were answered.

DECISION

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

13. **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.

14. **MINUTE**

The private section of the Council Minute of 26 January 2023 was approved.

15. **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

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

16. **LEVELLING-UP FUNDING OUTCOME**

Members received a presentation on the outcome of the application for Levelling-Up Funding and the next steps in relation to future bids.

The meeting concluded at 1.05 pm

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
16 FEBRUARY 2023
APPENDIX I**

OPEN QUESTIONS

Question from Councillor Thornton-Nicol

To Executive Member for Service Delivery and Transformation

On 16 November 2021, the Executive Committee agreed a recommendation from the Director Resilient Communities to establish a £70,000 Queen's Platinum Jubilee Fund. Can I ask what the final monies awarded were, who approved any spend above the agreed amount, and from where the additional sums, if any, were taken?

Reply from Councillor Rowley

As agreed by the Executive Committee the Fund opened on 5th January 2022 with a closing date of 30th April 2022.

Due to the significant interest and high level of demand from our communities the Fund was oversubscribed resulting in a total amount awarded of **£164,091.72** to 114 community groups. Details of all the awards made are provided on our website [Queen's Platinum Jubilee Fund | Previous Grant Awards | Scottish Borders Council \(scotborders.gov.uk\)](#)

The Director of Resilient Communities and the Director of Finance & Corporate Governance identified additional funding from underspends in the department's budget which the Executive Committee approved, be applied to the Platinum Jubilee fund through financial monitoring reports.

Supplementary

Councillor Thornton-Nicol asked when the evaluation report would be presented to the Executive Committee. Councillor Rowley advised that he could not give a firm date at the moment as the analysis was still being carried out.

Question from Councillor Anderson

To Executive Member for Service Delivery and Transformation

Does Scottish Borders Council perform an internal review on customer relations and specifically for staff who work in sensitive areas? This can sometimes be referred to as a quality assurance statement of intent. How is this logged, and is training offered to front line workers, for instance, ground staff in cemeteries, to ensure they are aware when sensitivity is needed? What policy is in place (if any) to ensure there is good practice in sensitive interactions with the public?

Reply from Councillor Rowley

The Council aims to ensure that all staff in positions where they engage with customers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide a high quality of customer experience. To enable this Scottish Borders have a set of 6 Competency Behaviours available to access on the SBC intranet site for all staff of which [Great Service \(sharepoint.com\)](#) is one of these.

Our appraisal system also has a specific section on Great Service where the line manager and member of staff can acknowledge good or improved behaviour is required in relation to customer service. Where improvement is required this will also be noted on the appraisal form under personal development and can include formal or informal training depending on the need. This information is logged in the appraisal system.

These competency behaviours can also be used at any time, when it is recognised that a member of staff is not meeting these standards, and discussed at 1-2-1 meetings with their line manager and agree on improvements or additional training required and then their performance reviewed.

SBLearn, our training platform, holds a number of training and learning material for our staff on a variety of subjects to support their development including numerous customer focused material including:

- Listening to Customers
- Look for customers unique needs
- Social Media and the customer
- Handling complaints
- Difficult conversations
- Handling conflict conversations
- Dealing with difficult telephone calls

We are currently looking at a “soft skills” learning pathway option which will guide staff more directly to some of these keys training and learning materials.

Good customer service is expected in all staff engagements with the public. As explained above this is specified in our competency behaviours and recorded through the appraisal system, as such there is no further policy requirement to ensure good practice in sensitive interactions with the public.

Supplementary

Councillor Anderson asked if staff who were not front-line received training. Councillor Rowley confirmed that all staff were trained to be courteous and polite including those who worked in cemeteries and graveyards. However, if Councillor Anderson had a specific concern he would ask officers to look into that.

Question from Councillor Smart

To the Executive Member for Estate Management and Planning

When is the lift in Hawick Town Hall going to be repaired? Currently it is out of use and therefore the building is not accessible for many people.

Reply from Councillor Mountford

Unfortunately the contractor has experienced delays in lead times for the required parts to carry out the works to the lift at Hawick Town Hall.

The parts are now anticipated to arrive in March 2023 and thereafter the works on site will be scheduled to minimise day-to-day operations of the offices and it is expected that the works will be complete in April.

Alternative arrangements can be made for those accessing the building that would require use of the lift to gain access to the first floor. Should any members of the public require access to the Hawick Town Hall meantime they should contact a member of staff in advance with their requirements and an area on the ground floor could be utilised for the visit.