

APPENDIX 2 – SOCIAL MEDIA Q&A

A Budget Social Media Q&A took place on 11 December 2017 with the Council Leader and Executive Member for finance. The Q&A generated 244 comments and reached 13,200 people. The consistent themes from this have been summarised below and responses were provided to as many as possible on the night. We have now provided responses in relation to the Administration's budget plans below.

Please Note: Because of the large amount of interaction on social media, it would be impossible to be able to capture everything in this format. Themes have been grouped below and this also covers some of the themes which could not be covered on the night within the hour.

Themes	Responses
Investment in the Tapestry is a waste of money	<p>The Council is committed to the Tapestry project, which is a major town centre regeneration project for Galashiels and which will have significant economic benefits including increased visitor numbers for the wider Scottish Borders. The visitor centre will also have social and education opportunities and has the support of a range of local groups.</p> <p>A full report to Council members on 22 December 2016 covering the consultation and due diligence process on the Great Tapestry proposal is available on the Council website or by clicking here:</p> <p>http://scottishborders.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s14284/Item%20No.%2015%20-%20GTS%20Report%20Dec%2016.pdf</p>
Investment in some areas of the Borders over others. It all seems to be Galashiels.	<p>It is not just about Galashiels. All the various investment plans are outlined in our published Financial Plans. This includes high level investment in towns across the region - not just one town and investment in one is not detrimental to any others as these projects will deliver much wider benefits to the Scottish Borders as a whole.</p> <p>We are also actively encouraging members of the public to get involved in how money is spent in their area. They can do this by taking part in their Area Partnerships and becoming involved in Localities Bid Fund and ongoing consultations.</p>
More shops needed in town centres	<p>Through various projects and investments the Council is aiming to ensure the region's town centres are thriving, vibrant places for businesses of all sizes and for people to work and live in, and are attractive to visitors from out-with the Scottish Borders. Through the next Local Development Plan, the Administration is committed to promoting diversification in town centres to support existing businesses and encourage a greater variety of business types to set up.</p>
More transparent procurement of professional services. Single tender responses don't provide value for the tax payer and exclude businesses that could	<p>The Council procures products and services in different ways, using a variety of methods with the aim of achieving best quality and value in all instances. Local contractors and suppliers are actively encouraged and supported to take part in tendering exercises. 'Meet the Buyer' events are also arranged in partnership with our contractors for many major projects to ensure that local businesses can access sub-contracting opportunities. The Council also seeks maximum efficiency through being part of Scotland Excel and Procurement Scotland frameworks from which it benefits through high economies of scale.</p>

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<p>otherwise provide a great service for SBC</p>	
<p>Will there be a rise in grants to Common Ridings and Festivals after no rise in 14 years, the cost of health and safety which SBC have enforced on us with no extra funds?</p>	<p>There is no proposed increase of the Festival Grants included within the financial plan. There is a full review of grants underway within SBC which will look to improve the ease of access to grants, transparency of distribution, grant compliance and monitoring of outcomes to ensure we achieve best value.</p>
<p>Invest money in the whole roads infrastructure rather than just one town?</p>	<p>The published budget plans propose investment of over £92m on Borders wide road and traffic infrastructure including £67m on roads and bridges over the next 10 years. This is in addition to the £5m revenue spend each year region wide.</p>
<p>Why are we not doing something immediately with the old Kelso High School?</p>	<p>This is a Grade B listed building and there is a process which we have to follow. This does mean it will be vacant for a short period of time but it is soon to be marketed as a development opportunity.</p>
<p>Parking issues across the Borders</p>	<p>The council has established a working group on parking that will be looking at all aspects of parking across the region. Residents can contact their local Councillor to feed in their views.</p>
<p>We need more affordable housing</p>	<p>The current Strategic Housing Investment Plan for the period to 2023 identifies the potential for 1,177 affordable homes to be delivered over the next 5 years.</p> <p>This is based on assumed funding amounts from the Scottish Government, partners and other agencies, that all land and infrastructure challenges are resolved in a timely manner and the construction sector has capacity to deliver projects.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the large majority of the homes would be delivered by local registered social landlords.</p>
<p>Re-instate garden waste</p>	<p>During a time of reducing resources we have to prioritise where we spend our budget. The garden waste service was non-statutory and a partial service and reinstating this service is not in our plans due to the costs involved.</p> <p>(The withdrawal of the garden waste service has contributed a net £450,000 per annum to the Council's overall budget deficit and a cost/benefit analysis was done at the time the Council took the decision to remove the service).</p>

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<p>Why are you outsourcing Border Care Alarms</p>	<p>The agreement to move to a partnership agreement with East Lothian Council follows a detailed review of the BorderCare service, which has been operational in its current form since 1987. As the review established that significant investment would be required to upgrade out of date monitoring software and meet the expected industry quality standards, an options appraisal was undertaken to establish the most effective and efficient way of continuing to provide the service. The chosen option will provide a number of significant quality, developmental and financial advantages which would be of benefit to all clients using the service. East Lothian Council has been providing a similar service to Midlothian Council and is considered to be an expert in this field.</p>
<p>SBC have had the power locally to assist businesses with non-domestic rates since 2015 but have not done anything. Are SBC looking to use this power to assist anytime soon with the budget?</p>	<p>Local authorities have been given discretionary powers under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to reduce Non-Domestic Rates (NDR). Significant numbers of premises in town centres are already eligible for rates relief, including full relief, through national schemes and any local reliefs would need to be equitable across the whole of the Scottish Borders and financially sustainable.</p>
<p>When will rural areas receive fibre broadband?</p>	<p>A large number of rural communities have access to superfast broadband through the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme, which the Council contributed £8m to.</p> <p>However, the Council absolutely recognises and shares the frustration that a number of communities, particularly rural ones, have, over the limitations of the current programme. As a result, the Council continues to lobby and work closely with all relevant partners to maximise the impact of infrastructure developments. Access to high speed broadband is critical to achieving Scottish Borders Council's vision of making the Scottish Borders an attractive place to live and work and for this reason the Council, together with the South of Scotland Alliance, is focusing its efforts on working closely with the Scottish Government to achieve the digital infrastructure necessary to deliver the Government's aim of providing Next Generation Broadband to 100 per cent of business and residential premises, as set out in the 2016/17 Programme for Government. Next Generation Broadband usually means anything over 25 Megabits per second (Mbps).</p> <p>The Council is fully committed to working with a range of partners to maximise the delivery of broadband to as many homes and businesses in the Scottish Borders as possible, both through existing programmes of work and through alternative methods.</p>
<p>Do something about dog fouling</p>	<p>The Council launched its Responsible Dog Ownership Strategy in February 2016, which aims to change people's behaviour to dog fouling and remind owners of their social and legal responsibilities.</p> <p>A number of initiatives have been launched, including the Green Dog Walker</p>

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	<p>Scheme, which aims to change attitudes towards dog fouling. Over 200 people have so far signed up to the community-led scheme since it was introduced in April 2016.</p> <p>A dog wellbeing day in Hawick and several microchipping events have also been held, while posters and pavement stencils can be requested by members of the public to be placed in areas where dog fouling is an issue.</p> <p>The strategy also included two dog fouling and litter enforcement officers being appointed through an external provider to target problem areas as part of a pilot. The Council carried out a series of communications to promote the strategy, including encouraging people to report dog fouling blackspots.</p> <p>Consultation with members of the public on the strategy has shown the majority believe the Council is doing more to tackle this problem. At the same time, we recognise dog fouling remains an issue but it is one which cannot be solely tackled by the Council, particularly when demand on public services is increasing while budgets are being squeezed.</p> <p>Officers have now collated all the information from the enforcement pilot project and assessed potential future options, which will be included in a Council report on the strategy which is due to be discussed by Councillors in early 2018.</p> <p>Members of the public can visit www.scotborders.gov.uk/dogfouling or phone 0300 100 1800 for further information, to request posters/stencils, join the Green Dog Walker scheme or anonymously report a dog fouling issue.</p>
<p>How to obtain an empty building for a business opportunity?</p>	<p>SBC has over 260 workshop units and 40 shop premises throughout the Borders. Properties currently available to let or buy can be found on our website - https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/directory/64/land_and_property_for_sale_or_let</p> <p>Business Gateway can advise on business loans and grants available and can also support new and established businesses in a wide variety of ways.</p>
<p>More play parks needed</p>	<p>The Council has invested significant funds into refurbishing and improving existing outdoor community spaces across the region, including Wilton Lodge Park in Hawick. A new play park at the Public Park, Galashiels is also planned. Other investments in play parks can be found in the detailed financial plan. The Council Administration is committed to ensuring that further investment in existing and new outdoor community spaces is a key priority with £2.8m included in the Capital budget over the next 4 years.</p>
<p>Staff parking is an issue in Newtown</p>	<p>Staff are regularly reminded to park responsibly in and around Council Headquarters. We do also promote various schemes such as car-sharing and cycle to work.</p>
<p>During budget cuts, why has the Council Leader been allowed to revamp her office?</p>	<p>Following the 2017 Local Government elections, in order to align to the new political administration arrangements some minor modifications were made to member office accommodation by Property Management. This was primarily done to increase capacity for desktop work and meeting space and to avoid removing reasonable adjustments which were previously provided under DDA legislation.</p>
<p>Ensure all road users including</p>	<p>We are working with Sustrans to develop multi-use paths across the Borders and are committed to protecting the roads budget and delivering significant road improvements.</p>

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cyclists are safe from the growing number of potholes	
Keep the share of the sport and PA budget to the Trust as free as is practical from cuts	We work in partnership with Live Borders to ensure the management fee provided is sufficient to deliver the services they are responsible for. As with other SBC departments they continually look to improve efficiency within their organisation and maximise income opportunities.
Keep clearing ditches to avoid accidents	We clean out the gullies within the Scottish Borders once a year. Blockages can occur all year round although known areas that are susceptible to blocking are inspected regularly and cleared when necessary.
What progress on the rail line to Carlisle?	A feasibility study is currently taking place and the Administration is committed to supporting an extension to the line.
Why is there a difference between what the Borders residents pay for Bordercare to the equivalent East Lothian system?	Each local authority sets its pricing models independently of each other taking into account a number of factors including the geographical spread of the service.
Increase the social care budget or will you just continue to outsource? Who has duty of care when private contracts have been handed back?	We commission vital services from those who are best placed to deliver the service. The duty of care resides with the Council and we take that very seriously. The Council's arms-length care company is contractually its provider of last resort. This is a key safeguard to service users to minimise any risks associated with a provider exiting the market or a contract being taken back.
When are you going to flatten Hawick High School and give us a school that is	Detailed assessments of Hawick High, Galashiels Academy, Peebles High and Selkirk High are being carried out as part of the ongoing School Estate Review. Each will be considered in relation to their condition, suitability and capacity in order to prioritise the order of investment in the secondary estate over the next 10 to 15 years. The outcome of the review will be brought back to the Executive Committee in due course, along with proposals to undertake consultations within each local community.

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<p>fit for purpose?</p>	
<p>IS SBC looking seriously at a permanent replacement for the road bridge at Lowood? Longer term surely a new bridge would be more cost effective than repairing the old one.</p>	<p>The current Lowood Bridge is a B listed structure and repairs will be implemented in order to maintain road network capacity with the minimum of disruption to users. In the longer term, a new crossing is desirable, at a location to be agreed, to increase overall network capacity, and not just in relation to any potential future development near Tweedbank Station.</p>
<p>Increase number of resources assigned to ground maintenance, pathways are infested with weeds and grass areas only cut couple of times a year it seems.</p>	<p>This is an area we are keen to explore further with communities and community groups to investigate where we can work better together to ensure the region looks its best. A pilot initiative to develop a way of managing communal land and increasing biodiversity is an ambition of the Administration.</p>