

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
21 DECEMBER 2017
APPENDIX I

OPEN QUESTIONS

Questions from Councillor Paterson

To the Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure

1. What has happened to the Council's Waste Management Plan which was approved by the previous Council on 25 June 2015? Can the Executive Member please tell us if this Administration has scrapped the previous Administration's plans for kerbside collections, and, if so, what plans do they have?

Answer from Councillor Edgar

The review of the kerbside collection service is a key component of the Council's Waste Management Plan that seeks to provide a waste service that is both fit for purpose and financially sustainable in the long term and this was recently discussed at a presentation provided by Waste Services on 4 October 2017, which was well attended by elected members.

It is anticipated that a report will be brought to Council in the early part of 2018, which will outline the findings of the review that has been undertaken with the support of Zero Waste Scotland.

2. Can the Executive Member please tell me what the take up is in Border Towns with regards collections of food waste and is it still accurate to say that Hawick has one of the worst collection rates of all Borders Town?

Answer from Councillor Edgar

I can confirm that the average participation level in the 5 Border towns which receive a food waste collection is 30.6%.

The town with the highest participation level is Peebles at 48.5% and the town with the lowest participation level continues to be Hawick at 21.6%.

Supplementary

Councillor Paterson asked if adverse publicity when collections began had affected collection rates in Hawick. Councillor Edgar advised that he did not think that was the case and that this was only a pilot scheme to see how people responded.

3. Can the Executive Member please let me know if there are any plans to do urgently required work to fix the very real problems with flooding at Ettleton Cemetery in Newcastleton with one Community Councillor saying that the burial lair had to be pumped out before his father was interred?

Answer from Councillor Edgar

The Council is currently undertaking a flood study in Newcastleton as set out within the Solway Flood Risk Management Plan 2016 – 2022. As this only looks at flood risk within Newcastleton and the catchment above the town, the Ettleton Sike – which runs next to the Ettleton Cemetery - is not considered within this study.

On 5th December, members of the Flood Team attended Newcastleton Community Council meeting and previewed the provisional flood study map outputs, whilst seeking feedback from the community. The issue with the Cemetery was not raised at that time.

The Neighbourhood Operations team however have noted that the operational implications of excavating land are that water can run off into those excavations. It is normal procedure therefore when preparing burial lairs prior to interment and during periods of wet weather, for water to be pumped out of those excavations prior to interment and backfilling.

At Eittleton Cemetery, the team are aware that drainage issues can occur, and where this is the case the burial lairs at those locations are no longer offered for purchase and members of the public are offered alternative burial lairs elsewhere within the cemetery.

The flood team and the neighbourhoods team have therefore been asked to jointly review the position and report back to the Service Director Assets & Infrastructure.

Supplementary

Councillor Paterson asked if Councillor Edgar did not consider that something needed to be done now given the views of the people of Newcastleton. Councillor Edgar reiterated that the matter had not been raised when the Flood team had met with the Community Council but that the matter was now to be reviewed.

4. Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Locality Services

Some Councillors and candidates made a big thing about the amount of dog mess in Hawick before and during the last Council elections with much criticism of the previous administrations handling of the problem. Can the Executive Member please tell me what this Administration are doing other than trying to educate people about picking up after their dogs?

Answer from Councillor Aitchison

The Council continues to implement the Responsible Dog Ownership Strategy including enforcement. A report on the previously agreed strategy is emerging which details lessons learned and provides options for members for the Council to consider in its future approach to Responsible Dog Ownership in the Borders.

This scourge is a consistent problem nationally and locally and in order to turn this problem around we must take a longer term view and employ resources consistently and regularly recognising the many successes that a sustained programme will deliver and focus on those and the vast majority of responsible Dog Owners in the Borders.

Supplementary

Councillor Paterson asked if more should not be done about this problem which seemed to be getting worse. Councillor Aitchison advised that people knew that it was something they should not do and it was an abuse on society. The Council was looked upon as the people who tidy things up but with limited resources this was not always possible. He commented on the good work with primary schools in Galashiels which had made a difference in that area and emphasised the need for everyone to play their part with regard to this problem.

5. To the Leader

With the Chancellor making a big thing about the Borderlands deal, can the Council Leader please tell the Council what progress has been made regarding suggested programmes from SBC, and who will be representing Scottish Borders Council when we meet the other Councils involved in the Borderlands deal?

Answer from Councillor Haslam

Cllr Paterson, to date there have been preliminary discussions between the five Councils, the Scottish Government and the UK Government. Those discussions have addressed the possible themes around which a Deal might be developed. As I have previously made clear, infrastructure including hyperfast broadband, energy efficiency and supporting a low carbon economy are all areas of significance that we will seek to address. We will of course also make the case for extending the Borders Railway to Hawick and Carlisle via Newcastleton.

The governance arrangements around a Borderlands Deal have not been agreed yet, but to date I have been involved, along with Cllr Rowley as Executive Member for Business and Economic Development. The Chief Executive, Tracey Logan, has also been involved and I would expect this high level engagement to continue as the Borderlands proposals are developed in more detail in 2018. I believe that if any Deal is to be done it will have to benefit as many communities across

the Borders as is possible. As a Tweeddale Councillor you have my assurance this will not be a Deal that benefits just the Central Borders.

Supplementary

Councillor Paterson asked what would be done for the people in Newcastleton. Councillor Haslam advised that the Deal would benefit the whole of the Borders, not just the central part.

Questions from Councillor Moffat

To the Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure

1. Greenlaw Parent Council has asked if consideration has been given to installing CCTV in Primary Schools for general security and where there have been previous and current issues with vandalism of the education buildings/grounds?

Answer from Councillor Edgar

Consideration has previously been given to the installation of CCTV cameras within Primary Schools and a number of schools currently have systems installed. Property Services are currently assessing the options for Greenlaw Primary School, which include:

- a) Full CCTV Installation
- b) Imitation camera installation
- c) Roaming/Movable camera installation (as part of a trial of new technology)

2. There is a current issue with pigeon droppings on the steps of Coldstream Town Hall and surrounding area; and the gutters need cleaned out.

- (a) Has consideration been given to adding more spikes to the frontage/ledges of the building to stop pigeons roosting?
- (b) Has any consideration been given to culling pigeons?
- (c) What are the current maintenance arrangements for Coldstream Town Hall?

Answer from Councillor Edgar

- a) Property Services are considering the installation of additional spikes.
- b) There has been no consideration of culling.
- c) Coldstream Town Hall remains the responsibility of SBC and is maintained by Property Services as a Council asset.

Supplementary

Councillor Moffat asked if more would be done to look after this building. Councillor Edgar advised that all properties were looked after, assessed and repaired when necessary.

3. To the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development

How are the Duns and Coldstream Business Parks being marketed, as there is a public perception that nothing is happening on either site? Is there any particular encouragement (e.g. financial or other support package) available for potential employers/businesses?

Answer from Councillor Rowley

Coldstream Business Park and the extension at Duns Industrial Estate have been advertised in the Scottish Institute of Directors magazine and marketed several times over the last 3 years in Commercial Property Monthly, a UK property magazine. The business development plots are also promoted on two websites, the Council's own internet pages and with CoStar who publicise UK and international property. There is prominent signage at the site entrances.

In addition to site specific enquiries, we encourage inward investment and local enterprises looking to expand to consider developing their businesses at Duns and Coldstream.

The plots are for sale at the market value for serviced business land. Businesses eligible to purchase are small and medium sized enterprises creating new jobs, and the land is available for Planning Use Classes 4, 5 & 6.

Whilst it may appear that nothing is happening on site, this is not the case. One plot at Coldstream is now 'under offer', while three other businesses also expressed interest in plots, but have not been able to take that interest forward. At Duns there are 3 businesses at the planning stage, and 5 previous enquirers have either changed their plans or decided that the capital investment required was too great.

Business Gateway can offer bespoke packages of support for these business growth opportunities. This can include professional help with developing business plans to seek finance. For plots at Coldstream and Duns, businesses could be eligible for Regional Selective Assistance, which is administered by Scottish Enterprise. Grants on a smaller scale may also be available through the Council's 'Scottish Borders Business Fund'. Loans are also potentially available through Business Loan Scotland and the Scottish Borders Business Loan Fund.

Supplementary

Councillor Moffat asked if local people and businesses had been discouraged because they did not meet the criteria for the sites, e.g. did not employ enough people or were in the wrong type of business. Councillor Rowley advised that the Economic Development service was working with businesses which did not meet the criteria but acknowledged that the original funding conditions did preclude some businesses.

Question from Councillor Ramage

To the Executive Member for Children & Young People

2018 is the Year of Young People which was launched by the Scottish Government recently although, as a council, we have been aware of this initiative for many months.

We run very successful projects throughout the year, Crucial Crew, Rural Day, Voice of my own to name but a few. Indeed our own Youth Borders was recognised as an example of best practise in a recent joint inspection for Children and Young People's services in the Scottish Borders which support 3500 young people.

Shetland have organised the BIG Takeover which is a brand-new, exciting event for young people that will deliver a full programme of arts, culture and sports on a scale that has never been seen before - they say! Can I ask what SBCs plans are for this coming Year of Young People 2018?

Answer from Councillor C. Hamilton

It is pleasing to see the reference to the commendation of the quality of youth services in the recent inspection of community learning and development in the Scottish Borders. It is important to note that strategic leadership and vision were highlighted as key strengths. As part of our vision we see young people as key leaders in their communities. Last year we started to plan for the Year of the Young Person (YOYP); the Children's Planning Group decided to recruit and appoint young champions from each secondary school who would represent the views of the young people in their local area. Work has started with the champions to gather ideas of what they want to see happening in the Borders as part of the YOYP.

In January the Champions are going to lead workshops involving young people across localities to pull together the main ideas for the YOYP and arrive at a programme which celebrates and develops existing events such as the Rural Schools Day for Primary 5 Children but also brings new events and develops more young people networks across the Scottish Borders.

The Planning Group have considered ideas too by looking at national activity already promoted for the YOYP and we were pleased to see that a number of activities being programmed for the YOYP already take place in the Borders. One idea we have had is a music and arts festival for secondary pupils at Springwood Park. Also all our secondary schools are expected to achieve their LGBTi chartered status in 2018 so we wish to celebrate this achievement.

The planning workshops led and facilitated by the young people early in 2018 will consider all existing events and all ideas for new events, activities and networks. The Director will look at budgets allocated for schools cluster working to ensure there is funding to support the ideas developed by the young people in this special year. The outcome of the January Workshops will be

presented to the Executive in February and Members will receive an invite to participate in the workshops too.

The YOYP is an exciting year but it is important that we build legacy out of it and this will be one of the themes within the workshops in January.

A full Comms strategy will be included as part of the Executive Papers in February.

The CYP Directorate very much welcomes Member involvement in the YOYP and looks forward to Member attendance at the workshops at the end of January. Please note dates /invites will be circulated week beginning 8th January.

Supplementary

Councillor Ramage asked that all Councillors play their part. Councillor Hamilton confirmed that there would be a full strategy and Councillors would be invited to join workshops led by young people.

Question from Councillor Robson

To the Executive Member for Children & Young People

Can the Executive Member advise whether the availability of Educational Maintenance Allowance is routinely highlighted to qualifying young people who have a Co-ordinated Support Plan?

Answer from Councillor C. Hamilton

The schools promote Educational Maintenance Allowance's during June and August. Schools are provided with information to be issued to pupils. It is also advertised on Radio Borders, SBC website and social media outlets throughout July, August and September. Posters and leaflets are also distributed to schools, contact centres, youth centres and libraries. A message is also sent to eligible pupils; this will include young people who have co-ordinated support plans.

As part of the Community Planning Partnership's Reducing Inequalities Strategy we have gathered information on the uptake of EMAs in localities. There are plans to make the application process much more accessible as we move forward and to provide support to families to make applications including those with children with CSPs.

Supplementary

Councillor Robson asked if the Council could ensure that out-with the promotion period that those receiving CSPs were notified in advance. Councillor Hamilton confirmed that she would liaise with the Service Director on this.

Questions from Councillor S. Hamilton

1. To the Executive Member for Business and Economic Development

Considering the disappointing announcement from the Royal Bank of Scotland the other week, can the Executive Member confirm if there is anything the council will be doing to mitigate the impact on residents from this abandonment of branch services in the borders?

Answer from Councillor Rowley

Cllr Hamilton, unfortunately I believe that the direction of travel on these closures is inevitable. But I also believe that these closures are premature and too drastic given our existing digital connectivity issues, poor transport and our significant aged demographic.

I think that RBS could, and should, come up with a better exit strategy that includes a phased branch-by-branch approach, a commitment to maintaining ATMs, or even introducing new machines that offer a wider range of services. I think they have options to reduce the negative impacts of these closures, whilst still achieving their goals.

RBS also need to make a greater commitment to business banking. We have an ambitious Council, a new Economic Agency, City Deal, Borderlands, Innovation and Business Parks and incubator hubs etc - is that the landscape for banks to retreat from?

I intend to challenge RBS to be more imaginative and will write formally to the bank's head office and push them on their evidence and encourage them to consider more imaginative models of community banking.

2. To the Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure

The town of Jedburgh has been virtually forgotten about in recent years with regards to recycling and waste management. Since the election, constituents have asked repeatedly why is Jedburgh not being brought into line with other towns in the area and provided with some form of community recycling centre?

Answer from Councillor Edgar

The Council currently provides a network of 7 Community Recycling Centres across the Scottish Borders where residents can deposit waste and recycle.

A recent review of the Council's CRC provision has confirmed that it compares favourably with other similar Scottish Local Authorities and best practice guidance, as we provide 1 facility for every 8,262 households compared to the Scottish Average of 1 facility for every 18,358 residents.

In addition 96.5% of households are within a 20 minute drive of a facility, which increases to 98.9% within a 30 minute drive which is entirely in line with best practice guidance for rural areas.

While it is understood that a new facility in Jedburgh would be well received and well-used there is neither a business case nor the financial resources within the Waste Services budget to provide and support a facility without further significant investment. For example, Kelso and Selkirk Community Recycling Centres each cost in the region of £900,000 to develop excluding the ongoing annual revenue costs associated with staff, site maintenance, regulatory compliance and haulage.

The findings of the Community Recycling Centre review will be brought to Members shortly.

Supplementary

Councillor Hamilton asked if a centre in Jedburgh would not help overall recycling rates. Councillor Edgar acknowledged that this would help but something else would need to close to fund it.