



Briefing Note

SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO COMMUNITY COUNCILS FROM SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

On 26 March 2015 Scottish Borders Council's Scrutiny Committee were presented with information on the levels and sources of funding available to community councils.

At the request of Elected Members on the Committee the content of that report is being made available to community councils in this briefing note.

There are currently 69 community council areas in the Scottish Borders all of which have an operational community council. All of these receive some level of financial support from the Council, with many receiving support to access funding through the Council's internal grant schemes.

Scottish Borders Council support to community councils – direct

Annual core grant

Core grant funding is awarded annually to community councils on receipt of their inspected annual accounts. This is given to support the community council in maintaining its administrative structure, and/or to further the objectives of the community council, providing the following conditions are met:

- a) The community council should not hold more than the equivalent of two years' core funding by way of reserves, excluding money ring fenced for specific initiatives.
- b) The community council must submit in writing annually its agreement to abide with the Code of Conduct for Community Councillors.

Funding is structured in five population bands:

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| • | Over 10,000 | £1,780 |
| • | 4,000 – 10,000 | £1,365 |
| • | 2,000 – 4,000 | £990 |
| • | 500 – 2,000 | £630 |
| • | Under 500 | £540 |

Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network receives an annual core grant of £1,250.

The total budget commitment for annual core grants is £50,950 p/a.

Hall hire reimbursement

Scottish Borders Council provides free use of premises owned and under the control of the Council for the purposes of holding Community Council meetings; where such accommodation is not available 100% of hire costs are reimbursed. The total spent on accommodation reimbursement in 2014/2015 was £4,902. The demand on this budget increases year on year as the cost of hiring meeting space, such as village halls, increases.

Local community path maintenance grant

The Access and Countryside team offers grants to community councils as part of its suite of integrated measures to address path vegetation control and to assist local maintenance and enhancement opportunities

The Local Community Path Maintenance Grant is available to reimburse annual expenses incurred up to the value of £450 for local path maintenance or improvements undertaken. This includes grass cutting, vegetation removal, surfacing, installation of gates, etc. and can be used towards the purchase of relevant tools and machinery.

The value of grants to March 2015 was £14,058 with grants distributed and spent by 33 Community Councils.

Scottish Borders Council support to community councils – indirect

Insurance

Scottish Borders Council provides insurance for Community Councils. This covers public liability, employer's liability, money and personal accident cover provided by Zurich, and cover for items owned by Community Councils with a value below £1,000. The cost for 2014/15 was £6,743.

Data Protection Registration

The annual registration fee of £35 per community council is met by Scottish Borders Council with a required annual budget of £2,415. Administration relating to the registration is undertaken by Council staff.

Scottish Borders Council funding accessible to community councils

Scottish Landfill Communities Fund

The Scottish Landfill Communities Fund (SCLF) is a tax credit scheme that enables operators of landfill sites (Scottish Borders Council) to contribute money to enrolled Environmental Bodies to support projects that meet environmental objectives. The SCLF in the Borders can provide funding to a range of community organisations, including Places of Worship and Community Councils. Almost all Borders communities have eligibility under the Fund. Community organisations are required to work through an Environmental Body in order to make an application to the Fund but should firstly discuss their ideas with the SBC Funding and Projects Officer. The enrolled body covering the whole of the Scottish Borders area is Berwickshire Community Councils' Forum Environmental.

The Fund is limited to 5 'Objects' in relation to the type of project it can fund. The most common projects are for 'Public Amenities' such as halls, play areas and sports facilities but the other Objects can consider projects relating to restoration of contaminated land, prevention of pollution, conservation of species and the restoration of Places of Worship or buildings of architectural merit. The total funding available in any one year is dependent on landfill tonnage and taxation due. Funding accrues monthly and applications are decided by Executive as soon as sufficient funds are available. The SCLF is normally used as part of larger funding package and it can fund from a few thousand pounds up to a typical maximum of £30,000.

Community Grant Scheme

The Scottish Borders Council Community Grant Scheme is the Council's generic small grant can. It can fund a range of community organisations, including Community Councils. Grants

are available from a few hundred pounds up to a maximum of £5,000. The Scheme has four Outcomes:

- Communities have more access to better quality local services or activities (including arts, music, heritage or sports activities) – for example improvements to community buildings, development of community events, enabling more people to take part in arts and sporting activities
- Communities have more access to a better quality environment (including the built environment) – for example by increasing access to the countryside, development of community gardens, improving open spaces, development of floral displays
- Communities have more pride in their community – for example development of Christmas Lighting projects, participation in celebratory events
- Communities have more access to better quality advice and information – for example provision of public noticeboards, promotional leaflets, development of websites.

In some circumstances the Scheme can also support community organisations who are in temporary financial difficulty.

The total budget available in 2014/15 was £135,465. £10,000 is deducted to create a budget for applications made by groups which work Borders-wide. In some cases, this budget can also accept applications from groups outwith the Borders but where the project directly benefits Borders people.

The budget is divided between 5 Area Forums as follows (based on population):

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| • Generic Budget (Borders-wide and non-Borders based Groups) | £10,000 |
| • Berwickshire | £23,211 |
| • Cheviot | £20,325 |
| • Eildon | £38,882 |
| • Teviot & Liddesdale | £20,752 |
| • Tweeddale | £22,295 |

Small Schemes

The Small Schemes budget has been available for locally identified projects since 2004. Elected Members, Community Councils and the public can request financial support to enable delivery of local improvement projects and initiatives from this budget. The decision to award a grant from this budget lies with the relevant Area Forum. Small Schemes is revenue funded and must be spent within an allocated financial year. The total allocated budget for 2014/15 was £200,506 with the budget allocated based on the length of the road network within the area; it was broken down as follows:

- Berwickshire - £48,200
- Cheviot - £34,702 (informally split between two wards)
- Eildon – £48,200
- Teviot & Liddesdale - £34,702 (split between two wards)
- Tweeddale - £34,702

Quality of Life

The Quality of Life budget has been available for locally identified projects since 1st April 2014. Elected Members, Community Councils and the public can request financial support to enable delivery of local improvement projects and initiatives from this budget. The decision to award a grant from this budget lies with the relevant Ward Members where the budget has been formally split between the Wards or the relevant Area Forum. Quality of Life budget is revenue funded and must be spent within an allocated financial year. The total allocated budget for 2014/15 was £100,000 and was broken down as follows:

- Berwickshire - £20,000
- Cheviot - £20,000 (split between two wards)
- Eildon – £20,000 (split between three wards)
- Teviot & Liddesdale - £20,000 (split between two wards)
- Tweeddale - £20,000

Common Good

Common Good is the name given to property of the former burghs of Scotland and may consist of money, land, buildings and moveable assets such as paintings and other artefacts. Common Good Funds are managed by the Council and officers prepare annual budgets of income and expenditure and where relevant allocate income from, for example, property rentals and dividends receivable on investments to be used for donations to applicants subject to ensuring that the Council have regard to the interests of the inhabitants of the area to which the common good related prior to 16 May 1975.