

# **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

MINUTE of MEETING of the SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL held in Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells on 26 June 2019 at 10.00 a.m.

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Present:- Councillors D. Parker (Convener), S. Aitchison, A. Anderson, H. Anderson, J. Brown, S. Bell, K. Chapman, K. Drum. G. Edgar, J. A. Fullarton, J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton, S. Hamilton, S. Haslam, E. Jardine, S. Marshall, T. Miers, S. Mountford, D. Paterson, C. Penman, C. Ramage, N. Richards, E. Robson, M. Rowley, H. Scott, E. Small, E. Thornton-Nicol, G. Turnbull, T. Weatherston

Apologies:- Councillors H. Laing, W. McAteer, D. Moffat, S. Scott, R. Tatler.

In Attendance:- Executive Director (P. Barr), Executive Director (R. Dickson), Service Director Assets and Infrastructure, Service Director Children and Young People, Service Director Customer and Communities, Service Director HR & Communications, Service Director Regulatory Services, Chief Financial Officer, Clerk to the Council.

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## **1. CONVENER'S REMARKS**

The Convener congratulated:-

- (a) Stow Primary School for being the Better Energy School Award Regional Winners in the "Totally Clued Up" category, Scottish Champions 2019 with Reece the Recycled Cow. A number of the children were present accompanied by their teacher Debbie Matthewson;
- (b) Broomlands Primary School winning an architecture award from the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS). Lesley Munro and Steven Renwick were present at the meeting; and
- (c) Glenda Watt from West Linton who received an OBE for services to older people, Catherine Johnston from Ladykirk who received a BEM for services to the Community and Amanda Richard from St. Boswells who received a BEM for services to the health and wellbeing of older people in the recent the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

## **DECISION**

**AGREED that congratulations be passed to those concerned.**

## **2. MINUTE**

The Minute of the Meeting held on 16 May 2019 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:-

Eildon Area Partnership	7 March 2019
Tweeddale Area Partnership	27 March 2019
Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership	16 April 2019
Cheviot Area Partnership	17 April 2019
Planning and Building Standards	29 April 2019
Executive	30 April 2019
Berwickshire Area Partnership	2 May 2019

Audit & Scrutiny	13 May 2019
Local Review Body	27 May 2019
Peebles Common Good Fund	29 May 2019
Civic Government Licensing	31 May 2019
Planning and Building Standards	3 June 2019
Executive	4 June 2019
Jedburgh Common Good Fund	4 June 2019
Berwickshire Area Partnership	6 June 2019

## **DECISION**

**APPROVED the Minutes listed above.**

### **4. CCTV PROVISION IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS**

With reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of 16 May 2019, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Assets and Infrastructure providing details of a consultation plan that examined the options for renewing or replacing the current Public Space Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) provision in the Scottish Borders. Given the significant capital and revenue expenditure required to modernise current systems on a like for like basis, the report tried to quantify whether this would deliver a value for money outcome for the Council given other budget constraints. Following the consultation period, a second report would be presented to Council at a future meeting outlining the options and associated costs. Members discussed the report and Councillor H. Scott proposed an amendment to the recommendations.

#### **VOTE**

*Councillor Turnbull, seconded by Councillor Edgar, moved that recommendations (a) –(c) in the report be approved.*

*Councillor H. Scott, seconded by Councillor Bell, moved as an amendment that the recommendations be amended as follows:-*

*Delete recommendation (a)*

*Re-title paragraph (b) paragraph (a), and delete the word “either”*

*Re-title paragraph (c) paragraph (b) and amend the wording to read:-*

*“that a second report outlining the options and costs associated with renewing or replacing the current Public Space CCTV provision, to include the consideration of portable CCTV, in the Scottish Borders, will be presented to Council in December 2019. That report to take full cognisance of the results of the report, commissioned by COSLA, on Public Space CCTV.”*

*Delete the word “or”*

*Delete paragraph (d)*

*On a show of hands Members voted as follows:-*

*Motion - 16 Votes*

*Amendment - 13 Votes*

*The Motion was accordingly carried.*

## **DECISION**

**DECIDED:-**

- (a) to note that Officers believed expenditure on new CCTV systems would not provide value for money;**
- (b) to approve the consultation plan and the timescales involved in the consultation process; and**

- (c) **that a second report outlining the options and costs associated with renewing or replacing the current Public Space CCTV provision in the Scottish Borders could be presented to Council in December 2019 if required.**

5. **FIT FOR 2024 UPDATE**

With reference to paragraph 1 of the Minute of 28 February 2019, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Executive providing an update on the 5-year programme of transformation across the Council, 'Fit for 2024'. It sought to inform Council on the latest position regarding change and improvement work, with a particular focus on achieving the savings target for the current financial year, as well as a look to future years. The report gave a recap on the rationale for and main categories of work being undertaken under the Fit for 2024 Programme. An overview was given on the various activities which had started and were seeking to contribute to achieving the objectives of the Fit for 2024 Programme. Details were given of the early areas of service review, which would be the first to undergo SBC's new approach. The report further provided an update on progress towards achieving the savings for 2019/20 with reference to other financial planning targets and considerations for the next 18 months of the programme in relation to key areas of transformation activity. The Chief Financial Officer and the Service Director HR and Communications gave Members a presentation on the challenges facing the Council in achieving the £18m of savings which required to be made by 2024 and the need for a flexible plan. Transformation needed to touch all parts of the Council and deliver clear improvements for customers. Members noted the position and that the Council of 2024 would be very different from that of today.

**DECISION**

- (a) **NOTED the initial work to establish the Fit for 2024 programme and specific elements of transformation contributing to the programme's objectives.**
- (b) **AGREED to receive a further progress update on Fit for 2024 in November 2019, following commencement of the full financial planning process for 2020/21.**

6. **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: MAIN ISSUES REPORT – CONSULTATION RESPONSES REPORT**

With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of 30 August 2018, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Regulatory Services providing a note of the representations received during the consultation on the Main Issues Report carried out between November 2018 and January 2019. The report explained that the Main Issues Report (MIR) was a forerunner to the review of the forthcoming new Local Development Plan (LDP2) which would replace the existing adopted LDP 2016. In essence the MIR sought public views on a range of key material considerations which the LDP2 must address. It raised a series of questions for consideration and where possible suggested preferred and alternative approaches for addressing identified issues. The representations received required further work to be fully scrutinised and they would be taken forward for consideration and responded to as part of the preparation of the proposed LDP2. It was anticipated the proposed LDP2 would be finalised by the end of 2019 and it was originally envisaged that it would be referred to the Council for approval at that point prior to being sent out for a public consultation. However, as the proposed Strategic Development Plan 2 (SDP2) had recently been rejected by Scottish Ministers this raised some issues for all SESPlan member authorities as to how their respective Development Plans would be taken forward. This included issues such as, for example, which strategic housing land requirement figures should be incorporated into Local Development Plans. The implications of the Ministers' decision was referred to in more detail within the report and legal advice was being sought as to how LDPs were to be progressed. Members welcomed the report and paid tribute to the hard work of the officers involved in the process.

**DECISION**

**AGREED to note the Summary of Consultation Responses submitted to the Main Issues Report as set out in the Appendix to the report.**

## 7. **COMMUNITY FUND AND AREA PARTNERSHIPS CONSULTATION**

With reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of 28 March 2019, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Customer and Communities proposing the approach and methodology to be followed in undertaking the review, including public consultation, of the future governance arrangements for Area Partnerships, including the allocation and disbursement of the Community Fund. The report explained that over the last few years there had been a number of important developments, nationally and locally, which had a critical bearing on issues of governance and community inclusion and empowerment. While those developments impacted on the Council's work at the moment, there was a lack of certainty over the final implications both in terms of future legislation and wider governance arrangements which might come to fruition. However, it was not possible to wait for final outcomes but to progress those areas within the Council's remit - the Review of Area Partnerships and the Community Fund - while ensuring that any conclusions embodied sufficient flexibility to allow arrangements to respond to this developing context. It was proposed to carry out a consultation exploring how individuals, groups and communities could be more involved in Area Partnerships and decision making. It was further proposed that the Area Partnership Review encompassed the interim changes to grant funding and the future of the Community Fund. The consultation would seek to gather views regarding local decision making, including what the arrangements could look like in each locality (governance arrangements may vary in each area in order to best suit local circumstances), and the new Community Fund. In order to ensure a full and robust response the consultation would be public, open to all members of Scottish Borders communities, and would include targeted engagement. To ensure that the review was completely impartial, clear and transparent, an external agency would be commissioned to undertake the consultation work on behalf of Scottish Borders Council. It was envisaged that the consultation would take place during the summer/autumn with the results and any recommendations being incorporated into forthcoming budget discussions and reported back to Council before the end of 2019. It was further proposed that a "fast track" application process would be brought in for the Community Fund for amounts of less than £1500, with a simplified application form. This would be assessed by officers in the usual way and an officer recommendation made. Further, delegated authority was sought for the Service Director Customer & Communities to decide such applications – in consultation with local Members – where the application could not wait for the next Area Partnership meeting. Applications for amounts over £1500 would require to use the normal application route and decisions could only be made on these at Area Partnership meetings. Members discussed the proposals. Councillor H. Anderson expressed some concerns and proposed that the decision on this matter be deferred until the next meeting in August to allow further clarification and suggested that the review of Area Partnerships should be undertaken first to ascertain if they were the best vehicle to administer these funds.

### **VOTE**

*Councillor Aitchison, seconded by Councillor Rowley, moved that the recommendations in the report be approved.*

*Councillor H. Anderson, seconded by Councillor Bell, moved that the decision be deferred until the August Council meeting to allow further clarification.*

*On a show of hands Members voted as follows:-*

<i>Motion</i>	-	<i>20 votes</i>
<i>Amendment</i>	-	<i>8 votes.</i>

*The Motion was accordingly carried.*

### **DECISION**

**DECIDED:-**

- (a) the scope, approach and timeline to the Area Partnership Review consultation, including the future allocation and governance of the Community Fund, as detailed in the report;
- (b) that an external company be appointed to undertake the consultation work on behalf of the Council;
- (c) that the consultation results, and arising recommendations, were presented at the December 2019 meeting of Scottish Borders Council;
- (d) that the following “fast track” application process was brought in for the Community Fund for 2019/20:
  - (i) for amounts up to £1500;
  - (ii) the application form being completed by a community group or by an Elected Member on behalf of a community group and an officer assessment/recommendation made;
  - (iii) delegated authority be given to the Service Director Customer & Communities to decide on “fast track” applications – in consultation with local Members – where the application cannot wait for the next suitable Area Partnership meeting; and
- (e) applications for amounts greater than £1500 to the Community Fund would require to use the normal application route and decisions could only be made on those at Area Partnership meetings.

#### 8. **MAY DAY HOLIDAY 2020**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director HR and Communications proposing that Council agree to move the May Day holiday in 2020 from Monday, 4 May 2020 to Friday, 8 May 2020 to coincide with the celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day. The report explained that in addition to annual leave, taken at times requested by an employee and approved by their manager, Scottish Borders Council gave employees four public holidays per annum: Christmas Day, Boxing Day and 1 and 2 January. It also gave two fixed holidays: May Day, falling on the first Monday of May, and St. Andrew’s Day, falling on the Monday nearest to 30 November. The Westminster Government had announced that the May Day holiday in England and Wales in 2020 would be moved from Monday, 4 May to Friday, 8 May. This was to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day, which fell on 8 May. Bank holidays were a devolved matter in Scotland. The Scottish Government had announced that they would also move the May Day holiday to Friday 8 May 2020. Members supported this proposal.

#### **DECISION**

**AGREED that Scottish Borders Council take the May Day holiday on Friday, 8 May 2020 rather than Monday, 4 May 2020.**

#### **MEMBER**

Councillor S. Hamilton left the meeting during the following item of business

#### 9. **MOTION BY COUNCILLOR BELL**

With reference to paragraph 12 of the Minute of 31 January 2019, Councillor Bell, in terms of Standing Order 26, seconded by K. Chapman, and signed by Councillors A. Anderson, J. Brown, K. Drum, D. Moffat, C. Ramage and E. Thornton-Nicol moved the following Motion as detailed on the agenda:-

“As the UK Parliament has been unable to agree upon terms for withdrawal from the EU and as the facts about, and implications of, withdrawal are increasingly clear. Scottish Borders Council considers that the case for withdrawal should be directly decided by the British people on the basis of the actual facts.

Council resolves to now act to communicate this opinion to the UK Government and to all local MPs, MSPs and MEPs.”

Councillor Bell and Councillor Chapman spoke in support of the Motion. Councillor Haslam, seconded by Councillor Jardine, moved against the Motion on the basis that it was outwith the scope of the Council. There followed a lengthy discussion.

#### **VOTE**

*On a show of hands Members voted as follows:-*

*Motion by Councillor Bell - 10 votes*

*Amendment by Councillor Haslam - 14 votes*

*The amendment was accordingly carried.*

#### **DECISION**

**DECIDED that no action be taken.**

#### **MEMBER**

Councillor Edgar left the meeting.

#### **10. COUNCIL CHAMPION**

The Convener proposed that the role of the Learning Disability Champion, currently held by Councillor Chapman, be extended to include physical disability and this was unanimously agreed.

#### **DECISION**

**AGREED that the role of Learning Disability Champion be extended to include Physical Disability.**

#### **MEMBERS**

Councillors Marshall, H. Scott and H. Anderson left during the following item of business.

#### **11. OPEN QUESTIONS**

The questions submitted by Councillors Paterson, H. Anderson, Drum, Marshall, H. Scott, Bell, Ramage, A. Anderson and Brown were answered.

#### **DECISION**

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

#### **12. 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.**

### **SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS**

#### **13. Minute**

The private section of the Council Minute of 16 May 2019 was approved.

#### **14. Committee Minutes**

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

#### **15. Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal**

Members noted the progress made to date, agreed the next steps and that further progress reports would be brought to Council at the appropriate time.

*The meeting concluded at 1.25 p.m.*



**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**  
**26 JUNE 2019**  
**APPENDIX I**

**OPEN QUESTIONS**

**Questions from Councillor Paterson**

1. To Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure

I have had several constituents from Newcastleton asking me about the new recycling lorry that this Administration had promised them that they would provide for not only Newcastleton but also several other rural areas in the Scottish Borders. What is the latest developments with the introduction of this recycling lorry and has it been decided what it will collect yet?

Reply from Councillor Haslam on behalf of Councillor Edgar

Officers were requested by the Administration to consider options for the delivery of a temporary mobile recycling pilot. We do not believe however that any commitment was made at that stage to Newcastleton.

This remains a work in progress and the focus on any short life pilot will be to test demand from one town only at this stage. A members briefing note will be issued in due course with the details of the proposed pilot scheme.

Supplementary

Councillor Paterson asked if communities like Newcastleton and Tweedsmuir would be considered, given they had the longest round trip to a recycling centre. Councillor Haslam advised that this decision would be taken once the outcome of the pilot was known. It was important to ascertain the demand for the service and the type of waste. It was hoped that it would work as there was a need to increase recycling rates. Young people in particular were very engaged and she commented on a recent meeting with pupils from Peebles High School. It would be part of the budget considerations to extend the service to more remote communities.

2. To Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Locality Services

Can the Executive Member give the Public an assurance that while the Council and other Councils up and down the length and breadth of the UK still use Glyphosate in the use of weed killing that it is safe to still be using in all areas. The Council have to weed kill especially around children's play areas, with this chemical being linked to instances of cancer, can the Portfolio Holder please give me an assurance that it is still safe to use Glyphosate in weed eradication?

Reply from Councillor Aitchison

Glyphosate is a pesticide, one of the most widely used pesticides in the world, and the UK has a rigorous approvals process for pesticides which are also subject to the regular EU wide initial approval and review programme for active substances. The review programme makes sure that the data supporting their approvals meets modern safety standards. The main aim of the process is to protect the health of people, creatures and plants and to safeguard the environment. The extensive range of studies undertaken on pesticides is aimed at establishing acceptable safety for people, animals and the wider environment. This process has been applied to glyphosate, and it currently approved for safe and efficacious use as an herbicide (weed killer) in the EU.

Approval was granted in 2002, based on a review of mammalian toxicology, ecotoxicology and other data. This approval ran until 31st December 2017 and has subsequently been extended until 15th December 2022.

Scottish Borders Council does use glyphosate across its services, applied by trained staff, and in accordance with its approved use. As with all such systems, we will continue to monitor the situation on an on-going basis.

### **Question from Councillor H. Anderson**

#### To the Executive Member for Children and Young People

Can the Executive Member for Education clarify the Council's policy in relation to the protection of rural local primaries?

#### Reply from Councillor C. Hamilton

Scottish Borders Council's policy for rural education incorporates the recommendations made by the Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education and falls within the ambit of the School Estate Review which commenced in 2016.

The principles of the review are:

- Increased educational and learning opportunities for all generations within the community
- Improved outcomes for the community
- Sustainability
- A future proofed community learning estate
- Affordability

The School Estate Review has involved proactively working with every school (parents and teachers) with a roll under 50 pupils (this includes many of the smaller rural schools) to create and implement plans to improve the sustainability of those schools. This has resulted in e.g. development of Early Learning and Childcare settings, introduction of breakfast clubs and catchment reviews etc. Work with the "under 50" club continues

Rural schools form a large part of our school estate - with 63% of SBC's primary schools and 22% of secondary schools being classified as rural schools. This is a significant proportion as over Scotland only 34% of schools are classified as being "rural"

There is detailed legislation in place regarding the consultation processes required for permanent changes to schools, which also provides specific protections for rural communities to ensure that a closure proposal for a school is the most appropriate option and requires Council's to fully consider the impact that a closure may have on the community. Any proposal for a permanent change to our schools is considered fully in light of the statutory provision and with extensive consultation with the parents and community.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Anderson expressed concern regarding the drop in Scotland's population, the roll out of early years' additional hours, and two primary schools with low rolls. She asked if it was possible to get a projection on population in these areas and how many nurseries were, or could be, attached to primary schools. Councillor Hamilton advised that Officers could provide this information.

### **Question from Councillor Drum**

#### To Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Locality Services

What actions are Scottish Borders Council going to take to learn from the problems encountered in the latest localities bidding process and the subsequent complaints from Community groups around the voting system?

#### Reply from Councillor Aitchison

There will be a full evaluation undertaken of the second phase of the Localities Bid Fund pilot which will mirror the evaluation of the first phase and include a survey of both the public and the project leads, and the methodologies used in both phases. A report on the overall £500k participatory budgeting pilot, including recommendations, will then be brought back to Council as soon as practical".

#### Supplementary

Councillor Drum commented on a recent participatory budgeting conference he had attended where John Alexander had spoken about the Dundee experience and asked if he could be invited to speak to the Council about it. Councillor Aitchison advised that he was happy to speak to people

and learn from the experiences in other areas. The aim of Area Partnerships was to identify local priorities and he gave the example of transport which had resulted in the Rural Transport Seminar.

### **Question from Councillor Marshall**

#### To Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Locality Services

In May 2018 it was agreed to establish a member's reference group to support the proposed programme to deliver a strategic network of outdoor community spaces across the Borders as approved as part of the Councils 2018/19 financial plan.

Can the Executive Member advise:

1. Who were the Members appointed to the Reference Group?
2. How many times did the reference group meet and what decisions did they make?
3. How and when were the decisions of the reference group including awareness of the proposed strategic network plans, communicated to the five Area Partnerships?

#### Reply from Councillor Aitchison

On 6<sup>th</sup> November 2018, the Convener issued an email to all Members outlining the current status of the play park investment proposals advising that discussions were continuing between himself, the lead Officer Jason Hedley and various Members regarding specific investment proposals in specific areas which had been outlined in both the original report to Council and the Convener's email.

It was also suggested in that email, that in hindsight, the formation of a Working Group was not strictly necessary and that matters could be dealt with on a more informal basis through regular meetings, reports and updates, which is what has occurred since that time.

Officers however can provide a full update to Council if required.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Marshall advised that he did not feel his question had been fully answered and asked if the Executive Member supported the removal of playparks which contributed to the wellbeing of the Borders public. Councillor Aitchison advised that consulting with local members had worked better than a set working group and all local Members had been involved. The policy to install new playparks would result in the removal of obsolete play park equipment. Reports to Area Partnerships had been taken following assessment of all playparks and feedback had been received. It was a fact of life that old equipment needed to be removed to pay for the new and there was a need to get to a cost neutral position.

### **Question from Councillor H. Scott**

#### To the Leader

1. What are the criteria used when considering and deciding which matters are to be discussed at 'private' meetings of the Council, where the public and press are excluded, and where Elected Members are bound by the Code of Conduct not to discuss such matters in public, or with their electorate?
2. Who is consulted during these considerations, e.g. Portfolio Holders or members of the Executive, and who makes the final decision?

#### Reply from Councillor Haslam

Private papers at any Council committee meetings are determined using Section 7a (Access to Information: Exempt Information) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended. There are 15 paragraphs in that Schedule describing specific exempt information and the reference to the relevant paragraph is made in the heading of each private committee report.

As these are officer reports, no consultation is held with Elected Members, and either the Clerk to the Council or the Chief Executive will provide advice to the relevant Director and make the final decision on which reports are to be considered in private.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Scott commented on recent items which had been kept confidential only to be released following FOI requests. He asked that the Leader ensure that there would always be a presumption of openness. The Leader confirmed there was a culture of openness and transparency in the Council for all decisions and a motion on each agenda to be agreed by Members before moving into private business.

### **Questions from Councillor Bell**

#### 1. To the Leader

Will you please ask COSLA to initiate an Independent evaluation of the roles & responsibilities of, and the remuneration & support for Scottish Councillors?

#### Reply from Councillor Haslam

Yes but why.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Bell advised that this was required to encourage more females to stand for election and reduce the age demographic. Councillor Haslam commented on a recent meeting "Equally Safe at Work" for which the Council was seeking certification. She felt that Councillors should receive the same support as MSPs such as child care costs and agreed that she would raise this with COSLA.

#### 2. To Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Locality Services

What is the current revenue cost of maintaining the 11 Play parks scheduled for closure in Tweeddale?

#### Reply from Councillor Aitchison

On 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018, Council agreed to both the significant investment and disinvestment in play areas and outdoor community spaces. The report at that time indicated that a significant reduction in the overall number of play parks (at that time numbering 243) maintained by Neighbourhood Services would be required to ensure that sufficient resources, both financial and manpower, could be redeployed to maintain the planned new facilities and ensure that the overall revenue impact on the service was cost neutral (as no additional revenue resources were being provided at that time, only capital).

While specific financial information is not available on a case by case basis, as it is not captured at such a granular level, the proposed removal of play equipment, is intended to provide that cost neutral impact when balanced across the available resources within the Environmental and Parks service. I would further confirm that no play park will be decommissioned until such times as the new play park investment in that locality is complete, and that no town or village which currently has a play park would be left without one following the rationalisation process.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Bell advised that Tweeddale Area Partnership had requested that local communities be consulted and queried the interpretation of obsolete when equipment was still well used. He asked for information on the money to be saved. Councillor Aitchison advised that the Area Partnership meetings were the opportunity for issues to be raised but he was happy for people to get in touch. He was unable to provide details of costs at a granular level but would be able to do so at area level.

### **Question from Councillor Ramage**

To Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Locality Services

If a community can access the advice and funding to renovate a play park, who will be responsible for organising and financing the ongoing maintenance?

#### Reply from Councillor Aitchison

Officers will be able to advise a community group on the technical requirements of maintaining a play park as safe and fit for use. This model is already used in Pringle Park, Selkirk where a community group undertake the necessary inspections and record keeping.

It would however rest with the community to secure finance and technical capacity to meet the obligations in maintaining a play park. The current play park closure programme relies on the revenue resources currently allocated to those old play parks to be utilised to support the new play park investment as previously agreed by Council so that the overall impact on the service is cost neutral.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Ramage in supporting the residents who used playparks asked if this was the Council passing their responsibilities to communities. Councillor Aitchison refuted this and advised that officers had collected information from the Area Partnerships and areas would still be available for play once equipment had been removed.

#### **Question from Councillor A. Anderson**

##### To the Executive Member for Children and Young People

We are about a year down the line in the pilot of the librarian-less school libraries. What lessons have been learned from this from the schools taking part and how is this informing the future of our school libraries?

##### Reply from Councillor C. Hamilton

The pilot in three high schools started in October 2018. An interim evaluation took place in December 2018 with minor changes being implemented in January 2019 to address some minor issues.

A more detailed evaluation was conducted in April 2019 which provided useful feedback from students, staff and parents from all nine high schools. The vast majority of respondents highlighted the importance of having access to a library for reading, digital, research and study. The feedback has been analysed and options for realising the decision of previous Council to identify savings is ongoing. It will also be critical to ensure that future library provision needs to be equitable across the authority.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Anderson asked, given the poor experiences in Galashiels and Eyemouth, that the pilot be abandoned. Councillor Hamilton advised she had spoken to the Parent Council Chairman at Galashiels Academy and the issues were being addressed. There had been a different experience in each school and a report would be provided if there were to be any changes.

#### **Questions from Councillor Brown**

##### 1. To the Executive Member for Roads and Infrastructure

Do you think it is acceptable that we have an adopted road that has 51 potholes varying in size from 18" x 12" to 4ft x 2ft to a depth of 4 to 5 inches?

##### Reply from Councillor Haslam on behalf of Councillor Edgar

In broad terms, the description of the road surface appears to be less than optimal, however without specific context, an indication of length of affected highway or specific details of the actual location being referred to it is difficult to offer any further substantive response

If the Member wishes to provide further information, Officers will provide a detailed response to him.

### Supplementary

Councillor Brown advised that the road concerned served Ramrig Farm near Swinton, affecting 10 properties, and was in urgent need of repair. Councillor Brown expressed disappointment that road condition was not improving and asked what steps were being taken to address this. Councillor Haslam advised that feedback showed that road conditions were improving, with permanent repairs carried out first time, and encouraged anyone to report potholes on-line as soon as possible to allow repairs to be carried out.

### 2. To the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Locality Services

The grass cutting timetable of 21 days was agreed by this Administration to save money. Duns and Gavinton Community Councils now see grass which used to take say 2 hours to cut now taking 2 to 3 times longer to do using more fuel. How can this be saving money? More time, more fuel, more mess.

### Reply from Councillor Aitchison

As part of the Council budget setting for 2018/19, the Council approved savings resulting in changes to the grass maintenance regime to some amenity areas, including cemeteries, from 10 working days to 20 working days. Member's briefings on the proposals were held at that time, during which it was explained that the savings would be principally met through a reduction in staff numbers, and that these reductions would be delivered by not recruiting into vacant posts.

The Council has an obligation not only financially to deliver services from within a defined budget envelope but also has a requirement to meet the environmental and social challenges in delivering those services, which includes responding to the Biodiversity Duty which the Council holds. The items raised in the question were considered as part of the overall saving and this also included significant investment in new equipment.

There can be operational changes which on the face of it, may appear to be less efficient to the public. Without knowing specific details about the instances to which the Member refers, I would ask he share the information reported from Duns Community Council to officers where they can take a more granular view of the issue and thereafter provide him with a detailed response.

### Supplementary

Councillor Brown asked if the Executive Member felt this fell short of satisfactory given the number of complaints. Councillor Aitchison gave examples of reduced grass cutting in other areas and advised that there were mixed views on grass cutting with those supporting biodiversity wanting grass left to grow. His view was that the Council were striking the correct balance.