

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
19 DECEMBER 2019
APPENDIX I

OPEN QUESTIONS

Question from Councillor Robson

To Executive Member for Adult Social Care

Who took the decision to terminate the funding for Borderline Helpline and for what reasons, and is any replacement service being set up?

Reply from Councillor Weatherston

The decision to end the funding to Borderline was jointly taken by NHS Borders and SBC at the Executive Management Team Meeting.

The Health and Social Care partnership, with its significant financial challenges in mind, reviewed its funding to this organisation. Consideration was given to the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) completed and the external review of commissioned services including Borderline. Although Borderline provides a good quality service valued by its users, as there are now alternative national help lines (Breathing Space and The Samaritans) as well as the local mental health crisis team, we have reached the difficult decision to end this contract with 6 months notice. We would also like to highlight the other early intervention and preventions services that we have recently invested in such as the Local Area Coordination Team, The Wellbeing College and the Well Being Service. In addition we have also been working with Primary Care Services to develop a comprehensive primary care mental health service which will be available directly to patients from GP practices across the Scottish Borders.

We will be working hard to support Borderline to seek alternative sources of funding and will be working with them to develop a transition plan to ensure that callers are aware of all the other support services available including those delivered out of hours.

Supplementary

Councillor Robson suggested that it was a disgrace that this funding had been withdrawn without consultation and that these services were not available elsewhere. Councillor Weatherston did not dispute the value of the service but given the huge budget challenges we could not afford to fund this service. The Council were working with them to identify other sources of funding but alternative services which were available offered a 24hr service whereas Borderline was only available 3 hours per evening.

Question from Councillor Bell

To Executive Member for Business and Economic Development

Will Scottish Borders Council be making a formal response to the consultation - which close on 31st January - on the Proposed Remote Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill?

Reply from Councillor Rowley

It is not proposed to make a formal response to this consultation on a private members' bill.

In responding to the challenges of rural areas, we believe that the Council's energies and capacity are best focused on critical developments such as the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency, Borderlands and the Edinburgh and the South-East of Scotland City Deal. These promise to have a truly transformational impact for our area, and all are built on principles of sustainable development which promote an equalities based approach responsive to needs across the board, including in rural settings.

Our focus should be on deprivation, isolation, depopulation, increasing dependency ratio, low growth, low skills and low wages and these are as pertinent in rural as in remote rural contexts.

Ensuring that sustainable development and therefore rural proofing is hard-wired into how the Growth Deals, the Agency and the Council go about their business is likely to be the best way of ensuring that we deliver for our most rural areas.

Officers would try to be available to assist should members wish to submit a response to the consultation.

Supplementary

Councillor Bell ask if the Executive Member would alert rural Community Councils and other Portfolio holders. Councillor Rowley advised he had submitted his own response and encouraged other Councillors to respond.