

Outline Proposal to Scottish Borders Council

Jedburgh Town Hall and Library and other services

1. Summary

The great news for Jedburgh about our new school campus has been diminished by the disappointing news that our Town Hall and our Library are to be closed by the Council.

On top of that blow to the town centre, the recent announcements by the two long-established major firms in the town, Mainetti and Starrett, that they are closing their factories means that some 200 workers will lose their jobs. The knock on effect on the town centre will cause further shop closures whilst local traders will lose vital business.

We understand that the Council is under severe financial pressure and has to save money. At the same time, the town centre is very important to the wellbeing of the community and cannot suffer the closure of two such significant buildings and the loss of so many jobs.

We have prepared this outline proposal because Jedburgh is going to be even more reliant on tourism. It has to be so attractive in appearance that passing visitors would wish to stop here and shop. And we need events and attractions in the town that would encourage prospective visitors to travel here.

Our proposal would improve the appearance of the town, be welcoming to visitors by providing services, develop and operate the Town Hall with superb facilities and increased audiences, and make the Library a social resource. In so doing it will create jobs in the town.

This would be funded under the Community Choices 1% Framework Agreement. What we propose is our Community Choice.

We believe this outline proposal would be to the benefit of both Jedburgh and Scottish Borders Council.

Once the principle of this proposal is agreed we will prepare a detailed Business Plan for implementing the proposal.

2. Jedburgh Town Services (working title)

Jedburgh Town Services (JTS) is the working name for the time being for the body that would implement this proposal. Using existing strong organisations in the town, we are proposing a coordinated structure to provide services needed by the community, to maximise the benefits of common assets, and to utilise the capabilities of local organisations. Funding would be by means of 1% pro rata of SBC's budget plus revenue generated in the town.

The initial areas we propose to encompass are :

The Town Hall

The Library

Town Maintenance (Flower Beds, Grasscutting and Hedgecutting, Play parks)

The 2 Public Toilets at the Main Car Park and The Glebe

An advantage of our proposal is that we would be able to consider other standalone activities and any others as decided by the community and agreed with SBC

3. Facilities to be involved

All of the facilities involved in this proposal are important for both the wellbeing of local residents and for the many visitors we wish to attract to the town as a destination and those who stop here on their way to the rest of the Borders and Scotland.

Providing these facilities will create jobs and can lead to further initiatives to improve services and additional job creation.

3.1 The Town Hall

We have already produced development plans for the area of the Ramparts, Abbey Place, and Murray's Green to become an events venue, of which the Town Hall will be a central feature.

We are finalising and costing plans for developing the use of the hall including, as well as existing activities, indoor markets, business incubators, weddings, Callant's Festival events. The adjacent Bandstand and park will be altered to make a larger flat area which will enable tented spaces directly accessible as an adjunct to the Town Hall.

We will improve the facilities of the Town Hall by extending it to the north and the east, thus providing a ground-level kitchen, and lift access.

The Town Hall would have its own management board, comprised of users and other representative bodies. It would be responsible for developing the facility,

obtaining grant funding, developing the activities, promoting use of it, accounting for income and expenditure.

3.2 The Library

The Library would have its own management committee, comprised of users and other representative bodies. It would be responsible for developing the facility, obtaining grant funding, developing existing and new activities, liaising with the Borders Library Service, promoting use of it, accounting for income and expenditure.

3.3 Flower Beds

Jedburgh is an important tourist town in itself but especially because it is a major gateway to the Borders and Scotland. Its appearance is critical to make it attractive to visit and stay and shop. The appearance of the our flowerbeds is a key visual first impression of Scotland.

The Council has already relinquished responsibility for maintain the flower beds in Jedburgh, some of which are which now are being maintained by volunteers, which is a limited resource. Jedburgh Horticultural Society will provide guidance for the layout of our floral displays. We could receive plants from JHS and others as well as purchasing some, whilst planting would be by a combination of voluntary and paid labour. Volunteers from the Jed Shed could provide items such as planters.

3.4 Grasscutting and Hedgecutting

Tidy grassed areas and neat hedges are likewise important to attract visitors. They need to be mowed and trimmed as and when required (ie not by a fixed schedule) which is easier to manage at a local level. This would be undertaken by paid trained staff.

3.5 Play parks

As well as play parks being a vital local amenity, the one adjacent to the main car park is an attraction for visitors and gives a good impression of the town. It needs to be maintained and insured.

3.6 Public Toilets

Jedburgh is the first town in the Scottish Borders that visitors come to when travelling to Scotland by car or coach. Our welcome is lessened by them having to pay to use the public toilets. JLFT has already made a proposal to SBC to manage the two public toilets, whilst having free entry. This would be advertised at the entrances to the town as an incentive for visitors to stop and shop. Again, this welcome is important not only for the town but for onward journeys to the rest of the Borders and Scotland.

4. Ownership of assets

Depending on discussions with the Council and its requirements, several options for each property are possible. Ownership could remain with the Council and the facilities leased to JTS. Alternatively, options for local ownership of the property and land assets in this proposal could include Jedburgh Common Good Fund, Jedburgh Community Trust or Jedburgh Leisure Facilities Trust.

5. Budget (draft)

Town Hall	£ 24,000
Library	£ 12,000
Town maintenance	£ 47,000
Public Toilets	£ 17,000
Total	£100,000

This is only an indicative budget. A separate budget is being developed for the Town Hall and will be finalised when details of the 2019-20 Town Hall finances have been obtained, whilst the town maintenance budget will require data on the location and sizes of grassed areas and hedging.

In the initial years, financial support for the Town Hall would be the first priority; that is, money spent on other services would be depend on what is available after the Town Hall has been financed.

6. Organisation

The main bodies that will be involved in Jedburgh Town Services are :

6.1 Jedburgh Community Council

As a statutory body JCC its Members are elected by the public under legislation and JCC is accountable to the Audit Commission. It is in the best position to receive questions from the public and to make decisions about what is required by the community.

6.2 Jedburgh Community Trust

JCT was formed 20 years ago to own property which would be held for the community. It already owns the Port House in Exchange Street and the Jed Shed in Abbey Wynd.

6.3 Jedburgh Leisure Facilities Trust

JLFT has been running the Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre since 2003. It is efficient, effective and highly regarded and has been working constructively with the Council for 17 years.

It is owned and managed by and for the community. Because it is run as a social enterprise, it can provide services to other community bodies (as has happened previously).

These services can include supplying staff (eg opening the Town Hall for activities), employing workers for town work, insuring workers and property, providing accounting services, adhering to employment law.

Open from 6am to 8pm on weekdays and 9am to 3pm at weekends, it would make bookings for the Town Hall and would be the contact point for services.

6.4 Jedburgh Alliance

Formed in 1999, JA provides a forum for organisations in the town to discuss and coordinate their activities. It would continue to ensure implementation of the Jedburgh Development Plan. It would monitor the services provided under this proposal and generate new ideas for further services and events.

Other associated bodies include :

6.5 Jedburgh and District News Group

JDNG is the umbrella body for the town's website and our monthly news magazine The Jed Eye. It will report on our activities, undertake satisfaction surveys, etc. It also markets the town.

It also incorporates Jedburgh Marketing and Tourism Group which produces tourist information, banners and other marketing initiatives.

5.6 Jedburgh Horticultural Society

JHS would provide advice and assistance on landscaping and planting.

7. Funding for the proposal

7.1 Community Choices 1% Framework Agreement

This is a commitment by the Scottish Government to work in partnership with local government to have at least 1% of local authority budgets subject to participatory budgeting. That is, local people would have a direct say in how that defined budget can be used to address our priorities. 1% of the Council's budget applied pro rata to Jedburgh would be about £100,000.

This proposal goes beyond how SBC currently implements Community Choices, but is entirely consistent with the Scottish Government's commitment. It would enhanced to promote local democracy, more efficient use of limited resources, and

improvements in citizen engagement and community health, satisfaction and well-being.

The funding could be administered by Jedburgh Community Council (legislation permitting) or by Jedburgh Leisure Facilities Trust which has ALEO status and already has a long-standing financial relationship with the Council.

We propose that our model is used as a pilot project for all towns in the Scottish Borders.

7.2 Earned income

The Town Hall would gradually generate more income as its use is marketed, promoted and locally managed, as would the Library to a lesser extent.

7.3 Development grants

We would apply for development grants from other bodies such as Creative Scotland. This would include improving the facilities of the Town Hall by extending it to the north and the east, thus providing a larger stage, dressing rooms, ground level kitchen, and lift access.

7.4 Jedburgh Common Good Fund

The Trustees of JCGF would be requested to ensure that applications for funding would be for the public good, principally for investment in infrastructure with a long lasting benefit. JCGF could have equity in such investments.

7.5 Other income

Current possibilities being explored are, for example, the two caulds which are suitable for installing turbines, at the Glebe and the Anna. Initial work has been done by JLFT. A town-wide group will be set up to take this to fruition and generate funds for the town and its development.

8. Benefits to Jedburgh and Scottish Borders Council

It is a time of great stress to the people of Jedburgh through closure of factories, shops and key town facilities, loss of jobs, upheaval over many years in the town centre, and compounded by the lockdown. This proposal will energise the townspeople and give them hope and an incentive to be more involved in what goes on in the town. It will be a huge boost to morale.

In a letter to Jedburgh Community Council on 12 March SBC explained it is undertaking a review of every operational property in the Borders as it is no longer feasible to maintain all existing properties. If applied to other towns, this proposal will

be able to offer a solution to the likely objections by these towns to any proposed closures to properties and services.

By making allocations of funding in the way proposed, SBC will save operational and administrative costs.

SBC will be recognised throughout Scotland as a forward looking Council whose application of this proposal will be emulated in many other authorities.

9. Next steps

We request Scottish Borders Council to make a decision in principle to support this outline proposal.

We will set up an Enabling Committee to include representatives from the main groups/organisations that would be involved in the proposal, as described above. This would progress plans to start implementation of the services in this proposal.

We will prepare our detailed Business Plan setting a sustainable vision for the future and a clear financial plan over 5 years, showing long term financial sustainability and demonstrating benefits for both SBC and Jedburgh.

10. Conclusion

This proposal is in the best interests of Scottish Borders Council as well as of Jedburgh and its inhabitants.

The Council would save money by being able to discontinue services, without unrest, that would be carried out by the community itself. It could be a pilot initiative applicable to the rest of the Scottish Borders, and the Scottish Government would be interested for its extension on a Scotland-wide basis, using funding that is already dedicated to local communities. The image of the Council will be enhanced, locally and Scotland-wide.

The people of Jedburgh will have their Town Hall as a focal point of the development of Abbey Place, they will continue to have the Library as a social centre, and they will have control over local services. The effects of the proposal will include greater citizen engagement and will provide the basis for locally initiated improvements to the town.

George Burt
1 July 2020

On behalf of the Jedburgh Legacy Group, consisting of :

Jedburgh Community Council
Jedburgh Alliance
Jedburgh Marketing & Tourism Forum
Jedburgh and District Community News Group

Jethart Callants' Festival
Jedburgh Horticultural Society
Jedburgh Community Trust
Jedburgh Rotary Club
Jedburgh Leisure Facilities Trust
Jedburgh Events
Jedforest Instrumental Band

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