

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL held via Microsoft Teams on 13 MAY 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

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

In Attendance:- Chief Executive, Executive Director (Corporate Improvement & Economy), Executive Director (Finance and Regulatory), Service Director Assets & Infrastructure, Service Director Customer & Communities, Service Director Young People, Engagement & Inclusion, Chief Social Work & Public Protection Officer, Chief Operating Officer Adult Social Work & Social Care, Principal Solicitor, Clerk to the Council.

1. **CONVENER'S REMARKS**

No remarks were made.

.2. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 19 and 25 March 2021 were considered.

DECISION

AGREED that the Minutes be approved and signed by the Convener.

3. **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Minutes of the following Committees had been circulated:-

Peebles Common Good Fund	24 February 2021
Chambers Institution Trust	24 February 2021
Major Contract Governance	2 March 2021
Pension Fund	4 March 2021
Audit & Scrutiny	8 March 2021
Hawick Common Good Fund	16 March 2021
Galashiels Common Good Fund	18 March 2021
Eildon Area Partnership	25 March 2021
Planning & Building Standards	29 March 2021
Tweeddale Area Partnership	30 March 2021

DECISION

APPROVED the Minutes listed above.

4. **BUILD BACK A BETTER BORDERS RECOVERY FUND**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Customer and Communities outlining proposals for the administration of the Build Back a Better Borders Fund which had been agreed within the Council's Financial Plan on 19 March 2021. The report explained that this new Fund had been established in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and, in recovery from it, would provide support for initiatives, projects or events that would "re-boot" or "kick start" activities relating to sport, culture, tackling environment and climate change issues in the year of COP26 (26th Conference of the Parties to the Convention) or volunteering, and therefore strengthening community capacity, resilience and engagement. The Fund, due to its focus on communities, would be allocated to each of the

five localities and would be managed through each Area Partnerships in line with the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) Report recommendations of empowering communities, improving transparency of the grant making process and being part of decision making at a local level. The focus of the Fund was to support those most in need to recover from the pandemic. There were a number of recent studies that had highlighted that those in particular SIMD areas had been disproportionately impacted as a result of Covid-19, and the risk of falling into poverty and extreme poverty was therefore considerably higher to those who were already vulnerable. In line with national and local policies such as Fairer Scotland Duty (including the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act), UN Sustainable Development Goals, Scottish Borders Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and Child Poverty Action Plan, it was therefore proposed that the budget allocation was based on an 80%/20% split of population and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), which was detailed in the report. A draft framework for the Fund was detailed at Appendix 1 to the report. Applications would be invited from 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2022, would be assessed by officers and presented to each Area Partnership for consensus. If consensus was not reached, it would be for Elected Members to make the decision, with the Chair having the casting vote. In order to expedite the Fund efficiently and effectively, there might be a requirement to convene additional Area Partnership meetings if there was a high level of applications. Members discussed the proposal and while the majority were in support, opinion was divided on the benefits of one-off funding.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to approve the proposed funding model as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report; and**
- (b) the funding allocation to each locality on the basis of 80%/20% population and SIMD as detailed in the report.**

5. ENTERPRISE MOBILITY FOR SOCIAL CARE – DELIVERING ON THE DIGITAL STRATEGY

With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of 25 February 2021, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Executive Director Finance and Regulatory proposing the implementation of the first phase of the Council's strategic enterprise mobility platform to digitally connect and empower the Council's frontline social care staff engaged in delivering 'Care at Home' services across the Borders. The report explained that Scottish Borders Council's Digital Strategy had been approved by Elected Members on 25 February 2021. The Digital Strategy identified the need to connect mobile front-line workers and provide improved workforce scheduling as a priority. The project to be delivered with CGI and Total Mobile would, as a first phase, deliver the technical platform for mobilising and empowering the front line workforce across the Council and enable the transformation of the delivery of home care services. The Council currently delivered more than 1.51 million home care visits per year. These care visits helped people to maximise their confidence and independence, living in their own homes wherever possible. These visits were provided by a mix of internal Council and External Care Provision. 360 frontline care workers were directly employed by the Council to undertake approximately 589,000 care visits per year, representing 39% of the total. These staff were supported by 40 agency staff and 19 FTE back office employees. External 3rd party providers delivered approximately 921,000 further visits, currently 61% of the overall total yearly care visits. The strategic business drivers for the project along with the benefits envisaged from the new Total Mobile application were explained. The project would deliver a mix of cashable and non-cashable benefits. The digital enablers scoped within the project business case appended to the report, should unlock gross cashable savings of £0.44M - £0.62M per annum with further productivity gains in non-cashable benefits estimated by Total Mobile at up to 10-15%. The change management approach and the benefits realisation plan were explained in the report. Mr Robertson gave a presentation outlining the project and showing how it could be extended in the future to cover other Council Services. Members welcomed the report and Mr Robertson reassured Members that

discussions had already begun with 3rd party providers on extending this project to cover all carers to ensure that all clients received the same standard of care. Councillor A. Anderson (seconded by Councillor Thornton-Nicol) proposed as an amendment to add a further recommendation, requesting a report on the delivery of savings and care benefits be brought back to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee within 9 months, and this was unanimously accepted.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) **approve the change management plan and the benefits realisation plan detailed in the report provided as part of the Business Case for the implementation of phase 1 of the Council's strategic Enterprise Mobility Programme to digitally connect and empower the Council's frontline social care workforce delivering Care at Home services to Border's residents;**
- (b) **note the Full Business case for the project appended to the report;**
- (c) **note that further phases of the project would be developed over the next 3 year period following the initial role out to Home Care staff; and**
- (d) **request that a report on the delivery of savings and care benefits would be brought to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee within 9 months.**

6. FEES AND CHARGES 2021/2022

With reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of 19 March 2021, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Executive Director Finance and Regulatory proposing an addition to the previously approved fees and charges schedule as follows.

- **Vehicular Access Consent** - For a house on a minor public road, such as in most housing estates, Vehicular Access Consent is required to form or alter an access over a public footway or verge. Introduction of a fee for processing the application which applies whether or not the application is successful.

A charge of £202 would be made for this service for the 2021/22 financial year.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the additional fee of £202 in respect of Vehicular Access Consent.

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Parker passed Chairmanship of the meeting to Councillor Weatherston for the following item of business to allow him to speak in support of the proposal.

7. GALASHIELS COMMUNITY CAMPUS UPDATE REPORT

With reference to paragraph 11 of the Minute of 17 December 2020, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Assets and Infrastructure providing an update on the progress with the new Galashiels Community Campus following the informal community consultation. The report to Council on 17 December 2020 identified that a range of options had been considered for the location of the new Galashiels Community Campus and approved that an informal community based consultation exercise should take place. Consultation material was prepared and a launch of the informal consultation took place on 18 March 2021. The consultation was digitally based given the restrictions in place at that time but were supplemented with an unstaffed exhibition located within the town. The informal consultation closed on 26 April 2021. However, the website remained open and all of the production material of videos, drawings and display information remained available for the public to view. The report provided analysis of the responses received and showed that there had been 1400 visits to the website and the comments section had seen 135 (10%) individual comments sent in. These had been reviewed and assessed in terms of their support or objection to the proposals and it had been ascertained that support was for either

options 1 or 3. There was a small but passionate group in the community who had opposed the Council's preferred option as set out in the community consultation. This group had been vocal in its opposition to the project. However, the Council was confident that there was widespread support amongst the school community and the wider silent majority for option 3. Members spoke in support of the proposal but were disappointed to note that there had been some very negative comments on social media and paid tribute to Dr Gordon for the removal of these. Members also paid tribute to Mr Curry, Mr Renwick and all other officers who had been involved in this project for their work to date.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) **to note the outcome of the informal consultation and that Option 3 remained as the preferred option for the new Galashiels Community Campus;**
- (b) **that the project would proceed to the statutory procedures in accordance with Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997;**
- (c) **to implement the formation of a visioning working group with representation from the community to participate in the further design of Scott Park;**
- (d) **to request the preparation of a business case to support and underpin proposals for Sports Facilities; and**
- (e) **to request a follow on report as the project progressed.**

8. MOTION BY COUNCILLOR BELL

Councillor Bell, seconded by Councillor H. Anderson, moved the Motion as detailed on the agenda in the following terms:-

“This Council, following the departure of the UK from the EU in January this year, welcomes the UK announcement that the Shared Prosperity Fund will be launched in 2022.

Given the timescale, we also welcome the invitation to apply for interim funding through the UK Community Renewal Fund. This funding will enable community organisations, statutory bodies and non-government organisations to pilot new programmes and approaches to community renewal and hopefully lay the foundations for applications to the Shared Prosperity Fund when it becomes operational.

Despite the extremely short deadline, we support our officers in the work they are doing to ensure bids are now submitted and hope their endeavours will ensure Borderers receive their full share of funding over this period.”

Councillor Bell and Councillor Anderson spoke in support of the Motion which was unanimously accepted.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Motion as detailed above.

9. OPEN QUESTIONS

The questions submitted by Councillor Robson were answered.

DECISION

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

MEMBER

Councillor Cochrane left the meeting.

10. **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

11. **Committee Minutes**

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

The meeting concluded at 11.50 a.m.

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
13 MAY 2021
APPENDIX I

1. To Executive Member for Community Development & Localities

Can the Executive Member advise what plans there are to reopen public toilets in the Borders?

Reply from Councillor Tatler

All SBC operated public toilets were closed in March 2020 due to Covid restrictions.

In August 2020, the Council re-opened 16 of the highest priority public toilets across the Borders and it has provided enhanced management and cleaning regimes to ensure public safety at these facilities.

Whilst Covid restrictions are relaxing, Covid precautions are not. Scottish Government guidance advises that there remains a need to continue the enhanced management and cleaning regimes already in place and consequently this impacts resources available to the Council.

The Council understands that there is a desire to re-open other public toilet facilities as tourism increases and it will consider innovative ways to deliver services such as these.

Where an established community group wishes to re-open and operate any other public toilet, officers can discuss opportunities available to them.

However given the enhanced Covid regimes, there are no additional resources available to allow any further public toilets to be re-opened at this time.

Officers will continue to monitor use of public facilities and will bring a report back to Council when and if the government Covid guidance changes.

Supplementary

Councillor Robson referenced an article in the Northumberland Gazette regarding funding of £1m to revamp public toilets in that area and asked if he could give consideration to this and the taking of appropriate measures in the Scottish Borders. Councillor Tatler advised that he was not aware of this article but that officers would be considering the future provision of toilets and proposals would be brought forward in due course.

2. To Executive Member for Adult Wellbeing

Can the Executive Member advise what plans are in place to cope with the number of outstanding home visits needing to be made by occupational therapists?

Reply from Councillor Weatherston

OT Assessments continued by all locality teams throughout the last year, the delivery of this was re-modelled in line with COVID restrictions and assessments were carried out either by a mix of phone, video (Near Me) or home visits depending on need and risks involved. This work covered a range of critical needs around assessment for equipment, moving and handling, and assessments to support hospital prevention of admission and discharge.

Currently we have a waiting list of 30 adaptations within our Care and Repair team. This is higher than normal partly due to a vacant post and maternity leave last year, and partly due to the pandemic. We have put in place a number of measures to manage waiting time such as prioritising external adaptations, completing grant paperwork remotely, asking the service user or family to take measurements/photographs of the bathroom for example enabling us to draw up a draft plan. This can speed up the process to the point of requesting quotes for the adaptation, however, we are then at the mercy of contractors providing quotes and ultimately having the capacity to take work on timeously. We also have a number of

installations delayed due to contractors being unable to carry out any internal works. These have now been prioritised for installation as COVID restriction have been reduced.

Supplementary

Councillor Robson asked that where there had been instances of works taking place without visits that these be checked. Councillor Weatherston asked for site specific information to allow any concerns to be raised with officers.