

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTE of Meeting of the EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE held remotely by Microsoft
Teams on Tuesday, 5 October 2021 at 10.00
am

Present:- Councillors S. Haslam (Chairman), G. Edgar, E. Jardine, C. Hamilton,
S. Hamilton, E. Jardine, S. Mountford, M. Rowley, R. Tatler, G. Turnbull
Also Present:- Councillors S. Marshall & W. McAteer
Apologies:- Councillor T. Weatherston
In Attendance:- Director Education & Lifelong Learning, Director Infrastructure & Environment,
Director Resilient Communities, Democratic Services Team Leader,
Democratic Services Officer (D Hall).

EDUCATION BUSINESS

Present: - Mrs L Craig, Mr I. Topping, Eleanor Lockey (Pupil Representative)

CHAIRMAN

Councillor C Hamilton chaired the meeting for consideration of Education Business.

1. STANDARDS AND EQUALITY REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 1.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Education and Lifelong Learning which informed the Executive Committee of progress made by the Education Service and schools during 2021-21 and noted the improvement priorities for session 2021-22. The Standard in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 placed a responsibility on Local Authorities to provide schooling for children and to ensure continuous improvement of the education system. The 2019/20 Standards and Quality Report provided a high level summary of the performance of schools in line with the Education Service Improvement Plan, it noted attainment and achievement across all aspects of service delivery. Appendix A to the report contained the Standard & Quality Report, an evaluation of the academic session 2020 -21 and drew on a range of data/information to support its conclusion. The report acknowledged the challenges faced by schools as a result of COVID-19 and the subsequent two periods of lockdown, but also highlighted a number of successes and achievements across all sectors. Appendix B to the report contained the Improvement Plan, a statement of objectives for academic session 2021-22. The Plan took cognisance of the recovery phase for education and a Build Back Better approach as outlined by the Scottish Government. The inclusion of Inspire Learning as a key driver for improvement in schools was noted in the report.
- 1.2 Members discussed the report and praised the excellent work done in trying times. In response to a question regarding the promotion of participation in local sports clubs in schools, Ms Robertson undertook to examine the issue further ahead of the expected resumption of team sports. In response to a question on specific plans to improve numeracy and literacy rates, Ms Robertson explained that plans were included in the framework, with clear strategies set out therein. The recovery curriculum also gave

explicit permission for teachers to focus on areas that had been identified as requiring attention. Regarding the development of young people in the workforce, Ms Munro explained that the high rate of leavers in the region that moved on to positive destinations reflected the willingness of many stakeholders to create opportunities for young people. In response to a question on mental health challenges faced by pupils, in particular young girls, Ms Strong explained that the wellbeing of pupils continued to be of the highest importance and that support was available 24/7. In response to a question regarding the promotion of schemes in schools, Ms Strong acknowledged that communications could be better and that she would liaise with schools to improve awareness of the availability of help.

DECISION

NOTED the report.

2. SOUTH EAST IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Education & Lifelong Learning which informed the Executive Committee of the progress made by the South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC) and the improvement priorities from August 2021. The report highlighted SEIC progress and achievements, as well as detailed the priorities from August 2021. It demonstrated commitment and action to achieving the national aims of excellence, equity and empowerment. In response to a question, Ms Strong, Chief Education Officer clarified that the focus of the collaborative was on improving staff skills development, which would have the effect of improving experiences for young people.

DECISION

(a) NOTED the SEIC improvement plan as contained in Appendix 1 to the report; and

(b) AGREED to support the involvement of staff in relevant improvement activities for the benefit of Children and Young People in the Scottish Borders.

OTHER BUSINESS

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Haslam chaired the meeting for the remainder of the meeting.

3. MINUTE

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 14 September 2021.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

4. PLACE BASED INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

4.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director of Resilient Communities that provided information on the Scottish Government Place Based Investment Programme which had provided an allocation of £38m of capital funding to Scottish Local Authorities, payable in the financial year 2021/22 with a view to supporting town centre regeneration projects and developing community wealth building. The Scottish Borders had been provided with an allocation of £912k which had been allocated based on a combination of total population and existing deprivation levels. The existing allocation needed to be financially committed by the end of the current financial year. Scottish Government and Council Leaders had agreed that Local Authorities would

receive a share of funding to help support place based investment over the next five years. Council officers had concentrated on the key priority towns identified in the Town Centre Matrix and had currently identified three potential projects in Eyemouth, Galashiels and Jedburgh that funding could be allocated to at the present time, with further work being carried out by officers in the other localities with a view to identifying and delivering additional placed-based projects in other settlements before the end of the financial year.

- 4.2 In response to a question regarding the project in Galashiels, Mr Johnstone, Lead Officer explained that the stone slabs that had been used in certain areas of Galashiels had not been fit for purpose, the supplier had accepted responsibility and that partial compensation was being provided by the supplier. It was confirmed that the replacement of slabs would primarily take place at Market Square and Cornmill Square, with works also being undertaken to reinstate a local statue at Market Square. With regard to the Town Centre Matrix which had last been updated in 2019, Mr Johnstone confirmed that the new officers in post would be reviewing these.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) **acknowledge the Scottish Government's Place Based Investment Programme intended to provide place based funding for Scottish Local Authorities over the next five years; and**
- (b) **allocate £560k from the current financial year allocation to three key projects within the priority towns of Eyemouth, Galashiels and Jedburgh.**

5. HAWICK FLOOD PROTECTION SCHEME – UPDATE ON ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK

- 5.1 With reference to paragraph 7 of the Minute of 16 March 2021, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Infrastructure and Environment that provided an update on the Active Travel Network element of the overall Hawick Flood Protection Scheme following the report to Executive Committee on 16 March 2021. An additional £3.7M of funding was granted to the Council by Sustrans for the Active Travel Network element of the Hawick Flood Protection Scheme. This additional funding allowed for increased Neighbourhood Links to be considered. Since the previous report, Officers had collaborated with Sustrans to identify a range of additional measures. Those additional measures were identified within the report.

- 5.2 In response to a question regarding the environmental impact of using asphalt to pave footpaths, Mr Curry undertook to examine the viability of alternative materials. The Chairman invited contributions from the local Members in attendance, who spoke extremely highly of this additional work as part of the Flood Protection Scheme.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the additional measures identified within the report to provide enhanced Active Travel Network Neighbourhood Links within the Hawick Flood Protection Scheme.

6. WINTER SERVICES PLAN

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Infrastructure and Environment that provided a review of the performance of Scottish Borders Council's Winter Service during 2020/21, and presented at Appendix A to the report, SBC's proposed Winter Service Plan for 2021/22. The report included in Appendix B the details of the ward members workshops held following last winter, and provided

feedback and updates following those meetings. SBC provided a winter service on over 3,000km of roads and 1250 km of footway across the Scottish Borders. The Winter Service Plan was reviewed annually and presented to elected members to outline the steps that aimed to make sure the road and footway network was safe. As part of the Fit for 2024 programme of transformational change, the Council was required to modernise and adapt all of its services to meet present and anticipated future needs in a responsive and agile manner, ensuring that services could continue to be delivered cost effectively and sustainably, while delivering efficiencies and savings where required. The winter of 2020/21 was not significant in terms of snowfall, which was limited to a few occasions. There was an almost unprecedented period of prolonged frost from late December to mid-February. This, coupled with increased sensitivity and expectation due to Covid-19, had resulted in above average salt usage and a higher than normal number of precautionary treatments being required. The Winter Service Plan for 2021/22 was similar to the previous 2020/21 Plan in terms of policy, priorities, routes, call out arrangements and resource planning. In response to a question on modernisation, Brian Young, Network Manager, explained that improvements would entail a variety of measures such as using technology to manage salt spread rates. Mr Young explained that the monitoring of salt bins was another ongoing matter, with operations staff assessing bins ahead of winter. In response to a question on the importance of communications and the SB Alert system, Mr Young undertook to look into the use of text messaging to issue weather alerts.

DECISION

(a) **NOTED the performance of the SBC Winter Service during 2021/21; and**

(b) **AGREED to endorse the Winter Service Plan for 2021/22.**

7. PRIVATE BUSINESS

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 the Appendix to this Minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 8 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

8. MINUTE

The Committee noted the Private Minute of the Meeting on 14 September 2021.

9. PROPOSED RELOCATION OF A BUSINESS FROM EARLSTON TO LAUDER INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

The Committee considered a report by the Director Environment and Infrastructure and approved the recommendations.

The meeting concluded at 11.50 am.