

## Response from Peter Hincks, Jed Valley Community Council

1. How your Community Council can ensure it considers equality and inclusion as part of its work  
We would look for guidance from SBC in the form of an appendix contained within the Scheme document.
2. Reference to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015  
A resume of any Act such as that above that is relevant to the operational ability of a community council should be attached as an appendix to the Scheme. Alternatively, such a resume could be made available to CCs on the SBC website.
3. Reference to Sub-Committees of Community Councils  
Sub-committees may be necessary for a specific purpose (eg a planning subcommittee or a special events) but they should be at the general consensus of that CC and perhaps have a limited role within the subject matter.
4. Should there be reference to wider localities/Area Partnerships?  
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5. Should there be a formula for determining the number of members of a Community Council (based on population and geography)?  
To have a community council in a rural area is somewhat different from that of a town area. In rural areas it is often very difficult to encourage and find volunteers willing to serve on a community council so it would be beneficial to determine the membership by both geography and population. Both these elements are important within rural communities but most particularly due to the spread of population and travelling distances to meetings.
6. Should there be reference to the ability to hold on-line meetings as well as physical meetings?  
Providing that the on-line element is of a suitable high speed and all members & general public are able to connect and that the meeting can be controlled and if necessary edited on the spot. It would be a good idea to give the individual community council the right to choose which way to hold any one meeting. It must be borne in mind that not all members have access to the internet.
7. The Working Group considers that the term of office for a Community Council should be 3 years (with options for Community Councillors to stand for re-election). Should the term be fixed or should there be rolling elections (i.e. an annual election with 1/3 of members standing down each year)?  
An elected term of three years for each community councillor would be good with a portion of members standing down at the end of each term. However, in rural areas it might be prudent to allow those standing down to be re-elected if new candidate numbers do not meet with the vacancy. It should be mandatory that the officers may only serve two consecutive terms in an officers position (ie after 6 years they relinquish the position but could be elected as a general member for the next term)
8. Should there be a limit on the number of times someone can be an office bearer?

There would be no need for such a requirement if the term an officer's position were limited as per previous answer.

9. Should training for Community Councillors be compulsory and who should provide that training?

Training is always advantageous to all but it must be borne in mind that community councillors are volunteers and are therefore giving of their free time so it should not be mandatory. Perhaps at the first formal meeting of a newly constituted community council the general public should be excluded to allow a training session to be conducted by a qualified individual who could be a representative of the SBC.

10. Should Community Councils be required to hold an annual survey/event to gather local views on a number of different issues relevant to their particular area?

Rural communities often prefer to go direct to their respective SBC ward councillors to have a problem resolved. An annual event seeking various views could be informative. At the same time the SBC ward councillor should keep the CC informed of the enquiry to give the CC a chance to take note of the subject matter.

11. Should a complaints procedure be included in the Scheme?

It would be beneficial in many instances to have a formal complaints procedure administered by an independent body (ie one not attached to the community council in question)

12. Should there be any changes to the co-option of members to Community Councils?

It may not be appropriate to publicly announce the details of the proposed co-opted member, as proposed in the scheme, if GDPR suggests otherwise. That information should be made available to a responsible individual within SBC for approval prior to a CC meeting. This would obviate any anomalies and ensure excluded individuals are not proposed as per section 8.2 of the Scheme for establishment. The CC may not have knowledge of excluded individuals.

13. Should the Code of Conduct for Community Councillors involve sanctions should these be broken?

Yes! In the case of a minor infringement it could simply be being banned from one meeting. In the case of a very serious breach there could be a mandatory exclusion from some meetings or perhaps a complete ban on ever being elected again to a community council. Such matters would best be dealt with by a disciplinary committee.

14. Should Scottish Borders Council's website include links to where Community Councils publish their agendas and minutes?

An excellent idea as some community councils seem reluctant to publish their meetings on the internet. Even if there were to be a coded access to the site for community councils common problems could be aired and dealt with either between councils or further advice sought for the benefit of all.

15. What funding should be available for Community Councils and for what purpose?

Specific funds should be made available to each CC to reimburse its officers for general expenses (ie postage, paper and printer ink, travel, payment of annual audit fees, hire of halls {thus negating the need to reimburse these costs} and a sum of monies to cover other sundry expenses based on a population count but being related to the type of CC be it a town or a rural community.

16. Should on-line banking be included?

With the demise of so many high street banks on-line banking should be made available to each and every community council.

17. Should there be job description/role profiles for Community Councillors and office bearers?

At the present time role profiles are available for basically the officers and whilst specific jobs can be delegated to individual members it would be an advantage to lay down rules to prevent individual members unreasonably excusing themselves from executing a specific job. Details could be included in the training session noted above

18. Should details of the Scottish Borders Community Council network be included in the Scheme?

It would be of assistance to each community council to know what the role of the SBCCN really was and the action each community council can take to involve the SBCCN on its behalf.