

Response from Esther Daborn, Skirling Community Council

1. How your Community Council can ensure it considers equality and inclusion as part of its work

Yes.

2. Reference to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

Yes – with an explanation of how a CC might enact those provisions.

3. Reference to Sub-Committees of Community Councils

Yes, to allow them to be set up.

4. Should there be reference to wider localities/Area Partnerships?

Yes – CCs should be encouraged to do so by SB Councillors attending meetings, by offering a platform to communicate with each other (through some version of the SBC CC Network, or through some channel to the TAP meeting chair).

Networking to create a meaningful exchange between community voice, knowledgeable others (SBC officers) and SB Councillors (policy developers and purse holders) needs a sustainable base to work from.

5. Should there be a formula for determining the number of members of a Community Council (based on population and geography)?

I think there already is.

6. Should there be reference to the ability to hold on-line meetings as well as physical meetings?

Yes, this should be encouraged to complement face to face meetings.

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)?

There should be a recommendation, but also permission for the CC to make decisions about term of office based on what is practical for that locality. SB Councillors can keep an eye on what they see and make a recommendation to the Communities Office if they consider there is a reason for a change in how a community is represented to the SBC.

8. Should there be a limit on the number of times someone can be an office bearer?

See comment above – what is practical and desirable for the community is the guiding principle.

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

The key is to a) respect the limited time that volunteers might have, b) encourage them to take advantage of support.

Training should therefore not be compulsory, but open access to resources should be offered. I understand some are already available.

A skills analysis questionnaire might be interesting. What skills do SBC officers consider desirable?

The questionnaire could ask C Councillors to consider whether they know how to do x, y, z, and offer resources to plug the gaps.

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?

Perhaps not so compulsory as 'annual' – there will be a tedium factor interfering.

But the community will be fine with an occasional survey. We did one when the first lockdown started to get an idea of needs and who could offer assistance.

Other information gathering can be done less formally.

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

Yes, and included on the CC website.

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

No – seems to work fine.

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

Yes.

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

Yes – there should be standard websites for CCs and links to those websites on the SBC website – CC websites should be standardised. They are currently liquorice allsorts.

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

It is important that a CC has an annual amount from SBC to cover regular running costs – website maintenance, rent of Village Hall, Christmas decorations, etc.

Applications to funds such as the Community Fund should only be used for one off projects. Since Community Councillors are all volunteers, they should not have to spend time preparing applications every year for regular outgoings.

An Annual budget should be set up and agreed with the Community Council Treasurer when this new scheme is initiated.

Some CCs have considerable community funding available from Windfarms, so this income should be taken into account when the SBC is discussing the budget to be set. In subsequent years, the CC should be asked to review these outgoings and request more or less as appropriate.

16. Should on-line banking be included?

Yes, we have already set that up.

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

I think there are. But if not, yes. But make sure you ask the CCs to edit any role profiles developed by SBC before they are finalised. They are the ones in the roles and they know what's needed.

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

To be honest, that network seems to exist in one dimension only – as a series of Minutes online. What is needed is, as suggested in No 4 above, is an interactive platform for CCs to communicate with each other.

A sustainable base is needed for networking to create a meaningful exchange between

- i) community voice,
- ii) knowledgeable others (SBC officers) and
- iii) SB Councillors (policy developers and purse holders).

This would mean a thorough overhaul of how the current SBC CC Network operates.