

Report of Neighbourhood Support Fund Assessment Panel Meeting on Thursday 9th June 2022

Introduction

This paper outlines the recent work undertaken by the Assessment Panel for the Berwickshire Area Partnership, Neighbourhood Support Fund (previously known as SBC's Community Fund). It gives a brief description of various activities and a review of recent applications. It goes on to make recommendations for consideration by the BAP.

Berwickshire Neighbourhood Support Fund 2022/23

Berwickshire Area Partnership, Neighbourhood Support Fund, Assessment Panel (NSF AP) met for the first full meeting of the financial year, between 1-2pm on Monday 9th May 2022. This was the first meeting since a change of fund name and an increase in funds available. The table below indicates how several individual funds have been drawn together into the Neighbourhood Support Fund for 2022/2023.

Neighbourhood Support Fund 2022/23	£86,612.21
Community Fund 2021/22 carry forward	£2,620.21
Local Festival Grants 2021/22 carry forward	£5,454.11
Ring-fenced Horse Time 2021/22 funding	£4,500
Total Neighbourhood Support Fund 2022/23	£99,187.19

Changes in the Application Form

At the last meeting of the BAP, it was agreed that the AP should make some minor changes to the application form to simplify it and streamline the assessment of submissions.

Specifically, we:

- requested a 50-word summary of what the project aims to achieve and how much it will cost
- added word limits to some sections and
- reworded some questions in order that they more closely correspond to the guidance notes and marking schedule used by the assessment panel

It was not possible to introduce an on-line version of the form, but we created a downloadable version of the modified application form which people accessed through the SBC website. This change seems to have been successful.

Additional Panel Members

A further member of the Assessment Panel recently stood down, following his election to Council. This leaves a current membership of four Assessment Panel members and four vacancies on the panel. The number of members required for the panel to be quorate when assessing applications is 4 members. In view of the need for four voting members for the

panel to be quorate, there is an urgent need to recruit additional members and attain a full complement of panel members. We continue to seek to appoint further members to the panel and anyone interested in joining the panel should contact Gillian Jardine GJardine@scotborders.gov.uk or James Purves JPurves@scotborders.gov.uk for further information.

Annual Review of Panel Operation

As described above we reviewed the operation of the Assessment Panel prior to the last meeting of the BAP. This led to changes in the application form. Since then we have had a further discussion related to the benefits to be gained if the Assessment Panel had full delegated powers.

At its meeting on 4th March 2021 the BAP agreed to the following recommendation: “We recommend the creation of a sub-subcommittee of the BAP with full delegated powers to undertake the assessment of applications and subsequently make awards.” At the SBC meeting on 25th March 2021, it was agreed that Assessment Panels could be introduced, but with limited powers which would be reviewed after one year.

All the funding recommendations made by the Assessment Panel to date have been agreed by the BAP. The process of reaching our decisions is now understood and accepted as fair, consistent, robust and transparent. Unfortunately, because the current arrangements require us to make recommendations to a BAP meeting, the communication to applicants, of subsequent awards, is being delayed significantly. We would therefore like to uncouple the work of the Assessment Panel and the BAP.

We recognise that under the Scheme of Delegation this request needs to be considered by Council rather than the BAP. We do however ask the BAP to consider and support a recommendation to Council that the panel receives full delegated powers. We would still report our decision to the BAP and our processes would be open to the scrutiny of the BAP and periodic modification as appropriate.

We therefore propose that:

1. It is agreed by BAP that a recommendation is made by BAP Elected Members to Council that the Neighbourhood Support Fund – Assessment Panel receives full delegated powers to make and communicate its decisions to applicants.
2. We move to a process of three, equally spaced, funding rounds each year, with the prospect of applicants receiving a decision within four weeks of the closing date for applications.

Assessment of Applications

The minutes of the meeting can be seen in Appendix 1 below, but to summarise:

- The Assessment Panel members involved were Keith Dickinson (Chair), Anne McNeil, Andrew Mitchell and Rachel Parker (voting members)
- As a result of the proximity of SBC elections only one councillor, John Greenwell, was able to attend the meeting.
- Recognising the need for transparency, panel members made declarations of interest where appropriate.
- Prior to the meeting SBC officers checked that applications complied with the published Eligibility Criteria.
- We blind marked all applications, according to the published criteria and SBC officers tabulated and circulated all marks prior to our meeting.
- There was a strong measure of agreement on both applications, so we moved relatively smoothly to a consensus and agreement on our recommendations.
- As a result of a declarations of interest, the panel was not quorate during the discussion of the ReTweed application. Nevertheless, a recommendation has been made.

A brief description of the applications considered and some individual feedback from our deliberations, can be found in **Appendix 1** below.

Summary of Recommendations

- 1. It is recommended that BAP approve the awards detailed in Appendix 1**
- 2. It is recommended that BAP approve the recommendation that the Neighbourhood Support Fund – Assessment Panel receives full delegated powers to make and communicate its decisions to applicants.**
- 3. It is recommended that BAP approve the recommendation for three, equally spaced funding rounds each year.**

APPENDIX 1

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL BERWICKSHIRE COMMUNITY FUND ASSESSMENT PANEL

MINUTES of Meeting of
BERWICKSHIRE COMMUNITY
FUND ASSESSMENT PANEL held via
Microsoft Teams on Monday 9th May
at 1:00pm

Present:- K Dickinson (Chair), A McNeil, A Mitchell, R Parker,
Councillors J Greenwell

In Attendance:- Community Co-ordinator G Jardine and Community
Engagement Officer James Purves

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Berwickshire Neighbourhood Support Fund 2022/23. It was noted that J Anderson would not participate in today's meeting due to his election to Council last week.

2. UPDATE ON DECISIONS MADE AT MARCH BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP (BAP)

Horse Time requested clarification on whether the funding awarded for the Individual Therapy project is to be spent within two months or whether the two month timescale is only in relation to the requested evaluation. SBC has confirmed with Horse Time that the request is for an interim evaluation of the first two months delivery of Individual Therapy and that funding does not need to be spent within this timescale. The panel requests that the interim evaluation be shared with assessment panel for members for discussion and agreement of next steps in relation to Horse Time's second funded project, the Resilience workshop. This review can be carried out by email and a meeting is not required.

3. ASSESSMENT PANEL REVIEW

Following agreement at the March BAP of a revised funding application form, the panel considered further recommendations they would like to make to the BAP. The panel agreed they will present the recommendations that were first put forward to the BAP at their meeting of July 2021 but which weren't supported by Council. The panel will ask the BAP to support these recommendations being put to Council once again. Proposals will also include having three or four rounds of funding per year with a fixed time, independent of BAP meeting dates. The panel would continue to report to the BAP and produce an annual report for transparency.

4 MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSESSMENT PANEL

The panel members agreed that the panel membership needs to increase to make the panel more credible. All panel members and SBC are to identify people / parties who they think might be interested in joining the panel and discuss this with them. There are four vacant places which the panel would like to see filled.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A discussion was had on when a declaration of interest is required. Cllr Greenwell contributed that it should be for the individual to decide their conflict of interest. The panel were not quorate for assessing the application from Re-Tweed.

GJ is to take advice on what the process is when the panel are not quorate for an application. It was agreed the panel would discuss Re-Tweed's application and come to an agreement on whether they would recommend it for funding.

6 PROJECT ASSESSMENTS

Burnmouth Community Council

An application from Burnmouth Community Council requesting £1,064 was received for two gazebos and a gas barbeque in order for shelter and hot food to be provided during community events in the hope that this will increase community engagement. The overall view was that it is worthwhile supporting efforts to increase community engagement. It was believed that if there is such a shelter it will increase engagement. These assets will help promote currently planned events and should encourage additional activities.

Decision NOTED that:-

It was agreed to recommended that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of £1,064 to Burnmouth Community Council

Re-Tweed *not quorate

An application from Re-Tweed requesting £4,900 was received for website and marketing costs to promote their trading activity International Tartans. It included a clear description of what Re-tweed does and their aim to grow international tartans. The application included a clear description of how the project will support women not in employment currently. Re-tweed have had previous success and the legacy from international Tartans is a significant step forward for Re-Tweed, but it will take a lot of marketing. This is a major initiative that has support from several partners and this gave the panel members confidence that the project was worthy of support.

Decision NOTED that:-

It was agreed to recommended that the Berwickshire Area Partnership award a grant of £4,900 to Re-Tweed

7 FUNDING AVAILABLE

As there is significantly more funding available than last year and then the panel expected to be available, the panel agreed on the need to promote the fund and attract more applications.

8 OVERALL REVIEW OF MARKS

Overall there was agreement from panel members on the worth of these two applications but some discussion on the detail provided by applicants and that evidence of need could have been strengthened.

9 REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS 1-2

The panel reflected on the challenges of being quorate and that is they had delegated powers they could do more to accommodate applicant timelines.

In addition to the two applications discussed, it was also raised that an application had been received over the weekend. Although the closing date for the first round has passed, the panel are supportive of assessing the application in time for the June BAP meeting to try accommodating the project start date of June 2022 plus the panel have met earlier than they normally would.

10 DECISIONS AND REPORT TO AREA PARTNERSHIP

It was agreed two applications would be recommended to the BAP for funding with a third application still to be assessed. There was recognition that the panel has not been quorate for one application and unlikely to be quorate for the the application still to be assessed so will take advice on how this is to be presented to the BAP.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

G Jardine to confirm date of the first BAP meeting after June.

The meeting concluded at 14:05pm