

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
31 MARCH 2022
APPENDIX II

Question from Councillor Robson

To the Leader

Does the Council have any ties or connections with either Polish or Ukrainian local authorities and have there been any contacts with them since 24th February?

Reply from Councillor Rowley

There are no such arrangements in place and the Council has not had any contact with Ukrainian or Polish Local Authorities since the 24th February

Supplementary

Councillor Robson commented on the pressures being caused by the number of refugees arriving in Poland and asked the Leader if he could raise the matter at COSLA to see if any Local Authority to Local Authority support could be provided either in practical or financial terms. Councillor Rowley advised that he hoped the Borders would offer a welcome to refugees and was just awaiting confirmation from Government of the Council's role. He confirmed he would raise the matter at COSLA and with Council officers.

Question from Councillor McAteer

To the Executive Member for Adult Wellbeing

Considering the communication received on Friday 18th March that advised that the submission of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the Hawick Care Village is being postponed from the previously agreed Spring 2022 until Summer 2022 (August/September 2022) can the Executive Member provide,

A) reassurance to the people of Hawick and the local community that the budgeted 60 bed care home remains committed and will be built in Hawick as promised?

B) That sufficient funding remains in place to complete the Hawick project without compromise, given the progress being made on the Tweedbank Care Village project?
and can he

C) indicate what plans are in place with regards to the Deanfield Care Home site in Hawick following previously made comments to this council that it was not fit for purpose and that increasing maintenance costs made its future untenable?

Reply from Councillor Weatherston

A) Reassurance to the people of Hawick and the local community that the budgeted 60-bed care home remains committed and will be built in Hawick as promised?

I can confirm that SBC remains fully committed to the Hawick Care Village development. In Council on 25th November 2021, it was noted that an Outline Business Case for the Hawick development would be developed and brought back to Council in Spring 2022.

As part of the process to develop an Outline Business Case, Scottish Borders Council want to do this in the right way and maximise the potential benefits for the people of Hawick, and so will engage fully with communities, staff, and the social care sector in order to do this well.

When this was discussed in Council in November, the Covid wave over January and February was not anticipated. This Covid wave significantly impacted on social care services, those who use these services, staff and the wider sector. As a result this impacted on our timescales for the engagement required and unfortunately as a result the timetable has had to be delayed to Summer. This engagement is crucially important as it helps us to get this right for the people of Hawick, and to ensure that the impacts of our public spend are maximised.

B) That sufficient funding remains in place to complete the Hawick project without compromise, given the progress being made on the Tweedbank Care Village project?

In March 2020, the Council's Capital Investment Plan approved in March 2020 included a £22.679m allocation for "new residential care provision" for Tweedbank and Hawick. That funding remains available for these developments, without compromise. Our engagement process that I described in the first part of my answer will ensure that SBC maximise value for money.

C) Indicate what plans are in place with regards to the Deanfield Care Home site in Hawick following previously made comments to this council that it was not fit for purpose and that increasing maintenance costs made its future untenable?

The provision for Deanfield Care Home site is being considered as part of the work in the development of the Outline Business Case. SBC have not yet confirmed the plans for Deanfield as we have not completed the Outline Business Case process including the engagement and the Options Appraisal processes.

Supplementary

Councillor McAteer advised that this was a serious matter for Hawick and sought clarification regarding the possible inclusion of private providers and the provision of 60 beds. Councillor Weatherston advised that there was absolute commitment to the provision in Hawick.

Question from Councillor H. Scott

To the Executive Member for Infrastructure, Travel and Transport

Considerable concern has been expressed by members of the community about the proposal to install an uncontrolled island crossing point on the C77 road at Melrose Gait. The residential estates here have a high population of young families and school children, who will be obliged to use this uncontrolled crossing point, with no indication of who has precedence, divers or pedestrians, and the associated dangers that may arise.

In light of recent changes to the Highway Code which places an obligation on the drivers of motor vehicles to give way to pedestrians at junctions and designated crossing points, will:

1. SBC now re-consider its decision to install an unregulated crossing point and instead install a 'Zebra', or light controlled crossing to remove any ambiguity?

or

2. Be prepared to arrange a site meeting with members of Galashiels Community Council and the Melrose Gait Residents Association to discuss the rationale and justify the decision to install an uncontrolled island crossing?

Reply from Councillor Edgar

1. Melrose Gait is not generating consistently large numbers of pedestrians crossing the C77 to walk into Galashiels. Whilst the CRC is accessed from the C77, vehicle volumes still allow gaps in the traffic for a pedestrian to cross. Moreover, the Highway Code has been changed recently and vehicle drivers are expected to adhere to the guidance that is set out within to improve the safety of people walking, cycling and riding horses. Considering these three factors, an uncontrolled island crossing point is the most appropriate solution for this location at this present time.

Light controlled crossings are reserved for locations where there are consistently large numbers of pedestrians crossing throughout the day. This is determined by an assessment of the volume of pedestrians, numbers of vehicles and gaps in traffic coupled with officer expertise, good practice guidance and local knowledge. Light controlled crossings are usually located in town centres or close to schools. There are local examples at Langlee Primary School on Melrose Road and St Peters on Abbotsford Road. Both of these locations were previously zebra crossings and subject to complaints from pedestrians about drivers not stopping. The Good Practice Guide published by Transport Scotland states that they no longer support use of zebra crossings as they are unsuitable for visually impaired pedestrians.

This particular stretch of road reverted back from a 20mph to a 30mph speed limit following discussions between officers, elected members and the community council. Officers are currently developing the design for the new roundabout at the C77 Melrose Road junction which will be constructed in 2023. This will be designed to support active travel and pedestrian movements.

2. As this response sets out the rationale justifying the uncontrolled island crossing point I do not think a site meeting is necessary at this time. However, Officers will continue to monitor activity in the area as the new crossing point is constructed and the roundabout developed and should circumstances change will review any further interventions that might be necessary.

Supplementary

Councillor Scott advised while he respected officers' expertise he could not agree with the reply and asked that a further letter of explanation be sent to the Community Council as to why a crossing was not required. Councillor Edgar confirmed he would ask the Director to provide a letter.