

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES of Meeting of the
BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP
held in Coldstream Community Centre, High
Street, Coldstream, TD12 4AP on Thursday,
1 December 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:- Councillors J. Anderson (Chair), J. Greenwell, C. Hamilton, D. Moffat, A. Orr and M. Rowley

Other organisations attendees: Ms J. Amaral (BAVS), Ms L. Anderson (Eyemouth CC); Mr J. Cairnie and Mr A. Johnson (Duns CC); Ms T. Collin (Allanton, Whitsome and Edrom CC), Ms D. Findlay, Ms J. Thomson and Ms W. Myers (Coldstream and District CC); Mr L. Inglis (Reston and Auchencrow CC), Ms A. McNeil (A Heart for Duns), Mr C. McQuinn (Hutton and Paxton CC), Ms R. Parker (The Frangipane Bakery), Mr D. Paterson (Berwickshire Housing Association) Ms J. Sutton (Cockburnspath and Cove CC) and Mr S. Wright (Chirnside CC).

In Attendance:- Community Co-ordinator (G. Jardine), Community Engagement Officer (J. Purves), Sergeant Alison Grainger (Police Scotland); Ms Rachel Hardie and Mr T. Jackson (Borders Greenway); Group Commander Douglas Tait (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service), Democratic Services Officer (W. Mohieddeen).

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair varied the order of business as shown on the agenda and the Minute reflects the order in which the items were considered at the meeting.

1. WELCOME AND MEETING PROTOCOLS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Berwickshire Area Partnership and to Coldstream Community Centre.

2. REPORT FROM POLICE SCOTLAND

The Chair introduced Community Sergeant Alison Grainger to deliver a presentation on Police Scotland work in Berwickshire communities. Sergeant Grainger advised that there was guidance for police officers to attend Coldstream and District, Duns and Eyemouth community councils while attendance for smaller community councils could be arranged on request. In Berwickshire, there were three community police constables, two based in Eyemouth and one based in Duns. Availability of police officers was affected by resources and Sergeant Grainger advised that community officers would fill gaps in provision affected by response police officers. In response to a question on whether there was enough police officers needed to cover the area, Sergeant Grainger advised that there were generally two police constables to cover each area however the Borders was a challenging local authority area to cover and that the guidance from the Chief Inspector was that Police Scotland should meet needs rather than expectations. Police Scotland were always recruiting and it was advised that the policy of retirement being available for police officers over 50 years-old or with 25 years of service brought challenges to Police Scotland capacity. Road safety and speeding in communities was discussed and attendees raised the possibility of more dragon's teeth road markings being used. Sergeant Grainger advised that she worked regularly with Scottish Borders Council Road Network Team Leader on issues of road safety. Mr Inglis raised the importance for the

police representation on the Berwickshire Community Safety Panel and Sergeant Grainger advised that she could be contacted by email to discuss possible police attendance. Sergeant Grainger advised that high-risk missing persons contributed to a great deal of work for Police Scotland. It had been observed that mental health issues have increased since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and that the impact on incidences of high-risk missing persons required a lot of police resource. The Chair thanked Sergeant Grainger for her contribution and advised attendees that councillors work with Police Scotland and could pass on any messaging through the Area Partnership.

3. **FEEDBACK FROM MEETING OF 1 SEPTEMBER 2022**

- 3.1 There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 1 September 2022. Mr Dougie Paterson, Berwickshire Housing Association, advised that he had also been in attendance at the meeting.
- 3.2 With reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of the Meeting held on 1 September 2022, the Chair advised that Ayton Heritage had already received funding elsewhere and that the panel didn't want to disclose that information before the funding scenario had been clarified.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Minute of the Meeting for signature by the Chair subject to the change detailed above.

URGENT BUSINESS

Under Section 50B(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Chair was of the opinion that the item dealt with in the following paragraph should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency, in view of the need to keep Members informed.

4. **REPORT FROM SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

- 4.1 The Chair invited Dougie Tait, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Group Commander for Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders to provide an update on fire and rescue matters for Berwickshire. The following statistics of incidences in Berwickshire for the year to date were presented to the Area Partnership.
- There had been 8 accidental dwelling fires, which caused 3 deaths
 - There had been 48 recorded incidences of other fires
 - There had been 41 non-fire incidences including 19 road traffic collisions, with 3 requiring rescue work with 6 recorded injuries
 - The service had seen an increase of incidences where forced entry was required for partner agencies, there had been 16 incidences recorded.
 - There was a significant recording of unwanted fire alarm signals, there were 91 since the first year quarter.
- 4.2 An on-call watch commander was introduced to co-ordinate non-fire related work. There were three on-call stations in Berwickshire. The service operated its own community action team which consisted of 4 firefighters and a Local Area Liaison Officer. 48 home fire safety visits for the most vulnerable had taken place. More community activity was able to take place following the ease of restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic which included CPR training at The Hirsell, Coldstream and bonfire safety talks in schools. With regards to skills development in the service, training activity had taken place for flood response. Coldstream station was appointed as wildfire support station following a period in July-August 2022 where there were wildfire incidences in the area. Group Commander Tait advised that the service supports wildfire response in Northumberland. With regards to recruitment, the Duns station saw an increase of personnel from 5 to 10 following targeted recruitment work. Daytime availability of personnel increased from 34% to 80% and there was an aim to increase availability by 25% in Coldstream and Eyemouth. Pre-recruitment opportunities were available for

prospective personnel to meet crew and observe training.

- 4.3 Group Commander Tait responded to questions from attendees. It was confirmed that damage to Duns fire station caused by Storm Arwen was resolved and the service's business continuity plan ensured that emergency availability was maintained. With regards to reports related to institutional prejudice in the London Fire Brigade, Group Commander Tait advised that he wasn't aware of the situation there, however his experience was that in 25 years of service in Scotland, he had not come across anything like what had been described in the reports of the London Fire Brigade. With regards to fire alarm legislation, the service initially fitted new smoke detectors for high-risk people. Group Commander Tait advised that information on CPR training could be accessed through groups contacting him by email.

DECISION

AGREED to circulate contact details for community groups to access support from SFRS community action team

5. BORDERS GREENWAY BRIEFING

- 5.1 The Chair invited Rachel Hardie to present an update on work taking place to establish an active travel route connecting Tweedbank Station with Eyemouth using the route of the old Berwickshire railway. The project started in 2020 when the potential was identified for connecting Tweedbank and Reston stations via the old railway route. There were benefits identified in three categories:
- People – Mental health and fitness benefits in a route with no traffic.
 - Place – active travel would have economic benefits for local businesses, and to connect communities.
 - Planet – active travel would be beneficial in the context of the climate crisis encouraging a shift from using cars.
- 5.2 In 2021, a group was formed to advocate the establishment of the route and which put a proposal to South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) who provided funding for a Scottish Borders Council-led feasibility study which was reported on in May 2022. The proposal put forward was for a hard-surface buggy/wheelchair friendly path for walkers and cyclists. The accommodation for equestrian use was being debated. In October 2021, a formal community collaboration group was established to work with communities to identify the most feasible route for the route. A walk of the old railway line from Earlston to Gordon had taken place to assess barriers and fencing for reporting to Scottish Borders Council. Community Councils were encouraged to participate in the group and to find out more by visiting <https://www.gavinton.net>.
- 5.3 Ms Hardie advised the route would be 40 miles-long and that over the course of the old railway line, two-thirds was walkable and access was allowed over three-quarters of the route. Roads were to be avoided as far as possible and final route had not been determined. The Chair thanked Ms Hardie for the presentation.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

MEMBER

Councillor Rowley joined the meeting during discussion of the above item.

6. UPDATE FROM NHS BORDERS

- 6.1 The Chair invited Mr Inglis, Reston and Auchencrow Community Council to introduce the item. A representative from NHS Borders primary care was not able to attend the meeting to address health centre matters. Adelle McElrath, Director of Dentistry of NHS Borders provided an update on dentist provision in Berwickshire and the Scottish Borders. Dr McElrath advised that primary dental care was provided through general services and public services. It was explained that general services were generally provided through

independent, high street-based dental practices. Public services were employed by NHS Borders and provided a safety net which offered services to the vulnerable, children and for emergency care. The Covid-19 pandemic had affected dental provision. There were 16 general dental services in the Scottish Borders and activity was at 84% higher than the national average. Public dental services were working hard to cover unscheduled and emergency care. Recruitment was increasingly an issue for dental services as nurses and receptionists were leaving the service. The establishment of a new dental surgery for Duns was progressing. Advertising for the new surgery couldn't begin until inspections on equipment had taken place. There was a potential for capability of 4,500 patients and registrations were being accepted on their website.

- 6.2 Dr McElrath advised that due to annual leave and sickness, there was not anyone available from NHS Borders to address the closure of the Chirnside Health Centre.

7. **PLACE MAKING**

- 7.1 The Chair invited Anne McNeil to present an update on the Duns and District Place Plan development. A meeting on place making in Duns had recently taken place with over people from various local groups. Amongst issues discussed were the desire to look at natural spaces like the park. Feedback also highlighted the desire for face-to-face consultancy to take place with someone that understood the community. It was identified that when data is collected from the community that resource was needed to take forward the work. A Heart for Duns had a part-time development officer led by a voluntary lead officer, however additional resource was needed to take forward place planning. Attendees discussed capacity requirements for communities take forward place making. Ms McNeil advised that a full-time officer could take forward this work and that A Heart for Duns would otherwise not have the capacity to take forward the work.

- 7.2 Attendees undertook table discussions for 10 minutes to discuss taking forward place making in communities.

8. **COAST TO COAST CYCLE ROUTE**

The Chair invited Councillor Rowley to present an update on developments of the Coast to Coast Cycle Route in place of Lena Hutton, South of Scotland Enterprise. Councillor Rowley advised that a soft launch of the route would soon take place and that the concept was for a cycling equivalent of the Southern Upland Way. The route would begin at Stranraer and would aim to go through as many settlements as possible along the route, making connections through scenic roads. The end point was intended to be Eyemouth. The expected time taken for keen recreational cyclists to complete the route would be 4-7 days. The intended impact of the route would be that investment would follow for e-bike storage and other infrastructure. The route has been fully funded and would follow as a legacy of the UCI World Championships which would take place in Scotland in August 2023. Councillor Rowley advised that project would not be an engineering project and that the route would be supported by new signage and a mobile application. Attendees discussed the route, and raised the importance of investing in road quality for cyclists and other users.

9. **COST OF LIVING UPDATE**

The Community Co-ordinator provided an update on activity and support across the Borders and in Berwickshire in relation to the cost of living. Scottish Borders Council had £1.2 million to support communities and households with the rising cost of living. Some activity was related to food including work with Fareshare and the Low and Slow Project with NHS Borders and Changeworks. BAVS had opened Warm Spaces Fund which used funding from SBC. Ms Amaral of BAVS advised that support had been received from The National Lottery and that applications to the fund were being received. Ms Amaral advised that there had been concerns raised with food distribution and that there had been movement to advocate for a 'cash first' approach. Councillor Anderson advised that feedback had been received from foodbanks for donations of pet food. Attendees raised concern about ongoing impact of the cost of living crisis and what further support there

would be from SBC. This would be dependent on the announcement of local authority funding from the Scottish Government which was due for December 2022. Mr Inglis advised that storage heaters had been switched off in the Reston community larder due to uncertainty of how to pay for heating. Feedback from users indicated that financial support was required possibly to cover food vouchers or money off electricity bills. It was noted that less food was being donated through Fareshare. The Community Coordinator advised that supermarket vouchers were available for distribution and the information to access them could be shared with community groups. Communities and Partnerships advised they would follow-up with community groups with information related to food vouchers and food distribution.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

10. **BERWICKSHIRE FUNDING TABLE 2022-23**

There had been circulated copies of the Berwickshire Funding Table which showed available funding in the Berwickshire area. Communities and Partnership confirmed balances of funds available and noted there were no applications for funding to be considered at the meeting. The Neighbourhood Support Fund began with £99,997.19 for 2022-23 and that £62,565.64 of funding had been awarded since 1 April 2022.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

The meeting concluded at 8.40 pm.