Eildon
Area Partnership

Our Sco##sh Borders
Your community

MINUTE of Meeting of the EILDON AREA PARTNERSHIP held remotely by Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 26 January 2023 at 6.00 pm

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Present:-	Councillors E. Thornton-Nicol (Chair), C. Cochrane, L. Douglas, E. Jardine J. Linehan, N. Mackinnon, J. PatonDay and F. Sinclair, together with 8 representatives of Partner Organisations, Community Councils, and members of the public.
Apologies:-	Councillor D. Parker
In Attendance:-	Community Co-ordinator, Community Engagement Officer (E. Coltman), Democratic Services Officer (D. Hall)

1. **WELCOME**
   The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Eildon Area Partnership held remotely via Microsoft teams, which included Elected Members, guests attending within the meeting and those watching via the Live Stream.

2. **FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION FROM MEETING OF 17 NOVEMBER 2022**
   The Minute of the meeting of the Eildon Area Partnership held on 17 November 2022 had been circulated and was noted. The Community Co-ordinator, Mr Kenny Harrow, explained that feedback on the Tweedbank Care Village had been positive, and that work was ongoing to realise that project. Mr Harrow encouraged any group or organisation seeking to provide a warm space for people struggling to heat their homes over the winter to contact the Communities and Partnership team.

3. **COMMUNITY CONVERSATION FEEDBACK**
   Mr Harrow explained that a copy of the feedback from the Community Conversations held by Scottish Borders Council over the summer had been circulated with the agenda. The events had provided the general public with the chance to meet Elected Members and senior staff to talk about what the Council did well, and where it needed to improve. Events had been held in all of the wards of the Scottish Borders. Councillor Jardine explained that the conversations had been well received, and highlighted that the events in Selkirk and Galashiels had been well attended and engaging. A broad range of issues had been raised, and it was hoped that some areas of concern could be brought into the Council Plan. It was hoped that further events would be held in the spring or summer of 2023. Those in attendance highlighted that it was important to promote the events by various different means in order to reach the widest possible audience. Members highlighted that it was important to try and engage with people who were not already engaged with the Council, and suggested that advertising or running sessions at non Council events could potentially ensure that a wider range of voices were being heard. Mr Harrow highlighted that it was important to deliver real improvements and changes, and that attempts to engage with people had to be genuine. The use of electronic notice boards at bus stops was suggested as a potentially effective way of disseminating official information to the public in a modern way.

4. **EILDON FUNDING TABLE**
   Copies of the Eildon Funding Table 2022/23 had been circulated with the agenda. Mr Coltman advised that the opening balance of the Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF) had been £147k, and that approximately £128.5k had been awarded since April 2022.

Applications totalling £32.1k had been assessed and were awaiting decision. Mr Coltman explained that if all of the applications were approved in full then the Fund would be oversubscribed by £13.5k. The Selkirk Community Council (Brighter Selkirk) application for £1.2k had been approved under the fast track arrangements following the publication of the agenda.

5.   **NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FUND**
5.1   There had been circulated copies of the Eildon Assessment Panel's recommendations as a supplement to the agenda. The Chair welcomed Ms Jenny Mushlin of the Eildon Assessment Panel to provide an overview of each of the recommendations.

5.2   **Earlston Bumps, Babies and Toddler Group**
Earlston Bumps, Babies and Toddler Group had applied for £3,763.39 to provide support and friendship to parents attending their group. Wider family members would also be encouraged to attend. The support would be used to help support training costs. The Panel was keen to support the group, and had recommended to part-fund the project with a grant of £1.5k. Members unanimously agreed to approve the application.

5.3   **Perfect Harmony**
The application from Perfect Harmony was for £3k to allow the group, made up of local musicians, to provide more concerts in nursing homes, residential homes, sheltered housing, hospitals and day care centres across the Scottish Borders. Perfect Harmony had indicated that the funding would allow them to provide an additional 40 concerns per year throughout 13 care facilities in the Eildon locality. The Panel was fully supportive of the group, and highlighted that the concerts were free at the point of access. If the group was unsuccessful in other securing funding in other localities, then the Panel felt that that the funding provided by the Eildon Area Partnership should be ring-fenced for Eildon performances only. Members unanimously agreed to approve the application.

5.4   **Hike and Bike Hub**
Hike and Bike Hub had applied for £8.2k, which would be used to cover the annual lease costs of a unit in Galashiels. The group aimed to promote active travel in the region, and were opening a centre which would offer affordable bike hire, servicing, led cycles and guided walks. The Panel was very supportive of the group, but were keen to see how sustainable the project was, and had therefore recommended to part-fund with a grant of £4.1k. The Panel indicated that this would allow the group to cover 6 months of their rent, and encouraged a further application to the NSF in 6 months if they could evidence that the project was doing well. Angela Crow of the Hub was present, and explained that plans to open a unit on Douglas Bridge in Galashiels had fallen through due to safety issues. The premises which would be rented were owned by a local landlord. In response to a question regarding whether SBC had been able to offer assistance finding a low rent space, Mrs Crow confirmed that SBC had been unable to find an available premises. Mrs Crow encouraged all attendees to visit the official opening ceremony of the Hub.

5.5   **Melrose in Bloom**
The application from Melrose in Bloom was for £5.75k to fund the replacement of a dilapidated wooden fence. It had not been possible to determine who ownership of the land. The Panel had recommended not to fund the application, but were happy that if ownership was established to consider a new application. Mr Coltman explained that since the Panel had met, he had received confirmation that the land in question was not owned by SBC. The Panel were content for Melrose in Bloom to submit a new application once they had undertaken their due diligence and confirmed ownership of the key area of land. The Chair encouraged the Group to consider engaging with the Criminal Justice Team for assistance with delivery of the project, as recently shared photographs had shown excellent works delivered at reasonable cost.   Members unanimously agreed not to grant the funding.

5.6 **At Birkhill House CIC**
The application was for £10.1k to help support costs associated with creating a "Fleece and Fibre" hub. This would enable people to learn new techniques and skills with fibre and fleece. The Panel felt that the group delivered important activities for the community, and that there was general support for their plans. It was felt that the application could benefit from a business plan and timeline in order to understand how their project would be delivered. Members unanimously agreed not to fund the project.

MEMBER
Councillor Sinclair left the meeting during the discussion below.

6. **TRANSPORT – LOCAL ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS**
6.1 The Chair welcomed Mr Gordon Grant, Scottish Borders Council's Principal Transport Officer to the meeting. Mr Grant explained that the preceding years had seen significant changes to the bus network in the region, with some areas more negatively impacted than others. Following the unprecedented disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, operations were now more stable. The Council was undertaking a transport network review in order to assess how it could improve what it has in place. The local bus network had operated on a series of fixed routes for approximately 30 years, with very little change. The use of technology, in the form of Demand Responsive Transport, such as that seen in the pilot PINGO project in the Berwickshire locality, had the potential to greatly alter the way in which transport services were delivered across the region. Work needed to take place to engage with key employers, such as NHS Borders, to try and ensure that bus services were fit for purpose, and enabled workers and service users to confidently rely on the bus network to meet their needs. Usage of the bus network was estimated at 78% of pre-covid levels. Mr Grant explained that a considerable part of the patronage of buses was made up of older people travelling on concessionary cards, and those individuals had not returned to using the service in the levels seen prior to the pandemic. Operating costs had increased considerably due to the inflationary environment seen in the UK as a whole, with costs up approximately 33%. Minor adjustments to the network, such as certain buses arriving or departing slightly later had the potential to make a big difference to user numbers and the wider networks' effectiveness. Mr Grant explained that, with reference to paragraph 3, where it had been suggested to use electronic travel boards to disseminate information to the public, it was possible to use those screens to put messages out. Work was ongoing to assess the practicalities and effectiveness of that. A marketing campaign was being developed which would encourage users to return to the bus network, and would focus on what changes were happening, and how families could travel at very cost effective prices.

6.2 Mr Grant encouraged attendees to provide their honest feedback on the network, and invited questions. Regarding how improvement and success would be measured, Mr Grant explained that the overall effectiveness of the network, and user numbers ultimately defined how successful the bus network was. The number of young people using the service was seen as key, and whilst the numbers of people aged between 11 and 17 was generally good, following that there was a dramatic drop off. Attracting tourists and visitors to use the public transport network was also hugely important. In response to a question regarding the lack of printed timetables at bus stops, and the need for passengers to use a smart phone application, the cost of printing and updating timetables regularly was highlighted as an issue. Whilst using a smart phone to check the bus time was not suitable for everyone, it was nonetheless considered effective taking into account resource challenges. Regarding cancellations and alterations to the X95 service, Mr Grant suggested that whilst the service could appear to very busy at certain times, a certain level of usage across the whole day was required to ensure viability. In response to a question regarding the 51 Service reverting to the bus station in Edinburgh from Waterloo Place, Mr Grant undertook to discuss the issue with the operator, but suggested that the current arrangement could be in place to ensure that traffic congestion in Edinburgh did not impact upon the 51's ability to connect with the 67. The importance of bus reliability was highlighted, as breakdowns had the potential to corrode user

confidence. Attendees suggested that SBC consider its potential to generate considerable energy from renewable sources, and to use that energy to power buses, with convenient charging points located throughout the region providing a hop on, hop off service. Mr Grant thanked attendees for their suggestions and emphasised that partnership working would be key to ensuring that the region had a travel network that was modern, green, and fit for purpose.

6.3   Attendees were placed into breakout room discussions to discuss what the barriers to active travel were in Eildon, and how greater usage of public transport could be encouraged. Following those discussions, the Chair explained that the key theme which had arisen appeared to be the need to provide 21st century solutions to 21st century problems. Attendees were encouraged to continue to provide their ideas or solutions, as the link to the discussion record would remain open. Mr Grant thanked attendees for their feedback. Mr Harrow suggested that a special forum could be set up to allow the Area Partnership to continue to feed its ideas and opinions on transport back to SBC. Regarding the work of the other Area Partnerships on specific issues, Mr Harrow explained that the Chair of the Eildon Area Partnership had been keen to provide the breakout room function, with a specific theme and a more focused agenda. Feedback on the way the Eildon Area Partnership had operated would be shared.

7.   **NEXT AREA PARTNERSHIP**
The Chair confirmed that the next Area Eildon Area Partnership would be held on Thursday, 23 March at 6pm. The meeting would be held online via Microsoft Teams.

8.   **ANY OTHER BUSINESS/ OPEN FORUM**
Attendees expressed their thanks to Mr Grant for his attendance and work on in a difficult area.

9.   **MEETING EVALUATION VIA MENTI**
Mr Coltman posted the link to the Menti evaluation, and encouraged attendees to complete the survey.

The meeting concluded at 7.40 p.m.