

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL TWEEDDALE AREA PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES of Meeting of the TWEEDDALE
AREA PARTNERSHIP held via Microsoft
Teams on Tuesday 7 February at 7.00 pm

Present:- Councillors M. Douglas (Chairman), D. Begg, J. Pirone and R. Tatler

Apologies: Councillors E. Small, V. Thomson

Also present:- Peter Maudsley (Peebles Community Council), Chris Lewin (Upper Tweed Community Council), Gordon Daly (Innerleithen Community Council), Chris Whitmore (Clovenfords Community Council), Esther Daborn (Tweeddale Assessment Panel), Lorna McCullough (The Bridge), Crick Carleton (Chair of the Tweeddale Area Partnership Place Making Working Group), Anne Snoddy, Harry Whitmore (SOSCH), George Thornton, Jean Dobbie,

In Attendance:- Community Co-ordinator (K. Harrow), Community Engagement Officer (H. Lacon), Democratic Services Officer (D. Hall), Trainee Democratic Services Officer (L. Cuerden)

1. **WELCOME AND MEETING PROTOCOLS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Tweeddale Area Partnership being held via Microsoft Teams and outlined how the meeting would be conducted and how those both in the meeting and watching via the Live Stream could take part.

2. **FEEDBACK FROM MEETING OF 1 NOVEMBER 2022**

There had been circulated copies of the Menti feedback and the Minute of the Meeting held on 1 November 2022. Hannah Lacon reported that feedback was beneficial and generally positive. In response to a request for more information on the Chambers Institution Trust, Councillor Tatler was to provide an update at this meeting. In response to comments around housing, Harry Whitmore from South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH) was to provide information on supporting community groups at this meeting. Denise Brydon, Project Manager for Access in Transport had provided an update on the Tweed Valley Railway Path which was to be circulated to Members after the meeting. The Eshiels Tunnel lighting and improvement works were to be considered for inclusion in the Destination Tweed project and was subject to the necessary bat licence permissions. The works to the high level bridge beams at Eshiels had been completed by SBC Contracts and additional non-slip strips had been added. The recent flooding had had an impact on the bank by the path at Walkerburn and was under investigation by the Flood Team and Access Ranger for the West. Construction of the Eddleston Water path was now in its end stage with a final site meeting on 9 February to review the construction. The path was expected to be opened soon, subject to design team input to the road safety audit in mid-February. Landscaping works were to continue once the path was open to the public, with an official opening event for the community in the Spring.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the minute and feedback of 1 November 2022 with spelling of lense changed to lens.

3. **SOUTH OF SCOTLAND COMMUNITY HOUSING**

There followed a presentation by Harry Whitmore of South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH). The organisation was established in 2006 to address a shortfall in rural housing supply in South West Scotland. SOSCH supported community organisations to deliver affordable community-led housing within the context of community-ownership of land and assets. There were 612 assets in community ownership across Scotland, including housing, shops and renewable energy sources. There were several benefits to community ownership: the building of sustainable communities; economic and social regeneration; flexible, affordable housing provision; and revenue source for community organisations. The team of five were currently engaged with 35+ communities in Southern Scotland. Their role centred on: organisational and capacity building; housing need and demand assessments; project feasibility work; allocations policy and funding support. As the Community Led Housing Co-ordinator for South East Scotland, Mr Whitmore had recently been building partnerships across the area at Kirkhope Steadings, Ettrick and Yarrow and Jedburgh town centre. There was to be a focus on bringing empty buildings back into use as community led housing. This had several benefits: carbon footprint reduction; town centre renewal and encouragement of economic investment; preservation of history and built heritage; and enhanced local support. It was noted that Peebles and Innerleithen were ineligible for the Rural Housing Fund due to their population size. However alternative funding sources were available through the Scottish Land Fund and South of Scotland Enterprise among others. SOSCH relied on local knowledge of housing need and vacant and derelict properties to deliver community led housing. Mr Whitmore ended the presentation with an appeal for members to consider the service that SOSCH provided when seeking to address housing need in Tweeddale, and he could be contacted at harry.sosch@outlook.com.

4. **CHAMBERS INSTITUTION TRUST (CIT)**

Councillor Tatler provided a brief summary of progress to date. Ms Lorna McCullough had been appointed as an administrator to the Beneficiaries Group. Sam Coe had been appointed to the Chambers Institution Trust Sub Committee as an observer member from the Beneficiaries Group. Tours of the Chambers Institution Trust building and a public consultation exercise were held in November 2022. Feedback from this had led to the consideration of installing a mezzanine floor in the Burgh Hall. To this end a brief was produced and brought to Page\Park Architects. In December, sub groups were formed: one to appoint a facilitator, one to produce a Communications and Engagement strategy and one to consider interior paint colours and window and lighting treatments. The facilitator brief had been completed and a stakeholder list and communications strategy had been finalised. Work had begun on 9 January 2023 with the suspended ceiling now removed. There had been significant extra costs to the scaffolding. Wi-Fi coverage was to be extended to the Burgh Hall, the Registrar's Office and the Quadrangle. It was a disappointment to not receive money from the Levelling Up Fund and other funding sources were being considered. The Sub-Committee were keen to broaden involvement to a wider geographical area; 28 people had expressed interest so far. The Burgh Hall work was to be completed by the end of April. A final report on the Burgh Hall work was to be presented in due course and thereafter fundraising for the remainder of the work was to continue. A celebratory opening event was to be considered to coincide with the 140th anniversary of the death of William Chambers. It was agreed that contact should be made with the Museum at Trimontium Melrose which had undergone a major renovation; the lead officer was to be approached with a view to attending the next meeting of the Beneficiaries Group.

DECISION

NOTED the update

5. **PLACE MAKING UPDATE**

Crick Carleton, Chair of Place Making Working Group provided an update of progress to date under four headings: Consultancy Framework Contract; Funding; Place Making Plans update; and Information Sharing. Scottish Borders Council had invited applications to join the Consultancy Framework Contract, a two tier platform for communities to access advice and support in the process of consulting, engaging and drafting their Place Making Plan or in the development of their financial Town Investment Plans. Although there was to be a focus on those larger communities engaged in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, smaller Tweeddale communities were to have access to these services towards the end of February 2023 to simplify the contracting process and facilitate rapid progress. Communities would have six consultants from which to choose; they were to engage one of their choice or run a 'mini competition' between a few. The Sub-Committee were to be advised of the date of the contracting process going live. Meanwhile, Tweeddale community groups were to liaise with SBC's Communities and Partnership Team. Early talks had taken place with SBC and the Borders Third Sector Interface to explore any additional support which might be provided. The funding of Place Making was made available from both SBC's budget (£110k) and the Shared Prosperity Fund (£300k). It was pointed out that SBC's share of funding was available for three years and the mechanism to draw on funds was being put in place currently. To date West Linton, Eddleston and Walkerburn had embarked on community engagement and data gathering, with Peebles further into the process. Other communities were at the very early stages of assembling a small team to begin. In a bid to improve information sharing between communities, an alternative to Microsoft Sharepoint was being sought. It was hoped that the Place Making project would be able to join with the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal in using their website to share experience and advice between groups and update progress via the public facing information page. It was confirmed that Skirling Community Council were able to join the working group for Place Making and there were no constraints on them engaging in the consultancy process. There was also some merit in smaller communities joining forces. It was confirmed that the formation of a development trust was not essential for participation in the Place Making Project and Chris Whitmore of Clovenfords Community Council undertook to liaise with Skirling Community Council to share information on their plans to form a development trust, supported by Lorna McCullough at The Bridge. The Development Trust Association Scotland (dtascot.org.uk) was a good source of information and support if any community wanted to form a development trust.

DECISION

NOTED the update

6. **FUNDING TABLE OVERVIEW**

There had been circulated copies of the Tweeddale Funding Table which showed available funds in the Tweeddale area. The Neighbourhood Support Fund had £93,357 available at the start of the year less £47,616.97 awarded thus far. If all applications totalling £15,620 were successful, funds of £30,120.03 would remain. There had since been a revision to the grant total based on the Panel's recommendations and if successful, there would remain £37,637.03. The Chair reported a lesser amount available in the Small Schemes fund and Ms Lacon confirmed that an updated figure was pending from Finance.

DECISION

NOTED the update

7. **NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FUND**

Ms Esther Daborn of the Tweeddale Assessment panel provided an overview of each of the applications. The Assessment Panel had carefully considered each application and any conflicts of interest were declared during the Panel's deliberations.

7.1 Perfect Harmony

The charity engaged local musicians to provide concerts in Nursing Homes, Residential Homes/Flats, Sheltered Housing, Hospital and Day Care Centres in the whole of the Scottish Borders. An application for £2700 to stage concerts had been made. Perfect Harmony had been asked to supply the 2023/24 budget for Tweeddale to clarify how the £2700 was to be spent to the benefit of Tweeddale specifically. This had not yet been received therefore no recommendation was possible.

7.2 Greener Peebles

Greener Peebles had requested £5,180 for a Celebratory event. Staff costs outlined in the application were not over and above normal staff costs, therefore an award of £2950 was recommended to cover budgeted staff costs.

7.3 Peebles Men's Shed

Peebles Men's Shed had requested £6,300 for rent and insurance. There was a limit of £5,000 to the NSF award if there was no evidence of seeking funding from other sources, so an award of £5,000 was recommended. The group were encouraged to continue to request 'pay what you can' contributions from members.

7.5 Priorsford Primary School PTA

An application had been made for £153 to restore their school badge mosaic. The project was to mount and frame the mosaic so it could be hung for display at the school. The Panel recommended the award.

7.6 Informal Group of Peebles People

An application had been made for £1287 to stage a week long factual public exhibition on the Peebles Common Good Fund (11/2/23-20/2/23) in the Eastgate Theatre Café. This was considered the business of the Peebles Common Good Fund and therefore no award was recommended.

7.7 There was general agreement to consider at the next meeting in March the restarting of a fast track process for applications of less than £1500. This two stage process would require a recommendation from the Tweeddale Assessment Panel, to then be decisioned by Elected Members via email. Kenny Harrow suggested a meeting with the Assessment Panel to agree criteria and process prior to the next meeting of the Area Partnership.

7.8 Councillor Tatler informed the Sub-Committee of the in-person meeting of the Peebles Common Good Fund on 28 February 2023. This meeting was to include a public Q&A session. There was to be considered the production of an annual report and an exhibition on the work of the Peebles Common Good Fund Sub-Committee in the future.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) that the application from Perfect Harmony was not approved;
- (b) to award Greener Peebles the sum of £2950 to cover staff costs at a celebratory event;

- (c) to award Peebles Men's Shed the sum of £5,000 towards rent and insurance costs;
- (d) to award Priorsford Primary School PTA the sum of £153 to restore and hang their school badge mosaic;
- (e) that the application from Informal Group of Peebles People was not approved;
- (f) to convene a meeting of the Tweeddale Assessment Panel to set criteria and process for a fast track funding application for awards under £1500 to the Neighbourhood Support Fund; and
- (g) to add an item to the agenda of the meeting of 28 March 2023 to consider the criteria and process recommended by the Assessment Panel for fast track application for awards under £1500.

9. OPEN FORUM

9.1 Ms Daborn proposed a vote of thanks to the Tweeddale West Councillors for their efforts in supporting the retention of the 101/102 bus service. Mr Lewin raised the long standing issue of the economic migration of young people from the Borders and whether there was any planned initiatives for Scottish Borders Council to address this. Councillor Tatler suggested that representatives of SOSE, Borderlands and SBC's Economic Development team be invited to a future meeting of the Area Partnership to share current projects that support enterprise across the Borders. Kenny Harrow reported that there was closer cooperation between Economic Development and Employment Service following their amalgamation. Lorna McCullough had attended a visioning event for the Scottish Borders Climate Action Network where it was reported that investment and resource was to be allocated to the Borders area with a focus on employability. Councillor Pirone suggested that housing was considered in tandem with employment opportunities. Youth engagement in the Place Making plans was also noted as important to the process; housing and employability were main drivers for them leaving the area. Work was being undertaken to address this. A vote of thanks from George Thornton was expressed to Councillors for their assistance following the recent floods. In relation to property availability, the regeneration of Walkerburn and Innerleithen communities had raised the profile of the area

9.2 Mr Harrow provided a brief summary of the Peebles High School feedback sessions. Both sessions were well attended by the Council officers, community organisations and the public. There had been communication issues and there was an undertaking to improve this going forward. The website page was to be updated regularly and provided public access to the ongoing plans and processes with a view addressing concerns. The Menti feedback tool was to be available for the next two weeks via the Peebles High School website for further comment or questions. Members were requested to direct any queries they receive about the project build to the Communities and Partnership team. Council officers were commended for their efforts in staging the sessions in a time of increased workload pressures and budgetary constraints.

9.3 A request was made to consider holding a future meeting of the Tweeddale Area Partnership in person at the Burgh Hall. Kenny Harrow agreed to investigate the possibility of 13 June 2023 meeting being hybrid.

10. MEETING EVALUATION

Ms Lacon encouraged attendees to complete meeting evaluation forms via the link in the chat and to submit any items for a future agenda.

11. **NEXT MEETING OF THE TWEEDDALE AREA PARTNERSHIP**

The next meeting of the Tweeddale Area Partnership was scheduled for 28 March 2023, via Teams.

The meeting concluded at 8:40pm.