

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL TEVIOT AND LIDDESDALE AREA PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES of Meeting of the TEVIOT AND LIDDESDALE AREA PARTNERSHIP held in The Lesser Hall, Hawick Town Hall, Hawick on Tuesday, 21 February 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present:- Councillors C. Ramage (Chair), , J. Cox, W. McAteer, N. Richards and A. Smart

Other organisations attendees:, Mr W. George, Ms M. Short, Mr C. Knox and Mr D. Taylor (Hawick CC); Ms F. Benton (The Bridge), Mr I. Crosbie (Newcastleton and District CC); Mr W. Douglas, (Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Water CC);, Mr P. Kerr (Southdean CC), Ms W. Potts (Burnfoot CC), Ms R Dickson (SBHA), Mr R Swinton (Hobkirk CC),

Apologies:- Councillors S. Marshall

In Attendance:- Community Co-ordinator (G. Jardine), Community Engagement Officer (S. Culverwell), Democratic Services Officer (D. Hall).

1. **WELCOME AND MEETING PROTOCOLS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and to Hawick Town Hall, and introduced Sarah Culverwell, Community Engagement Officer to the meeting.

2. **FEEDBACK FROM MEETING OF 13 SEPTEMBER 2022**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 16 November 2022. The Chair advised that the South of Scotland Enterprise were holding a webinar on March 9, from 2:30pm to 3:30pm, and from 7pm to 8pm to allow interested parties to comment on their coast to coast cycle route plans. Attendees expressed concerns that the route did not pass through Bonchester Bridge, given the facilities already present there. The Chair confirmed that it remained unfeasible to host hybrid meetings due to technology constraints. The Community Co-ordinator explained that it was not possible to hold hybrid meetings in school halls, but that smaller rooms in schools could potentially be used. The possibility of using breakout rooms in online meetings to boost discussion was raised. Scottish Borders Council's Roads Department had provided a response on providing notice of road closures, explaining that there were over 200 road closures per annum, and that Community Councils were notified via the road closure circulation list as far in advance of a closure as possible. Regarding the ownership of mobile phone masts in the area, SBC's Emergency Planning department had confirmed they were often in private ownership, and that no central register existed. It was therefore extremely challenging to ascertain who owned or leased the masts.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Minute for signature by the Chair.

3. **COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS FEEDBACK**

The Chair 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. A broad range of issues

had been raised, and areas of concern could be considered as part of the budget process. It was hoped that further events would be held in the spring or summer of 2023. Overall, the conversations had been well received. Members expressed their hopes that the future events would be well attended and reach a greater diversity of attendees.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

4. POLICE SCOTLAND UPDATE

The Chair advised that a representative of Police Scotland had been unable to attend.

5. SOUTH OF SCOTLAND COMMUNITY HOUSING – HARRY WHITMORE

The Chair welcomed Mr Harry Whitmore of South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH) to make a presentation. 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 highlighted that projects based in Hawick were not eligible for support 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. In response to a question regarding the criteria for the Rural Housing Fund, Mr Whitmore explained that the scheme operated based on the population size of settlements. Those with fewer than 3000 people were automatically eligible, whereas those above 10,000 were automatically ineligible. Settlements falling within that range would be eligible for some support depending on their proximity to larger settlements. In response to a question regarding the acquisition of vacant properties on high streets, Mr Whitmore explained that the process would be challenging, and indicated that SBC's Empty Homes Officer was best placed to assist with queries and enquiries of that nature. Regarding the selection of local people as tenants for housing built by a community development trust, Mr Whitmore explained that it would be possible to screen applicants in such a way as to set out preferred characteristics to ensure that tenants would be those with links to the area. It was not possible to select specific, named individuals. Mr Whitmore stressed that large projects were possible, however it was prudent to proceed in a phased manner to ensure that goals could be delivered upon. Mr Whitmore ended the presentation with an appeal for members to consider the service that SOSCH provided when seeking to address housing need in Teviot and Liddesdale, and undertook to share his contact details with attendees.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

6. TEVIOT AND LIDDESDALE FUNDING TABLE 2022-23

There had been circulated copies of the Teviot and Liddesdale Funding Table 2022-23 which showed available funding in the Teviot and Liddesdale area. The Neighbourhood

Support Fund had £87,826.02 available with £56,219.68 awarded since 1 April 2022 and applications valued at £12,258 that awaited decisions. Ms Jardine confirmed that funding could be carried forward from the current financial year, and that at its meeting in April, the Area Partnership would consider applications to the 2022/23 Fund only. The rules regarding the 2023/24 Fund would be considered at the meeting of the Area Partnership in April, with applications for 2023/24 considered at the June meeting.

DECISION NOTED

7. NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FUND - POT A FUND

- 7.1 There had been circulated copies of a report from the Teviot and Liddesdale Neighbourhood Support Fund Pot A Assessment Panel which detailed recommendations for three applications for funding.
- 7.2 **Burnfoot Community Futures**
An application had been received from Burnfoot Community Futures which had requested £3758 for Burnfoot Events. The funding applied for would allow the purchase of equipment to extend the kitchen/café service and improve external lighting.
- 7.3 **Campaign for a Scottish National Park**
An application had been received by Denholm and District from the Campaign for a Scottish National Park for £1,000 to support their “The Community of Twelve Towers of Rule” project.
- 7.4 **Campaign for a Scottish National Park**
An application had been received by Hobkirk Community Council from the Campaign for a Scottish National Park for £1,000 to support their “The Community of Twelve Towers of Rule” project.

DECISION AGREED:

- (a) **To grant Burnfoot Community Futures an award of £3,758;**
- (b) **To grant the Campaign for a Scottish National Park an award of £1,000 from the Denholm and District Neighbourhood Support Fund Pot; and,**
- (c) **To grant the Campaign for a Scottish National Park an award of £1,000 from the Hobkirk Neighbourhood Support Fund Pot.**
- ### **8. NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FUND - POT B FUND**
- 8.1 The chair invited Ms Marion Short, the Chair of Community Fund Pot B Assessment Panel to provide a summary of the applications which had been considered at its meeting on Tuesday, 31 January 2023.
- 8.2 **Teviot and Liddesdale Ladies Amenities Group**
The application from the Teviot and Liddesdale Ladies Amenities Group requested £1,500 to help meet the costs of replacing the Christmas lights on nine trees around the main square in Newcastleton. The panel had examined the details of the application meticulously and considered that the efforts to raise other funding from the local community should be commended. The display had ceased to operate due to the failure of the equipment. Ms Short highlighted that the Group had made donations to various other groups and charities within the locality, and therefore the application was recommended for approval subject to the condition that the funding was ring fenced for use solely on the Christmas lights project. Those in attendance unanimously approved the recommendation.

8.3 **Perfect Harmony**

Perfect Harmony, a group which performed concerts in nursing homes, sheltered housing, day care centres, and other similar locations, had applied for £3,000 to assist with the costs of delivering their events. Ms Short explained that the Assessment Panel were strongly in favour of the activities of the group, however, due to a lack of information, considerable areas of concern remained unaddressed. The Group had applied to the Eildon Area Partnership for £1350 to provide 6 concerts. The application for Teviot and Liddesdale would enable 2 concerts to take place. Given the lack of application of a pro-rata rate, and the Group's considerable financial reserves, the Assessment Panel had recommended to defer the application. Ms Jardine explained that she had discussed the application with Perfect Harmony. Each individual care home, or similar facility, was required to apply to Perfect Harmony, and pay membership fees, for performances. Perfect Harmony were in the process of confirming the number of facilities which would be registered with them in Teviot and Liddesdale for 2023/24. Attendees expressed their hope that the group would submit a revised application in the future.

8.4 **Elliot Clan Society**

The application from the Elliot Clan Society requested £2,000 to assist with the costs associated with an event celebrating an Elliot gathering. In considering the application the Panel had felt concerned at the lack of evidence of any other fund raising for the event. The Panel had felt that there was not sufficient detail in the application, and due to that ambiguity had recommended not to approve the application. The group had ring fenced £8,000 for the officers to attend a dinner, whilst other members of the public would be required to pay to attend. Councillor McAteer explained that he had been in discussion with the Elliot Clan Society regarding their application, and stressed that the individual responsible for completing the forms had been unwell. There was considerable debate regarding the appropriateness of Elected Members approving applications contrary to the recommendations of the Assessment Panel. Attendees expressed their concerns at an application being approved which had not followed the defined procedure. The Chair of the Newcastleton Community Council explained that they had discussed the merits of the application and were unanimous in their support. Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Smart proposed that the application be approved using the remaining funds of from Pot A - Newcastleton in place of funding from Pot B. This was unanimously approved.

DECISION AGREED:

- (a) to grant Teviot and Liddesdale Ladies Amenities Group £1,500;**
- (b) that the application from Perfect Harmony was not approved ; and,**
- (c) to grant Elliot Clan Society funding of £1,919 from Pot A – Newcastleton, of the Neighbourhood Support Fund.**

9. **UPDATE ON PLACE MAKING**

The Chair explained that she had held discussions with Denholm Primary School regarding assistance in improving engagement with Place Making. The Primary 5, 6 and 7 students would be asked what they liked about where they live, and what they did not like. It was hoped that through these efforts engagement with young people and their parents would be improved. 30 to 40 year olds, those likely to be parents of primary school aged students, represented one of the groups that was not as engaged with place making compared to others. Ms Jardine explained that a workshop event would be held on Placemaking in the Town Hall for the Hawick community led by the Town Team, a group of volunteers.

DECISION NOTED the update.

10. **COMMUNITY COUNCIL UPDATE**

10.1 The Chair of Newcastleton Community Council explained that they hoped that SBC would consider providing a greater degree of admin support to Community Councils as part of the budget setting process. Concerns remained in the Community regarding the proposed deposit return scheme, particularly as rural areas were expected to be less likely to host reverse vending machines. Ms Short highlighted that the feedback on the newly repainted bollards on Hawick High Street had been overwhelmingly positive. Hawick Community Council continued to hold discussions with Newcastleton regarding their CCTV system, with a view to setting up their own system. Regarding the recently approved funding available to Community Councils to celebrate the King's Coronation in June, Councillor McAteer explained that the funding had been approved by SBC from the Covid recovery fund, and that each Community Council could apply for up to £500 if they wished. The money was not a grant, and would not automatically be provided. Ms Culverwell highlighted that the Great British Spring Clean would take place at the end of March, and undertook to circulate the details.

10.2 A meeting had been held on Tuesday, 15 February 2023 with representatives of Scottish Power Energy Networks regarding energy transitions. Elected Members, Community Representatives and Mr Euan Norris of Scottish Power had been in attendance. Regarding the EPC ratings of all of the wards in the Scottish Borders, Hawick and Denholm had scored the lowest. Hawick and Hermitage was second bottom. SBC was in the process of producing a Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy, and were also decarbonising transport and fleet. The areas of Hawick and Selkirk would be pose considerable issues in the context of providing electric vehicle charging points given their layout and geographical profile. It was hoped that SBC would directly involve communities and listen to their concerns and opinions.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

11. **COST OF LIVING**

Ms Jardine provided a reminder that a number of different measures of support were available for communities, and encouraged any community group or individual to contact the Community and Partnerships team for assistance accessing that support.

DECISION

NOTED

12. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION DOCUMENT**

The Chair advised that a considerable amount of useful information could be found using the additional information document and urged attendees to consult it.

13. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that an invitation would be extended to the Campaign for a Borders National Park to provide an update on their work. Ms Jardine highlighted that a presentation From Campaign for a Scottish Borders National Park had already taken place at Hawick Distillery. It was hoped that a conference for Community Councils would be held in October 2023. The Chair suggested that the next meeting of the Teviot and Liddesdale Area Partnership be held via Microsoft Teams, which was unanimously agreed.

The meeting concluded at 7.55 pm.