

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES of Meeting of the
BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP
held in Foulden Village Hall, Foulden, TD15
1UH on Thursday, 9 February 2023 at 6.45
pm

Present:- Councillors J. Anderson, C. Hamilton, D. Moffat and A. Orr

Other organisations attendees: Mr J. Aitchison, Ms L. Anderson and Mr G. Power (Eyemouth CC), Ms J. Amaral (BAVS), Ms K. Burch (Abundant Borders), Ms T. Collin (Allanton, Whitsome and Edrom CC), Ms A. Currie (Berwickshire Anti-Litter Group), Ms M. Douglas and Ms H. Paxton (Greenlaw and Hume CC), Ms P. Hood (Cockburnspath and Cove CC), Mr L. Inglis (Reston and Auchencrow CC), Mr A. Manley (Foulden, Mordington and Lamberton CC), Ms W. Myers (Coldstream and District CC), Mr D. Paterson (Berwickshire Housing Association), Mr K. Pattison (Paxton Resilience Group), Mr G. Pearson (Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham CC), Mr P. Potter and Ms S. Potter (Burnmouth CC), Mr S. Wright (Chirnside CC).

Apologies:- Councillors J. Greenwell and M. Rowley

In Attendance:- Community Co-ordinator, Community Engagement Officer (J. Purves), Mr H. Whitmore (South of Scotland Community Housing), Ms C. Wilson (NHS Borders), Democratic Services Officer (W. Mohieddeen).

1. **WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Berwickshire Area Partnership and to Foulden Village Hall.

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

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 1 December 2022.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Minute for signature by the Chair.

3. **COMMUNITY CONVERSATION FEEDBACK**

There had been circulated copies of a summary of feedback from Community Conversations events that took place during summer 2022. The Chair advised that Elected Members and senior SBC officers. 11 Community Conversations were held in total, two of which were in Berwickshire; one event held in Duns on 26 July 2022 and one event held in Eyemouth on 2 August 2022. The issues raised were to be considered as part of SBC's budget process and would inform local planning.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

4. **SOUTH OF SCOTLAND COMMUNITY HOUSING**

The Chair introduced Harry Whitmore of South of Scotland Community Housing (SOSCH) to present on support available to communities for community housing projects. SOSCH were established in 2006 as a community-led housing enabler in order to address shortfalls 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 and Land Reform. Community-led housing typically took the model of being owned by a Community Development Trust which allowed for the ownership of housing by community trusts and also assets such as shops and renewable energy sources. Benefits of community housing included the provision of affordable homes for local people and workers, particularly in rural areas. Other benefits of community-led housing stated by SOSCH included encouraging repopulation of rural areas, regenerating local economies through the provision of housing, repurpose derelict or empty buildings, and to act as a reliable source of revenue for community organisations. SOSCH offered support for community organisations by providing a long-term project lifecycle support. SOSCH had a team of five people working across the entire of the South of Scotland on services related to community-led housing and were engaged in over 35 communities. The support that SOSCH provided were helping through the policy and funding contexts of community-led housing and nurture partnerships on a regional, national and international level.

MEMBER

Councillor Hamilton joined the meeting during discussion of the item.

Communities could use SOSCH support to properly establish trusts, hire staff for local groups to take forward work and to access funding. Funding opportunities were presented which included the Rural Housing Fund and Scottish Land Fund, Architectural Heritage Fund, South of Scotland Enterprise, Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF); Borderlands Growth Deal, Ecological Building Society, Wind Farm Funds, Empty Homes Grant Scheme, and SSE Scottish Borders Sustainable Development Fund. SOSCH supported community groups through established routes to community asset ownership which included Community Right to Buy, Community Asset Transfer, and open market or negotiated sales. Mr Whitmore explained that as the Community-Led Housing Coordinator for South East Scotland role was part-funded by the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership there was a focus on bringing empty building into use as community-led housing. Benefits of this route included a reduced carbon footprint from preventing the demolition of old building and building new properties, aiding town centre renewal, restoring confidence in local property markets by ending long-term empty properties, preserving built heritage and encouraging community participation. Mr Whitmore explained that Eyemouth was the only settlement in Berwickshire not eligible for the rural housing fund which may be caused by its proximity to larger settlements. There were vacant and long-term empty property hotspots in Berwickshire – settlements that highlighted were Greenlaw, Coldstream South, Swinton, Leitholm and Fogo. Cranshaws and Abbey St Bathans were also affected by a high number of second homes. Mr Whitmore asked attendees to consider opportunities for community-led housing and to engage SOSCH in their deliberations, and answered questions from those in attendance. Mr Whitmore advised that projects typically took 5 years from conception to moving-in of tenants. The Chair thanked Mr Whitmore for the presentation.

DECISION

- (a) **AGREED to circulate SOSCH presentation slides and contact details for Mr Whitmore to Area Partnership attendees; and,**
- (b) **NOTED the update.**

5. NHS BORDERS

Cathy Wilson, General Manager Primary and Community Services at NHS Borders was invited by the Chair to address the Area Partnerships on topics related to primary care in Berwickshire. The closure of the Chirnside medical practice was addressed and Cathy Wilson explained matters which surrounded the decision. The operation of the Chirnside branch was unsustainable due to difficulties around the recruitment of GPs. A short-life working group was created to assess the situation of the branch. Reduced hours were

considered however this was deemed unsafe. The case went to the NHS Borders executive team which supported the decision to close the branch which highlighted the challenges of attracting GPs to work in Berwickshire which was being addressed by a live project which was looking at active solutions to increase GP capacity. Cathy Wilson answered questions from attendees on the challenges of GP recruitment in Berwickshire. A review had taken place to assess GP recruitment after the Duns clinic was taken over on an emergency basis by the NHS Borders board. No applications were received for GP positions in Duns and reasons found included travel and housing issues. Other measures to address primary care were being initiated which included eConsult which wasn't to replace a phone call opportunity with a GP but allowed for a triage to take place. Cathy Wilson explained it was difficult for NHS Borders board to assess number of patients as data was held by GP practices and other ways to monitor performance of primary care were used. Cathy Wilson advised that she was happy to share minutes of the short-life working group with community councils. Cathy Wilson was thanked by attendees for addressing the Berwickshire Area Partnership.

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

There had been circulated copies of the Berwickshire Funding Table which showed available funding in the Berwickshire area. The Communities Coordinator explained that there were 36 applications to the Neighbourhood Support Fund to be considered and that the fund was oversubscribed. 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. Ms Jardine highlighted that there was £2,523.23 in the SBC Enhancement Trust and £12,332.43 available in the SBC Welfare Trust.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

7. **BERWICKSHIRE NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FUND**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Berwickshire Neighbourhood Support Fund Assessment Panel which provided a description of activities of the panel and recommendations for 36 applications to the Neighbourhood Support Fund. The applications requested funding which totalled over £121,000. Further clarification was added to the Neighbourhood Support Fund guidance notes in September 2022 which addressed clearly defined outcomes and timescales, and funding was less likely to be given for ongoing activity and general staff support without compelling justifications. The panel had welcomed two new panel members, Kathy Huffman and Jim Hettrick. Furthermore, Anne McNeill had taken the decision to step down and she was thanked by the panel for her contribution to its work over the previous two years. Mr Dickinson restated the assessment panel's wish to uncouple its work from the Berwickshire Area Partnership and to have authority to grant funding from the Neighbourhood Support Fund so that grant funding decisions could be made more timeously in three equally-spaced application periods per year.

DECISION

AGREED:

- (a) To award Gordon Community Sportsfield a grant of £5,000;**
- (b) To award Borders Pottery a grant of £4,829;**
- (c) To award Abundant Borders a grant of £3,636;**
- (d) To award Coldstream Heart Rhythm a grant of £2,250;**
- (e) To award Borders Women's Aid a grant of £1,080;**

- (f) To award A Heart for Duns a grant of £5,000;
- (g) To award Parent Space a grant of £3,752.10;
- (h) To award Ayton Christmas Lights a grant of £945;
- (i) To award Duns Rugby Football Club a grant of £849.45;
- (j) To award Duns Football Club an awards of £1,000;
- (k) To award Birgham Community Development Trust an award of £4,590;

8. **BERWICKSHIRE ANTI-LITTER GROUP**

The Chair invited Alison Currie of Berwickshire Anti-Litter Group (BAG) to inform the Area Partnership on the group and its aims and activities. BAG was established to address litter in Berwickshire particularly on roads and with litter on the A1. Solutions suggested included engaging with the council to allow volunteers to conduct a litter pick on roads. The group wished to see better enforcement to tackle littering. Members discussed the issues raised around littering on roads and advised that examples could be used from other countries on their approach to littering and that enforcement may be considered.

9. **PLACE MAKING**

The Community Engagement Officer provided an update on Place Making activities in Berwickshire. The Place Making Tool was presented to Eat Sleep Ride who were guided through the questions in the pack where affordable housing and access of space for community use was raised issues that merited attention. Comments received in Place Making workshops were to be collated as part of town plans. Ms Amaral advised that a workshop with Scottish Futures Trust was proposed to take place on 26 April 2023 and that BAVS were available to deliver training. 17 training sessions had been delivered by BAVS for community groups. Attendees remarked that Place Making workshops required suitable notice for people to attend.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

10. **COST OF LIVING UPDATE**

There had been circulated copies of an update on activities that had taken place by SBC on cost of living support. SBC agreed a range of measures totalling £1.2 million to support communities affected by the cost of living crisis. This included the creation of the Warm and Well Fund to support voluntary, community and charity organisations to provide a warm space for those that struggled to heat their homes during the winter months. Working in partnership with The Bridge and BAVS the intention was to provide a dignified approach to ensuring help reaches communities and individuals who required additional assistance. In Berwickshire, SBC Warm and Well funding of £18,541 was being distributed through BAVS who also secured match funding of £25,680 from the National Lottery. As part of the Cost of Living support, CAB and BAVS organised and delivered an energy information session to help community volunteers and staff have supportive energy conversations with people who were using warm spaces or who were accessing community services. The training provides information on the financial sources available to heat homes and how to refer people to assistance. Funding was available to support energy training across the Borders so additional sessions could be offered to those who were interested.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

11. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION DOCUMENT**

The Chair advised that additional information was included in the agenda pack which contained information on current consultations and links to useful information.

12. **NEXT MEETING OF THE BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP**

The Chair advised that the next meeting of the Berwickshire Area Partnership was on 30 March 2022.

The meeting concluded at 8.50 pm.