

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**  
**16 FEBRUARY 2023**  
**APPENDIX I**

**OPEN QUESTIONS**

**Question from Councillor Thornton-Nicol**

To Executive Member for Service Delivery and Transformation

On 16 November 2021, the Executive Committee agreed a recommendation from the Director Resilient Communities to establish a £70,000 Queen's Platinum Jubilee Fund. Can I ask what the final monies awarded were, who approved any spend above the agreed amount, and from where the additional sums, if any, were taken?

Reply from Councillor Rowley

As agreed by the Executive Committee the Fund opened on 5th January 2022 with a closing date of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

Due to the significant interest and high level of demand from our communities the Fund was oversubscribed resulting in a total amount awarded of **£164,091.72** to 114 community groups. Details of all the awards made are provided on our website [Queen's Platinum Jubilee Fund | Previous Grant Awards | Scottish Borders Council \(scotborders.gov.uk\)](#)

The Director of Resilient Communities and the Director of Finance & Corporate Governance identified additional funding from underspends in the department's budget which the Executive Committee approved, be applied to the Platinum Jubilee fund through financial monitoring reports.

Supplementary

Councillor Thornton-Nicol asked when the evaluation report would be presented to the Executive Committee. Councillor Rowley advised that he could not give a firm date at the moment as the analysis was still being carried out.

**Question from Councillor Anderson**

To Executive Member for Service Delivery and Transformation

Does Scottish Borders Council perform an internal review on customer relations and specifically for staff who work in sensitive areas? This can sometimes be referred to as a quality assurance statement of intent. How is this logged, and is training offered to front line workers, for instance, ground staff in cemeteries, to ensure they are aware when sensitivity is needed? What policy is in place (if any) to ensure there is good practice in sensitive interactions with the public?

Reply from Councillor Rowley

The Council aims to ensure that all staff in positions where they engage with customers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide a high quality of customer experience. To enable this Scottish Borders have a set of 6 Competency Behaviours available to access on the SBC intranet site for all staff of which [Great Service \(sharepoint.com\)](#) is one of these.

Our appraisal system also has a specific section on Great Service where the line manager and member of staff can acknowledge good or improved behaviour is required in relation to customer service. Where improvement is required this will also be noted on the appraisal form under personal development and can include formal or informal training depending on the need. This information is logged in the appraisal system.

These competency behaviours can also be used at any time, when it is recognised that a member of staff is not meeting these standards, and discussed at 1-2-1 meetings with their line manager and agree on improvements or additional training required and then their performance reviewed.

SBLearn, our training platform, holds a number of training and learning material for our staff on a variety of subjects to support their development including numerous customer focused material including:

- Listening to Customers
- Look for customers unique needs
- Social Media and the customer
- Handling complaints
- Difficult conversations
- Handling conflict conversations
- Dealing with difficult telephone calls

We are currently looking at a “soft skills” learning pathway option which will guide staff more directly to some of these keys training and learning materials.

Good customer service is expected in all staff engagements with the public. As explained above this is specified in our competency behaviours and recorded through the appraisal system, as such there is no further policy requirement to ensure good practice in sensitive interactions with the public.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Anderson asked if staff who were not front-line received training. Councillor Rowley confirmed that all staff were trained to be courteous and polite including those who worked in cemeteries and graveyards. However, if Councillor Anderson had a specific concern he would ask officers to look into that.

#### **Question from Councillor Smart**

##### To the Executive Member for Estate Management and Planning

When is the lift in Hawick Town Hall going to be repaired? Currently it is out of use and therefore the building is not accessible for many people.

##### Reply from Councillor Mountford

Unfortunately the contractor has experienced delays in lead times for the required parts to carry out the works to the lift at Hawick Town Hall.

The parts are now anticipated to arrive in March 2023 and thereafter the works on site will be scheduled to minimise day-to-day operations of the offices and it is expected that the works will be complete in April.

Alternative arrangements can be made for those accessing the building that would require use of the lift to gain access to the first floor. Should any members of the public require access to the Hawick Town Hall meantime they should contact a member of staff in advance with their requirements and an area on the ground floor could be utilised for the visit.