

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
TEVIOT AND LIDDESDALE AREA FORUM

MINUTE of Meeting of the TEVIOT AND
LIDDESDALE AREA FORUM held in Lesser
Hall, Town Hall, Hawick on Tuesday, 19
January, 2016 at 6.30 pm.

Present:- Councillors G Turnbull (Chairman), A Cranston, W McAteer, S Marshall,
D Paterson, R Smith, Community Councillors: Mr M Grieve (Burnfoot), Ms G
Crew, (Denholm) Mr C Griffiths (Hobkirk), Mrs M Short (Hawick), Mr T
Stevenson (Upper Teviotdale & Borthwick Water).

Apologies:- Station Manager Mr R Bell, (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service), Community
Councillor Mr W Roberts (Denholm).

In Attendance:- Inspector Carol Wood (Police Scotland), Sergeant R Noble (Police Scotland),
Neighbourhood Area Manager (Mr F Dunlop), Democratic Services Officer (J
Turnbull).

Members of the Public:- 13 in attendance

1. **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chairman varied the order of business as shown on the agenda and the Minute reflects the order in which the items were considered at the meeting

2. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman, Councillor Turnbull, welcomed those present to the Area Forum. With regard to the temporary closure of Sandbed Post Office, Councillor Turnbull reported that Mr Douglas Scott, Senior Policy Advisor, Scottish Borders Council, had been in contact with Linda Bonar, the Post Office's Public Affairs Manager. Ms Bonar had advised that the Sandbed Post Office would close on 29 January 2016, for refurbishment and reopen on 22 February 2016. The Post Office was unable to provide a temporary post office owing to the length of time required to install a dedicated IT line into a building. The mobile service was also unavailable as it was being used in other areas and was not capable of providing a larger branch service. The nearest post office, with the same range of functions, was in Jedburgh. The Post Office was investigating provision of a bus service to Jedburgh three days each week. The Burnfoot Post Office would also be able to provide local post office services. The Forum expressed their disappointment at the short timescale the Post Office had provided for advising of the temporary closure and the lack of replacement facility during the refurbishment period. The closure would cause hardship and inconvenience, especially to elderly, disabled residents. It was noted the Sandbed Post Office had temporarily closed in 2005 and a replacement had been set up in a much shorter time period. Hawick Town Hall staff had also indicated that they would be able to accommodate a temporary post office. It was agreed that a meeting be arranged with Ms Bonar and Councillors as soon as possible to discuss further. The Chairman went on to notify that the report on the one-way system would be presented at the February meeting. This was due to a staff changeover and postponement of the survey due to the recent floods. The Chairman concluded by informing that grants were available for flood affected residents, businesses and community groups. A flat rate grant of £1,500 was available to anyone affected by flooding. An additional £3,000 was available for businesses severely impacted by the flooding which affected their ability to trade. Applications forms were available from Contact Centres or from Scottish Borders Council's website.

DECISION

AGREED that a meeting be arranged, at the earliest opportunity, with the Post Office to discuss the temporary closure of Sandbed Post Office.

3. **MINUTE**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 15 December 2015.

- 3.1 With reference to paragraph 11.3 of the minute, Mrs Drew, Denholm Community Council, intimated that the meeting with Ms Jane Bower, South of Scotland National Park, had not taken place.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Minute.

4. **WARD BOUNDARIES**

The Chairman welcomed John Lamont MSP, who was present at the meeting to take part in the ward boundary discussion. Councillor McAteer notified that a meeting had taken place with the Scottish Government Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment, Marco Baigi, to discuss the Boundary Commission's proposals. At the meeting, concerns had been raised regarding: parts of Burnfoot being in an area of deprivation - the bottom 5% percentile of the entire country; Hawick being in an isolated, rural area; the Boundary Commission's methodology when deciding parity and representation; and approximately 20 councils lodging objections to the Boundary Commission's proposals, with some councils now considering judicial review. The Chairman, Councillor Turnbull added that he had been in discussion with Paul Wheelhouse MSP and had highlighted the Area Forum and its excellent record for community engagement. If the Boundary Commission's proposals went ahead the Forum, in its present form, would not exist. Mr Lamont advised that the Boundary Commission had been tasked by Scottish Government to give extra representation to deprived areas without any increase in the total number of councillors. This meant that the central belt would receive additional councillors, rural areas fewer. He confirmed that his submission to the Boundary Commission had been for retention of the status quo. However, the problem was that the consultation period had ended. Historically, government ministers had never gone against the Boundary Commission's recommendations. There followed a discussion, the consensus being that the Boundary Commission's methodology had been flawed and that the status quo should remain and that six councillors be retained. The Chairman concluded the discussion by advising that Mr Wheelhouse had stated that he would prepare a letter, supporting local Members. This letter, together with a suitable motion, would be presented to Council for consideration.

DECISION

(a) **NOTED** that all six local members were unanimous in their wish for retention of the existing ward boundaries represented by six councillors.

(b) **AGREED** that once Mr Wheelhouse's letter was received, an appropriate motion from all six local councillors be presented to Council.

5. **CITIZENS ADVICE**

Mr Ian Heard, Pension Wise Guidance Specialist was present at the meeting to give a presentation on the Pension Wise Service which was funded by HM Treasury and delivered throughout the UK by the Citizens Advice Bureaux. Mr Heard stated that he had started in post last year and initially his role was to deliver Pension Wise Guidance sessions, this had been expanded to cover local promotion, marketing training and guidance sessions for the Roxburgh & Berwickshire, Central Borders and Peebles and more recently Dumfries & Galloway areas. Mr Heard advised that Pension Wise was a free and impartial service for defined contribution (DC) pensions to help people

understand their options. Mr Heard explained that the 2014 budget, announced Pension Freedoms with a pledge of free, impartial guidance, including face to face. These new pension rules came into effect on 6 April 2015 and Pension Wise had been launched in March 2015. The service was for people close to or over 50, who had a defined contribution pension and were close to making a retirement decision. The service was not designed to replace Financial Advisors but was in addition, to assist people in understanding the new freedoms and their options. Pension Wise Guidance sessions were approximately 45 minutes and discussed what it meant for the individual's circumstances. Online guidance was available from www.pensionwise.gov.uk; telephone appointments on **0300 330 1001** or at the local Citizens Advice Bureau. Mr Heard was currently contacting local firms to discuss the possibility of taking the service to their employees. Assistance and promotion of the Pension Wise Service from councillors and attendees at the meeting would be appreciated. The Chairman thanked Mr Heard for his informative presentation.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

6. SCOTTISH BORDERS HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

Ms Clare Malster, Strategic Community Engagement Officer, Scottish Borders Council, was in attendance to give a presentation on Scottish Borders Household Survey 2015. Ms Malster began by advising that the survey had been undertaken in partnership with: Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Borders Sports & Leisure Trust (BSLT), the four regional social landlords (RSLs) and Transport Scotland. The financial cost of the survey to the Council had been £11k. Ms Malster advised that 2,445 paper surveys had been returned and 261 responses completed online. This was a 41% response rate which was the highest response rate since 2010. Ms Malster went on to highlight some of the responses from the survey, including, satisfaction with the Council overall which had reduced slightly from 2013 from 66.5% to 54.5%. However, there had been a slight increase in the percentage that considered the Council excellent from 3% to 4.1%. This highlighted the Council's transformation programme to deliver a high standard of service was being maintained. Ms Malster explained that the survey showed that satisfaction with the local bus services had remained fairly consistent. There was a piece of work going forward at the moment for the operation of an improved service. Satisfaction with the kerbside waste and recycling collection service had reduced from 92% in 2013 to 79%, with 14% dissatisfied compared to 5% in 2014. These figures reflected the removal of the green waste collection. Satisfaction with the service offered at recycling bring sites had reduced from 82% to 69%, there had been issues with the contractors emptying banks but this has been resolved. Ms Malster highlighted the top five neighbourhood problems which were: parking problems (45%), rubbish and litter (43%) anti-social driving including speeding (42%) people using or dealing drugs (25%) and people being drunk or rowdy in public places (24%). The top three priorities were in line with the Borders as a whole. Ms Malster stated that the survey result showed 75% were dissatisfied at the speed of repairs to local roads; this was consistent throughout the Borders. To conclude her presentation Ms Malster highlighted that 86% of respondents considered the neighbourhood was a good place to live which was encouraging. Inspector Wood intimated that the top five neighbourhood problems reflected those in Police Scotland's multi ward plan. Councillor Turnbull thanked Ms Malster for the informative presentation.

DECISION

NOTED.

7. NEIGHBOURHOOD SMALL SCHEMES AND QUALITY OF LIFE

With reference to the paragraph 7 of the Minute of 15 December 2015, there had been circulated copies of a report by Service Director Neighbourhood Services updating the Forum on previously approved Neighbourhood and Quality of Life Schemes. The report sought approval for regrouting of setts within the footway at High Street, Hawick; the remarking of car parking bays at Lothian Street, Hawick and the erection of a fence at

Havelock Bank, Hawick. Permission was also sought from the Quality of Life Scheme to upgrade the existing woodland walk within Newcastleton Primary School. Mr Dunlop, Neighbourhood Area Manager, advised that upgrading of the footpath at Waverley Walk, Hawick had been completed. The installation of goal posts at Green Terrace had been delayed because of the weather, however, the sockets had now been installed. Councillor Marshall reported that he had received complaints regarding mud on the Waverly Walk footpath from Chay Blyth Place to the Leisure Centre; four or five lighting columns also required repairs. Mr Dunlop would liaise with the appropriate officers and arrange for cleaning of the footpath and repairs to the lighting columns.

DECISION

(a) AGREED the following new Neighbourhood Small Scheme for implementation:-

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|--------------|---|---------------|
| (i) | Regrouting of setts within footway on High Street, Hawick | £4,050 |
| (ii) | Remark existing bays within car park, Lothian Street, Hawick | £ 750 |
| (iii) | Erection of fence at Havelock Bank, Hawick | £1,140 |

**(b) AGREED the following new Quality of Life Scheme for implementation:-
Upgrading of existing woodland walk within Newcastleton
Primary School. £ 900**

(c) NOTED

- (i) The updates on previously approved Neighbourhood Small Schemes as detailed in Appendix A to the report; and**
- (ii) The updates on previously approved Quality of Life Schemes as detailed in Appendix B to the report.**

8. POLICE SCOTLAND

There had been circulated copies of a report by Inspector Carol Wood, Police Scotland. The report highlighted that with regard to the Drug Dealing and Misuse priority, a number of stop and searches had been carried out in December. Four individuals had been reported for possession of drugs. Two house searches had been carried out under misuse of drugs' warrants resulting in two males being charged with drug offences. The Road Safety priority showed that 16 road checks had been carried out in December, although more had been carried out due to festive and road safety campaigns. One conditional offer had been issued for failing to wear a seatbelt and one warning for the anti-social use of a vehicle. With regard to the to the Anti-Social Behaviour priority, five fixed penalty tickets had been issued. The report stated that in the next few months, community officers would continue to carry out patrols to deter youth anti-social behaviour. There would also be a joint initiative with roads policing officers to give attention to areas where concerns had been raised regarding various road traffic matters. The Chairman thanked Inspector Wood for the report.

DECISION NOTED.

9. SCOTTISH FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

There had been circulated, copies of a report from Mr Russell Bell, Station Manager, Hawick Fire Station, updating the Forum on Scottish Fire and Rescue activity for the month of December 2015. In Mr Bell's absence, the Chairman advised that there had been one house fire incident, at a farm steading causing two casualties. There had been one open fire, eight unwanted fire alarm signals and 33 special service incidents, including 21 relating to flooding.

DECISION NOTED.

10. **OPEN QUESTIONS**

- 10.1 Councillor Smith in his role as Chairman of Planning & Building Standards Committee, reported that the Scottish Government had issued information to community councils regarding the Reporter's changes to the Local Development Plan. Scottish Borders Council were unhappy with the proposed changes. However, challenging the changes would delay the Local Development Plan for approximately a year which would affect planning applications. Councillor Smith explained that the Reporter had made extensive changes to the renewables policy and to housing allocation. In terms of housing, 916 housing plots had to be identified across the Scottish Borders. With regard to renewables, SBC had offered to review its renewables policy but this offer had been rejected. Councillor Smith had sent letters to the Chief Planner, the Chief Reporter and the Chairman of the Independent Review Panel of the Review of the Planning System to express concern at the lack of consultation and the outcome of the process. A response was awaited.
- 10.2 Councillor Marshall advised that the sewage works at Duke Street had been reinstated. The contractors were carrying out investigation works for a new sewage pipework.
- 10.3 Community Councillor Grieve referred to the Hawick News office being relocated and asked if councillors were campaigning against the move. Councillor McAteer advised that he had written to the Chief Executive of the newspaper but had not had a response.

DECISION

NOTED the reports.

11. **COMMUNITY COUNCIL SPOTLIGHT**

- 11.1 Mr Robson from Upper Teviot and Borthwick Water stated that the community were concerned at the poor condition of the roads, many of which were in a dangerous condition. He advised that as many as 40 timber vehicles could use the road in a day and funding needed to be sourced elsewhere for maintenance. Mr Robson also advised that the Community Council had investigated the provision of a defibrillator for the community, but the cost had been prohibitive. Councillor Paterson advised that a community grant might be available to cover the cost.
- 11.2 Mr Griffiths, Hobkirk Community Council, stated that the Community Council were concerned at the proposals for wind turbines in the area. Mrs Crew added that Denholm and District Community Council were also concerned and stated that the public needed to be made aware of the impact the wind turbines would have on their communities. Community councils needed to meet together to discuss. The Chairman advised that the Scottish Borders Community Council Network (SBCNN) should be contacted to facilitate a joint meeting. Local MSPs should also be involved and invited to deliver an election address to the Forum. The clerk was asked to check if this would be appropriate.

MEMBER

Councillor Smith left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

- 11.3 Mrs Short, Hawick Community Council, advised that their recent petition regarding the 120 Bus Service had been received favourably by the Petitions and Deputations Committee. With regard to Christmas lights testing, a community grant application had been submitted. Mrs Short notified that they had also received an anonymous donation of £1k from a retired gentleman towards the light testing. This was an extremely kind gesture and much appreciated.
- 11.4 Mr Grieve, Burnfoot Community Council, advised that a landscape architect was now involved in the Remembrance Garden project. Plans were also ongoing for the Carnival. A meeting of Burnfoot Community Partnership would be held next Thursday.

- 11.5 Mrs Crew, Denholm and District Community Council, advised that they encouraged support of the national park proposals.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (i) To request an item on the agenda to discuss wind farms; and
- (ii) To request the clerk ask if appropriate for local MSPs to attend the Forum to delivery their election address.

12. **DATE OF NEXT TEVIOT AND LIDDESDALE AREA FORUM MEETING**

- 12.1 The Chairman concluded the meeting by advising that he had been delegated to investigate the hire of a pressure machine for cleaning streets. A meeting would be arranged with local members to discuss.
- 12.2 The next meeting of the Teviot and Liddesdale Area Forum would be held on Tuesday, 16 February 2016 at 6.30 pm in the Lesser Hall, Town Hall, Hawick.

The meeting concluded at 9.00 pm.