

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES of Meeting of the
BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP
held in Volunteer Hall, Langtongate, Duns,
TD11 3AF on Thursday, 1 June 2023 at 6.30
pm

Present:- Councillors J. Anderson, J. Greenwell, D. Moffat, A. Orr and M. Rowley

Other organisations attendees: Ms L. Anderson (Eyemouth CC), Mr E. Chester (Eyemouth Community Centre), Ms T. Collin (Allanton, Whitsome and Edrom CC), Mr K. Dickinson (Gavinton, Fogo and Polwarth CC); Ms M. Douglas and Ms H. Paxton (Greenlaw and Hume CC); Mr D. Fisher (Ability Borders/Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber), Mr L. Inglis (Reston and Auchencrow CC); Ms P. Hood (Cockburnspath and Cove CC); Ms B. Landon (Borders Community Action), Mr A. Lester; Ms A. McNeill and Mr Lindsay Wood (A Heart for Duns); Mr D. Morgan (Hutton and Paxton CC); Mr B. Purvis and I. Woolley (Swinton and Ladykirk CC); Ms M. Rodger (Lammermuir CC).

Apologies:- Councillor C. Hamilton

In Attendance:- Community Co-ordinator, Strategic Housing Development Officer (L. Renwick), Community Engagement Officer (J. Purves), Chief Inspector Vincent Fisher (Police Scotland), Mr J. Boulton (Tweed Valley Rail Campaign), Mr B. Payne (Berwickshire Civic Society), Democratic Services Officer (W. Mohieddeen).

1. **WELCOME**

The Chair introduced Andrew Lester, Chair of A Heart for Duns who welcomed attendees to the Volunteer Hall. Mr Lester delivered a presentation that gave a brief overview of the work of A Heart for Duns and their acquirement of the Volunteer Hall. A Heart for Duns delivered a programme of events for the benefit of the Duns community which were highlighted in a video presentation.

2. **FEEDBACK FROM MEETING OF 30 MARCH 2023**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 30 March 2023.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Minute of the Meeting for signature by the Chair.

3. **LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2023-28 CONSULTATION**

The Chair introduced Lindsey Renwick, Housing Strategy Team, to deliver a presentation on progress of the 2023-28 Local Housing Strategy Consultation. Scottish Borders Council was statutorily obligated to produce a local housing strategy every five years to be submitted to the Scottish Government. It was a key strategy for Scottish Borders Council that set out priorities for housing based on local and national strategies, and also outlines areas for partnership working. Through surveys and local engagement exercises, the 2023-28 draft strategy had been prepared over a period of 18 months. The Housing Strategy Team were available for community groups to discuss support for engaging in the consultation. Ms Renwick advised that the Local Housing Strategy was part of a framework of related strategies and housing policies, and noted that the Local Housing

Strategy was key for housing and linked with the Local Development Plan. Ms Renwick agreed to circulate the presentation slides and Berwickshire data profile with the Area Partnership following the meeting.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the update; and,**
- (b) **AGREED that the presentation slides and Berwickshire data profile be circulated to attendees.**

4. REFRESHED COMMUNITY PLAN PRIORITIES

4.1 The Chair introduced Chief Inspector Vincent Fisher to deliver an update on development of the Scottish Borders Community Plan and to ask for contributions to be made. The Community Plan was the process for Scottish Borders Council and other bodies such as Police Scotland to work with businesses and communities to improve services. The Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership were obligated by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to prepare and publish a Community Plan. Other agencies involved in Community Plan development included NHS, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and South of Scotland Enterprise. Five themes had been developed with 16 priorities that engagement and research was to be undertaken on. The five themes were:

- Enough Money to Live on
- Economy, Skills and Learning
- Enjoying Good Health and Wellbeing
- A Good Place to Live, Grow Up and Enjoy a Full Life
- Community Empowerment

4.2 The consultation on the Community Plan was to close on 16 July 2023. During discussion of the Community Plan consultation, it was advised that the development of the Community Plan was instructed by legislation, however the consultation and engagement exercise provided opportunities for community-led planning, alongside the work of Place Making.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

5. FLAG FOR BERWICKSHIRE COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN

The Chair introduced Brian Payne, Chair of Berwickshire Civic Society who presented an update on the Flag for Berwickshire project. The project was delivered to be a community-led and community-designed project to develop a flag for the Berwickshire. It was noted that Berwickshire District ceased existing in 1996, but the name was still present in community institutions such as Berwickshire High School, housing associations and local newspapers. The competition had launched and full information could be found on the website www.flagforberwickshire.org and on the project's Facebook page. Development of the flag would be an open invitation for designs to be submitted with shortlisting to take place of the best designs to put forward for a public vote. Submissions were to open on 1 June 2023 and close on 30 July 2023, judging to take place in August 2023 and the public vote to take place from 5 September 2023. Judges were to be invited from the community and the competition was supported by the Court of the Lord Lyon. Designs were to be submitted electronically or paper-based using forms circulated by BAVS.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

6. **TWEED VALLEY RAIL CAMPAIGN**

6.1 There had been circulated copies of a presentation slide pack that summarised the aims of the Tweed Valley Rail Campaign. The Chair invited James Boulton to present to the Area Partnership about the campaign. The aim of the campaign was to re-establish a rail connection from Tweedbank Station through Kelso to Berwick. The campaign had a three-point plan which was:

- 1) Gauge support;
- 2) Feasibility study; and,
- 3) Build it.

6.2 Mr Boulton advised that reasons for pursuing the railway were to support tourism and leisure in the Borders, support active travel, provide access to work, education and healthcare, to attract investment by opening up other parts of the Borders, and encouraging more housing to be built. The campaign had received investment from the Cheviot Neighbourhood Support Fund to run for a second year and had received over 300 people signed as members or supporters of the campaign. Plexus and Schloss Roxburghe had supported the campaign and ongoing engagement was taking place with relevant MPs and MSPs. It was the position of the campaign that, alongside the feasibility study into the extension of the Borders Railway through Hawick to Carlisle, a feasibility study should take place to ascertain the benefits of opening the railway eastwards from Tweedbank to Berwick. During discussion of the presentation, it was advised that the Reston Station capacity for 14 charge points rather than 20. Attendees considered the potential for the railway to carry freight, supporting farmers and attracting tourists with steam locomotives.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

7. **BERWICKSHIRE NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FUND**

7.1 There had been circulated copies of a report from the Neighbourhood Support Fund panel that provided attendees with an update of activity of the panel. The panel met on 10 May 2023 to consider matters relevant to the fund, which included:

- 1) Panel membership;
- 2) Delivery of the Neighbourhood Support Fund in 2023-24; and,
- 3) Funding stream opportunities.

7.2 After a resignation, there were now four community members of the panel. The panel decided to approach interested people personally rather than circulate emails to promote opportunities to become members. The panel further decided that Scottish Borders Council should identify individuals and community groups that may have an interest in joining the panel. Those interested were to submit an application form which was to be facilitated by Scottish Borders Council.

7.3 During 2022-23, there were 58 applications received which requested a total of £211,000. 31 applications were approved which received a total of £95,497.19. The budget for the 2023-24 Neighbourhood Support Fund was £50,185. The panel made recommendations to the Area Partnership which included that the application maximum should remain at £5,000, the criteria should remain the same, there should be two application rounds in the year, the fund should open at 2 June 2023 with the first funding round to be considered for the 31 August 2023 meeting of the Berwickshire Area Partnership and the second round of applications to be considered at the 8 February 2023 meeting.

7.4 The panel made further recommendations for supporting applicants to consider other funding opportunities. It had been noted by the panel that some applications were eligible for other funds. The panel recommended that officers support applicants to consider other funding opportunities so that funding could also be secured elsewhere.

Furthermore, it was recommended that the Scottish Borders Council would share with the Berwickshire Area Partnership information related to funding opportunities that were available to support community activities.

DECISION

(a) AGREED:

- (i) That the Neighbourhood Support Fund 2023-24 maximum application value remain at £5,000;**
- (ii) That the application criteria remain the same;**
- (iii) That there be two application rounds in 2023-24;**
- (iv) That the first application round open on 2 June 2023 and applications be determined on the 31 August 2023 meeting of the Berwickshire Area Partnership;**
- (v) That the second application round be determined at the 8 February 2024 meeting of the Berwickshire Area Partnership;**
- (vi) That officers support Neighbourhood Support Fund applicants by advising of other funding opportunities for applicants to consider;**
- (vii) That officers share with Berwickshire Area Partnership a summary of information of related funding opportunities available to support community activity; and,**

(b) NOTED the update.

8. BERWICKSHIRE FUNDING TABLE 2023-24

There had been circulated copies of the Berwickshire funding table which outlined available funds and grant opportunities in Berwickshire. The Community Engagement Officer presented the paper and advised that the opening balance for the Neighbourhood Support Fund was £50,185 with a £4,500 carry-over which totalled £54,685.00.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

9. PLACE MAKING UPDATE

9.1 There had been circulated copies of a report from the Berwickshire Area Partnership Place Making Working Group which reported on progress of the working group and made recommendations to support communities with development of plans. The Chair invited the chair of the working group, Mr Dickinson, to present the report who advised that one of the main concerns that communities had was with having capacity to take forward the work in engaging their communities to develop a plan and implement it. Areas of support identified were:

- Additional dedicated support to work with communities to develop plans;
- Funding to provide for training, expenses, materials and workshops; and,
- A peer group support network to establish a group of contacts, information sharing, developing skills and providing a forum for communities to seek help and advice.

9.2 This formed the basis for a successful application for funding through Borders Community Action (BCA) for £83,600 to fund a dedicated officer, based in BCA, for 2023-24 to support communities in the eastern Borders with a focus on development of community-led plans in Duns and district, and Coldstream and district. The funding was drawn from

Scottish Borders Council Community Engagement. The funding award included £35,000 to enable facilitation, training, materials and workshops.

- 9.3 A place making support framework was established by Scottish Borders Council to help communities access support to develop plans. There were two parts to the framework which included support for communities to develop plans and technical support for business cases and investment plans. In summarising work that the working group could continue with, Mr Dickinson advised that there should be further oversight and coordination of work taking place across Berwickshire which may be of use to the Area Partnership. Mr Dickinson recommended that the Area Partnership note the work of the working group, address the challenges of oversight and coordination of place planning work by either continuing with the working group with modified terms of reference or incorporating the activity of the working group into the core agenda of the Area Partnership, that the BCA Place Officer reports to the working group and the Area Partnership on place making progress in Berwickshire, and that the Area Partnership should recommend to Scottish Borders Council to include community stakeholder participation on the Place Partnership Advisory Panel. Conversations which regarded continuing the work of the working group were to take place and any recommendations were to be brought back to the area Partnership at a future meeting.

DECISION

(a) AGREED:

- (i) To invite the BCA Place Officer to report to the Berwickshire Area Partnership on place making progress;**
- (ii) To recommend to Scottish Borders Council to include community stakeholder participation on the Place Partnership Advisory Panel;**

(b) NOTED:

- (i) The progress made by the working group; and,**
- (ii) The update.**

10. 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.

11. NEXT MEETING OF THE BERWICKSHIRE AREA PARTNERSHIP

The Chair advised that the next meeting of the Berwickshire Area Partnership was scheduled to take place on 31 August 2023.

The meeting concluded at 8.15 pm.