

MINUTE of Meeting of the EILDON AREA
PARTNERSHIP held Via Microsoft Teams on
Thursday, 16 November 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present:- Councillors E. Thornton-Nicol (Chair), C. Cochrane, L. Douglas, E. Jardine, J. Linehan, N. Mackinnon, D. Parker, J. PatonDay, F. Sinclair and H. Steel together with 9 representatives of Partner Organisations, Community Councils, and members of the public.

In Attendance:- Community Co-Ordinator (K. Harrow), Community Engagement Officer (E. Coltman), Democratic Services Team Leader.

1. **WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Eildon Area Partnership held via Microsoft Teams.

2. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION DOCUMENT**

There had been circulated copies of an additional information document with the agenda.

3. **FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION FROM MEETING OF 7 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The Minute of the meeting of the Eildon Area Partnership held on 7 September June 2023 had been circulated and was noted. The Community Engagement Officer, Mr Erin Coltman, highlighted that the speed introductions held at the previous meeting had been well received and had demonstrated the range of experiences and interests amongst the attendees. The feedback on the presentation by Borders Community Action had been positive. The Community Development Support Team at Borders Community Action continued to hold regular talks and meetings, with the next one due to be held at Eildon Housing Headquarters on Tuesday, 21 November 2023.

3. **TIME FOR CHANGE – NHS BORDERS**

The Chair welcomed Mr Ralph Roberts, Chief Executive of NHS Borders and Mr Chris Myers, the Chair of the Integrated Joint Board. Mr Roberts explained that presentation were being delivered at the five Area Partnership sessions on 'Time For Change' a wide ranging conversation with communities to consider the range of NHS services in the Scottish Borders and to feed into a refresh of NHS Borders Medium Term Plan. The scale of challenges in planning and delivering health services to meet need were unprecedented; significant workforce challenges allied with a smaller working age population (45% vs 65% nationally), over a large rural area and a growing financial deficit. Under the four suggested discussion headings: Services In the Community; Community Bed Based Services; Acute Hospital Services; and Mental Health Services there had been an audit of provision, public feedback, achievements and areas of focus. A further community engagement drop-in session was to be held at the Great Tapestry of Scotland Building in Galashiels from 2-7pm on Wednesday, 29 November. Mr Myers highlighted that the community, and all major parties would be key to delivering a health service that was fit for purpose into the future. Whilst the rural nature of the region presented challenges it also presented good conditions for innovation to thrive. The Chair highlighted that "older people" rather than "elderly" was the preferred term to refer to people as they grew older. The Chair further highlighted the importance of more long-term contracts for care providers such as physios, and that providing care directly in communities had huge potential cost and patient satisfaction benefits. It was highlighted

that the message to the general public on Time for Change needed to be managed effectively to ensure that rumours did not cause unnecessary panic. Attendees stressed that any change to services which would require people to travel out of their local area needed to be carefully considered to ensure that people were not disadvantaged. The importance of the range of services being more joined up was suggested as something that needed to be taken into account. Mr Roberts acknowledged the concerns which had expressed throughout the discussion and confirmed that there were no plans in place to close any services or facilities. The Health Service, like most of society, was facing considerable pressure on its resources and needed to ensure that it could balance its priorities and deliver for the people of the Scottish Borders. The Time for Change discussions would feed into and inform how the Service was shaped for the future. Mr Coltman undertook to share the details with community networks prior to the session.

4. **DESTINATION TWEED**

4.1 The Chair welcomed Marina Piper, the Project Manager with Destination Tweed to provide a presentation. Ms Piper explained the Destination Tweed project was focused on celebrating and sharing the nature, history and stories of the River Tweed, as well as caring for and enjoying the river in a sustainable way. The project would involve developing a source to sea trail and enhancing habitats. Over 30 partners and funders, including Scottish Borders Council, Visit Scotland, SOSE and Visit Scotland were involved. Work was ongoing to build up resources and capacity to ensure that the 5 year project could be delivered. The source to sea trail was an element which SBC had led the way. The focus was on ensuring that various existing paths and ways were linked up and joined to deliver the trail. Design principles were in place, with ramped access and self-closing gates in place of styles expected to ensure that the route was accessible. Ms Piper highlighted the various elements of the river Tweed trail which were complete, underway, or pending. The Melrose to Maxton route was expected to involve a bike route, with scoping ongoing. Work was ongoing to determine how best to tell the story of the river alongside the route, to ensure that people were engaged. Ms Piper highlighted the various projects alongside the Destination Tweed project, including the Crook Inn Bunkhouse, where there was a planned accessible room, connecting threads story telling workshops and bug life planting sessions. Tweed Watch was holding sessions in Old Melrose with Newstead Primary School students as part of health and wellbeing sessions. Uncovering the Tweed were identifying sites using LIDAR data and aerial photographs. A Community Grants scheme totalling £200k over 3 years was in development. Work on tackling invasive non-native species was ongoing. Pollinators Along the Tweed, focused on improving the number of and biodiversity of the species along the river Tweed, was expected to improve 15 sites in the current year. The overall plan involved transformational and meaningful change of the landscape in partnership with multiple partners and funders. The benefits were expected to be seen across the economy, environment and communities. The entire scheme was focused on a low carbon tourism model, with effective public transport links and active travel.

4.2 Attendees thanked Ms Piper for her presentation and encouraged her to keep up the good work. In response to a question regarding whether the potential for the Tweed corridor to be designated as a National Park, Ms Piper explained that the group would embrace the opportunity if that happened but would continue on their work if that did not turn out to be the case. Ms Piper acknowledged the potential benefits of a national park.

5. **EILDON FUNDING TABLE**

There had been circulated copies of the Eildon Funding Table 2023/24 with the agenda. Mr Coltman outlined that £13.1k of the Neighbourhood Support Fund 2023/24 pot remained if the application to be considered at the meeting was approved.

6. **NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FUND 2023/24**

There had been circulated copies of an application for £10k from Melrose Football Club. The funding applied for would be used as part of the Club's plans to refurbish the Engine Room on Gibson Park and construct an extension to provide a community hub and

changing rooms. The funding would be used to complete the RIAS stages. In its consideration the Assessment Panel had noted the significant number of community comments by the public on the planning portal in relation to the planning application and the considerable work which the Club had undertaken as part of the project. The strong community focus of the application had acknowledged, and the Panel had recommended to fund the application in full. Members unanimously approved the application in full. The Chair welcomed Mr Greg Simpson of the Club to the meeting. Mr Simpson expressed his thanks for the grant.

7. **MEETING EVALUATION VIA MENTI**

The meeting evaluation link for Menti was displayed, and the Chair encouraged attendees to share ideas for future meetings.

8. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Community Co-ordinator, Mr Kenny Harrow, highlighted that Scottish Borders Council was undertaking a varied grass cutting trial in areas of Galashiels, Tweedbank, and Selkirk. The cutting regimes in certain areas would be changed to allow longer between cuts in specific areas to link in with the Destination Tweed project.

9. **NEXT AREA PARTNERSHIP – THURSDAY 25 JANUARY 2024**

The Chair advised that the next meeting would be held via Microsoft Teams. The meetings in March and June would be held in-person.

The meeting concluded at 7.30 p.m.