**Draft Minute of Virtual Meeting of the Tweeddale Access Panel, held on Zoom, on Wednesday, 25 November 2020 at 7.00pm.**

**PRESENT:** *Paul Nichol (Chairman), Frank Drummond, Stuart Hill, Callum Macdonald, and Elaine Thomson.*

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Councillor Robin Tatler.*

**APOLOGIES:** *Michael Davis.*

1. **Quorum**

The Chairman noted that there was again an insufficient number of members present to form a quorum.

**DECISION**

**AGREED** that any conclusions reached in the course of the meeting would not be final decisions but recommendations for approval at the next quorate Panel meeting.

1. **Minute of Meeting held on 23 September 2020**

The Minute of the Meeting held on 23 September 2020 had been circulated.

**DECISION**

**RECOMMENDED that it be approved** as a correct record.

1. **Matters Arising**

**(a) Salt Bin Location – Eddleston**

Callum advised that he hoped for a response from a local Councillor later that evening, at a meeting of Eddleston Community Council, to his request for a salt bin to be located in Old Edinburgh Road, Eddleston.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

**(b) Deaf Awareness and Covid**

Paul advised that Clare Wildsmith had been encouraged by Robin to apply to the Council for funding for a supply of see through masks and information signage for local businesses, to improve communication with customers with a hearing impairment.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Street Access Surveys**

Paul expressed his thanks to all members who had taken part in the street access surveys. Their feedback had been included in the overview and three reports prepared by David Hunter, our consultant. These concentrated on three main walks: from the Gytes Leisure Centre to Hay Lodge Health Centre; between Peebles High School and Priorsford Primary School and the town centre; and from Halyrude Primary School to the town centre, but also included references to issues in some nearby streets.

Paul would finalise the reports before passing these on to Philippa Gilhooley, the Council roads officer who had authorised the funding to engage David Hunter. Paul would share the contents of the reports with the Community Council and Peebles Community Trust, who were also taking an interest in Spaces For People, and Emma Guy of the Go Tweed Valley Tourism BID (Business Improvement District).

Paul encouraged Panel members to share the final reports widely with others who might benefit from the recommended actions being undertaken, both disabled people and pram pushers.

Paul confirmed that David Hunter was willing to attend any meetings with Scottish Borders Council to discuss the reports and any action to follow.

Mention was made of the lack of rest areas for disabled people along some routes. Robin pointed out that the local Rotary Clubs had funded some benches along the Tweed Walkway, and suggested that they might be approached to fund any benches needed along other walking routes.

**DECISION**

**NOTED AND AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that:

1. Paul finalise the reports and share their contents with the Community Council, Community Trust and Go Tweed Valley Tourism BID; and
2. all members share the contents of the finalised reports with anyone whom these might benefit.
3. **Website Improvements**

Paul advised that he and Callum, Stuart, Clare Wildsmith and Spencer had met the previous day on Zoom with Fiona Budd, our website developer. Website improvements were under way. The font size had been enlarged to 16 points, and colour contrasts adjusted, based on Elaine’s feedback. The front page was simple, with three themes, and the onus would be on Panel members to provide the content. The first task for members would be to provide a photo and a short biography of themselves. Paul would circulate his biog as an example. He hoped the Panel could find someone, perhaps a senior High School pupil, with the skills and interest to establish a Panel presence on social media.

 People were more likely to respond to a message on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, and follow up a link to our website from there, than to initiate a search of our website spontaneously. The website should also contain a short news summary of matters of interest in the Panel Minutes, although the full Minutes should also be available there for people wanting more detail.

**DECISION**

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that:

(a) members provide Paul with their photo and a short biography; and (b) members advise him of anyone who might take on a social media role for the Panel.

1. **Constitution**

As agreed at the last meeting, Frank advised that he had begun a review of the Panel Constitution, which was now well out of date. There were a number of issues on which he would appreciate some input from any members interested, before bringing a draft of the proposed new Constitution back to the full Panel. Once approved by the Panel as a draft, the Constitution would have to be submitted to OSCR for approval before being brought into operation.

Robin suggested that Lorna McCulloch, at The Bridge, who had some knowledge of such matters, might also be consulted.

**DECISION**

**AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that Frank consult on the contents of the proposed Constitution with Paul, Callum and Lorna McCulloch, before bringing a draft to a future meeting.

1. **Wheelchair Accessible Housing – Target**

There had been circulated a report by the Council’s Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy, approved by the Executive Committee on 17 November, which recommended that the Council set an annual target of 20 wheelchair accessible homes, consisting of 15 to be provided by Registered Social Landlords, and 5 from other sources. According to the report recommendations, the Director was remitted to report back after 31 March 2026 on the delivery of the target, but the covering email referred to an annual review.

The background paper by consultants, on which the report was based, stated that around 2,000 households contained a wheelchair user. Of that number, a minimum of 600 people needed a wheelchair to move around the home, and 80 families included a child wheelchair user. A further 2,000-2,500 occupants required housing adaptations because of difficulties in moving around the home. The researchers estimated that a minimum of 220 wheelchair user households occupied a house which was wholly unsuitable for their needs, and a further 450 required additional adaptations to their current homes to meet their changing needs.

Paul had obtained a copy of the background paper, entitled “Space to live – Wheelchair accessible housing in the Scottish Borders”, and offered to send a link to Panel members interested. He had passed on some queries to the Council regarding how this housing would be provided, and a reply was awaited.

Comments were made regarding the ambiguity over the review period, the time it might take to meet the backlog, and the need to ensure that the houses were built in locations where the wheelchair users wanted to live.

**DECISION**

**NOTED AND AGREED TO RECOMMEND that**

1. the Panel ask to be kept informed of developments;
2. Robin clarify the review frequency; and
3. Paul circulate a link to the background paper.
4. **Chairman’s Report**

Paul advised that all of the activities covered in his Chairman’s report had already been discussed under other items on the agenda.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Secretary’s Report**

Frank advised that he had attended a meeting of the Tweeddale Area Partnership on Zoom on 3 November. The main item on the agenda had been to discuss the future arrangements for Partnership meetings and how to broaden attendance.

Frank had expressed the Panel’s appreciation of the provision of a British Sign Language interpreter, whenever required, at past Partnership meetings, but had pointed out that a number of attendees would benefit from the use of a sound amplification system and a hearing induction loop.

Robin confirmed that these matters were under active consideration for Tweeddale and the other Area Partnership meetings. He advised that he was holding a number of drop-in discussion meetings on Zoom and would welcome any Panel members wanting to take part.

**DECISION**

**NOTED AND AGREED** **TO RECOMMEND** that Frank circulate details of Robin’s drop-in meetings to members.

1. **Treasurer’s Report**

Frank advised that changes to the Panel’s banking arrangements had not yet taken place, with the result that Michael was still our Treasurer so far as the Bank were concerned. Callum advised that he hoped to arrange for the necessary paperwork to be exhibited or delivered to the Bank within the next few days. In Michael’s absence Frank reported that the Panel’s current bank balance was £2,234.03, after payment of Bank service charges.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Three Bridges Walk, Peebles**

Robin advised that roads engineer Paul Franklin had been appointed to devise a solution to the accessibility problems caused by the stepped section on the Three Bridges Walk alongside the Hay Lodge Health Centre complex. The project would then have to be costed and funding found to bring it to fruition.

Paul suggested that Robin investigate whether the project might be eligible for Spaces For People funding.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Tweeddale Area Partnership Meetings**

Robin advised that the next Tweeddale Area Partnership meeting would take place virtually on Tuesday, 19 January 2021.

**DECISION**

**NOTED.**

1. **Date of Next Meeting**

**Wednesday 20 January 2021, on Zoom, at 7.00pm**