



## SBC Customer Services Project

The current arrangements in the Borders for serving the public are confusing to the public and difficult to manage for the Council. There are over 35 different reception counters in 11 different Border Communities. – In fact there were more than 24 in the 4 main towns of Galashiels, Hawick, Duns and Peebles. In addition the council advertises over 500 different telephone numbers in the phonebook and currently only has a very limited number of services which are available online.

The objective of the Customer Service project is to improve the way the council deals with enquiries from the public. This will be achieved by:

- Establishing a single point where all face to face enquiries can be dealt with in each of the 11 towns where the council currently has a contact centre
- Simplifying telephony to establish a single number which customer can call for all enquiries.
- Using generic customer service staff able to provide services and information across a range of council services, allowing customers to deal with their enquiries at

- the first point of contact.
- E – enabling a number of council services to allow customers to transact on a 24/7 basis

Significant progress has already been made towards these goals

- In Hawick a single enquiry counter has been established in the Town Hall in the High St. – replacing six different counters previously used to provide these services. In Duns the contact centre at Newton St can now deal with enquiries previously dealt with at 5 different counters. The Contact Centre at Paton St. in Galashiels is currently being developed as the single point of contact for that community and work is underway to identify a suitable site in Peebles town centre for a contact centre.
- New telephone software and hardware has been procured and has been used in Hawick since May last year. This is in the process of being transferred to Council Headquarters and a simplified telephone numbering system will be implemented later this year.
- A group of generic customer service staff, taken principally from existing revenues and benefits staff, have been trained in customer service and

in providing services on behalf of other departments. These staff are now working in all the contact centres across the borders.

- A significant investment has been made in technology and infrastructure to help e – enable a number of services the council provides. This will continue to be developed. In addition, publicly accessible computers are being made available in all contact centres.

In the next phase of the project (2009/10) it is anticipated that some council services (e.g. making a benefit application) will be able to be delivered by partner agencies (e.g. Housing Associations and Citizens Advice Bureau's. This will be possible as a result of significant investments in new technologies.

In addition alternative facilities (e.g. Libraries) will be used to provide a broader range of council services. The project is keen to explore further ways of using partner agencies and technology to develop service provision to more remote parts of the region.

We can provide this document on tape, in large print and various other formats by contacting the address below. In addition, contact us for information on other language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you and explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

Clare Malster, Community Engagement Officer  
Business Improvement Unit, Scottish Borders Council Headquarters  
Newtown St. Boswells  
MELROSE TD6 0SA  
Tel: 01835 826626

## Scottish Borders Community Councils' Network (SBCCN)



February 2009

### Chairman's Comments

Parents Against Cuts in Education (PACE) sought publicity and campaigned against proposed reductions in budgets devolved to schools. Understandably so perhaps? Councillor Bhatia should be complimented, therefore, on her ambitions for every child by way of the radical recommendations in the Transforming Children's Services (TCS) document. SBC's Education spokesperson guided the TCS proposals through on the back of a pledge not to cut the devolved school budget. Immediately PACE backed – off, not to be heard of again until very recently when they moved their argument against cuts towards seeking additional funding for schools. They suggested that the schools budgets could benefit at a cost to the roads maintenance programme! PACE appear to be unconcerned about any part of the transforming services for children or other essential services. Just give us more money. Who knows what a school needs to survive, to accommodate change and to develop?

Andrew Keddie's (Southern Reporter) and David Knox's (Border Telegraph/ Peebleshire News) informative articles on SBC budget plans were just that – informative. Where was the cut and thrust of journalistic debate which brings out the real facts behind the cosy press releases? Has the press lost his cutting edge? Why did the editors seem to be so acceptant of "much good news for the Borders" as suggested by Councillor Parker? In order to analyse with confidence

access to all of the information is necessary. Freedom for staff to speak to the press would help – but, of course, that is not allowed!!

It is all too cosy. In Edinburgh the opposition parties fail to question in any depth the budget as proposed by the SNP; opposition parties simply look selfishly for crumbs from the table. At Newtown St Boswells the SNP, in opposition, fail to question in any meaningful way the budget as proposed by the administration, perhaps because of the concordat – who knows. With whom lies responsibility to challenge the budget? Is this the price to be paid for proportional representation and her sister complementary politics?

If you take 2% away from budgets annually, over some 10 years, service efficiency must be affected. Who is asking about the real effect these cuts place on service delivery? Who is asking how this so called efficiency saving is re-distributed? What is the impact on the roads and building maintenance programme? Which posts are to be made redundant and what will be the impact on services. If impact is minimal why were the posts there in the first place?

Wherein lies the responsibility to challenge the budget? As a Community Council have you made your views known through your local Councillors? Is there a record which shows that they have pursued your concerns to the highest level and reported back? Or is everything just cosy?

### Headlines

#### SBCCN AGM

Date: 13/05/2009  
Venue: Scottish Borders Council HQ

#### SBCCN Annual Seminar

Subject: Town and Village Centre Renewal  
Date: 03/10/2009  
Venue: Scottish Borders Council HQ

#### Funding Review

The Review of funding to Community Councils is due to commence shortly. All Community Councils have been informed and asked to nominate representatives to the Working Group.

#### Data Protection Act

Scottish Borders Council will be paying the DPA registration fee, and complete the registration process for all Community Councils.

For more information contact Clare Malster.

# Scottish Borders Community Councils'



## Snippets

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Environment Agency have recently published a draft of the **River Basin Management Plan** for the Solway Tweed river basin district for consultation.

Issued by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency communications department

[www.sepa.org.uk](http://www.sepa.org.uk)

### General enquiries:

Telephone: 01786 457700

Email:

[publicrelations@sepa.org.uk](mailto:publicrelations@sepa.org.uk)

The 2008 Association of Scottish Community Councils Conference held in the Scottish Parliament last November, heard that funding negotiations with the Scottish Government were at an advanced stage, including the part funding of a field officer. ASCC were not supporting the limited empowerment pilots introduced by the Scottish Government. For more information contact Bob Kerr.

[kerr203@btinternet.com](mailto:kerr203@btinternet.com)

## Community Planning

Changes to New Ways (Community Planning Partnership in the Scottish Borders) have been implemented to ensure that the Borders is best placed to deliver the Borders Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) which is now a requirement of community planning partnerships in Scotland. The Borders Strategic Board now consists of Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, Scottish Enterprise, Borders College, Eildon Housing and Lothian and Borders Police. Three themes within the New Ways Partnership brings together relevant agencies, organisations and community groups involved in the achievements of the outcomes of the SOA: - Competitive Borders, Healthy Borders and Strong and Safe Borders. The latter provides Community Councils with an opportunity to contribute to the work of the partnership. Each theme has a core group of public sector partners who receive public money to work towards the outcomes in the SOA. The core "Strong and safe Borders" theme is

chaired by Lothian and Borders Police. Every second meeting is extended to the wider stakeholder group including the involvement of representation from Community Councils. This arrangement focuses on core outcomes but ensures that the public sector develops a better understanding of current issues affecting communities. Positive dialogue is encouraged between the community and voluntary sector, wider stakeholders and the public sector. New Ways Co-ordinator, Sarah Glendinning, has agreed to provide short articles relating to the work of the Partnership for future Newsletters.

If you seek more information now then

[www.scottishbordersnewways.com](http://www.scottishbordersnewways.com) is the address. If you would like to speak with Sarah then

[sglending@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:sglending@scotborders.gov.uk) will find her, but if you have ideas for future articles please let Clare Malster know

[cmalster@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:cmalster@scotborders.gov.uk)

## Climate Change Fund

The Scottish Government has set aside some £18.8m to allow communities to bring forward solutions to make a significant reduction in carbon emissions. The Climate Challenge Fund will be available over three years (2008-2011) and has the very ambitious target of an 80% reduction in Scottish emissions by 2050. Project funding ranges from £100 to £1m. The application process is in two parts. The first is an 'expression of interest' in which the scheme is outlined – both in scope and cost. Should this find favour

with the assessors, a second stage application is invited and this has to have fully worked up costs and outcomes together with a clear monitoring and evaluation process.

Along with the Southern Uplands Partnership and SBC a bid has been made to provide insulation in Borders homes and village halls. The various initiatives so far carried out only achieve a response rate of 5% and it is felt that a Borders sponsored and delivered campaign could do much better by using Community

## St Johns Church — Can You Help?

**St Johns Church Selkirk is looking for contents for their starter packs for the homeless.**

Being housed does not necessarily mean being 'homed', new tenants have found themselves without light bulbs and other basics, as you can imagine this would be **disheartening in the extreme**. **Can you help?**

The lists of goods that are desperately needed are listed below. Have you any unwanted items at home? (They do not all have to be new but they do need to be clean):

### KITCHEN & UTILITIES

- Pots, pans & frying pans
- Dustpan/ brush
- Crockery & Glasses
- Washing up bowls
- Potato peelers
- Scourers & Dishcloths
- Kettles & Toasters
- Washing up liquid

- Tin openers
- Toilet rolls
- Bathroom/Kitchen cleaner
- Casserole dishes
- Light bulbs
- Cereal bowls
- Kitchen knives
- Forks, knives, spoons
- Soup ladles/Fish slice/spatula

### BEDDING & LINEN

- Towels & Tea towels (new)
- Blankets & Sheets
- Pillow cases & Duvet covers
- Pillows & Quilts (new)

### OTHER

- Alarm clock, Curtains, Radio

(although the homeless are thankful to be housed, one drawback is the sudden isolation that they may feel, a radio helps with this)

If you have anything to donate please contact

Carol Wilson on 01896 848718 who will arrange collection

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH**

Community Councils, may be obtained from SBC's Louise Cox [lcox@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:lcox@scotborders.gov.uk)

An opportunity to hear more "Meeting the Challenge – Your Community and the Climate Challenge Fund" will be held on Thursday 5th March, Edinburgh and Wednesday 11th March, Glenrothes. The event is targeting groups eligible to apply to the fund, and those who may support / advise them. This event is not limited to groups with particular environmental agenda – open to all!

## Snippets



### Witness Service

**Peebles Selkirk Jedburgh Duns Sheriff Courts**

**Are looking for**

### VOLUNTEERS

**Are you enthusiastic & interested in helping your local community?**

**Do you have a sensitive caring nature & one day per week to spare?**

**Witness Service Volunteers give practical & emotional support to victims & witnesses of crime during their time at court.**

**Comprehensive training will be given. All travel expenses will be reimbursed.**

**If you are interested please contact**

**Cornelia on 0131 220 1550**

**or email**

**Witnessservice.edinburgh-sc@victimssupportsco.org.uk**