



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 282nd Meeting of the Community Council held on Thursday 8th April 2021 at 7.00pm via Zoom.

Present, L.Turnbull, A.Snoddy, L.Hayworth, P.Maudsley, O.Olesheva, M.Bruce, G.Mackie, L.Marriott-Dowding, G.Ramsay, A.MacKenzie, J.Shearer, S.Watson, E. Rae, S. Rae, Cllr.Tatler, Cllr. Small, Cllr.Haslam, Cllr.Chapman, Cllr.Bell

Members of the public: Michael Pearson, Hilary Scott (Peebleshire News), Fiona Dalgleish (Peeblesshire Foodbank), Dave Hodson (Tweeddale Youth Action), David Ferguson, Steve Dube

Apologies- Cllr. Anderson, C.Forsyth, and S Montgomery

Presentation from Fiona Dalgleish who is the Development Manager at the Peeblesshire Foodbank. There have been a lot of changes recently and she wanted to let people know the latest developments.

The foodbank has been running for a number of years and was originally located in a unit in Cavalry Park. However it was too small when social distancing rules were introduced at the start of the pandemic because only one volunteer could work in it at a time. It moved to St Joseph's Hall, which worked well but was only a temporary measure. With the prospect of Brownies, Guide meetings etc, due to resume it has had to move again. It is now based in a larger unit at Cavalry Park which has a warehouse, office and meeting room, and the lease is in place for 18 months.

Referrals have doubled, more families than ever are asking for help. There are different demographics too: currently most of the people accessing the foodbank have jobs or are on furlough. Plans are being made to have space for drop in sessions with the Citizens Advice Bureau. People will be encouraged to come in and pick up their own food, there will be a debt manager to help with budgets and assistance with completing forms. It will be more than just giving out food, there will be signposting advice as well. This will happen as soon as restrictions ease. The second change is the referral system. At the moment people are referred by various organisations such as schools, Social Work, GPs and addiction clinics. Some people have slipped through the net and are not in contact with these institutions while others do not want to be involved with them. Therefore the Foodbank are now taking self-referrals (by email only). A Trustee will ensure the self-referrals are getting the help and advice they need and that the appropriate conditions are met. There is a lot of support for the Foodbank from the Peeblesshire community and there are donations from Tesco, Sainsbury's and the Co-op in West Linton. It is important to get rid of some of the stigma that is attached to using the Foodbank. In 2020 it helped 1,200 people in Peebles.

A question was asked whether supermarkets give food which is past its 'sell by' date to the Foodbank? Sharing Sheds in Walkerburn and Innerleithen take out-of-date items but it is not something the Peeblesshire Foodbank does.

Core funding is in place for the Foodbank: funding from a couple of sources will pay for the manager's salary and rent of the premises until December. The Foodbank distributes mainly tinned food but they also get fresh food donated by allotment holders and some local businesses.

Approval of the Minutes: L. Turnbull tabled a correction to the Minutes from last month. Outside the Box is a charity which provides support to groups and people who want to make a difference in their communities and to support individuals and groups as we come out of Lockdown.

The Minutes were then proposed by P.Maudsley and seconded by L.Hayworth.

Police Report: Circulated on 2nd April. M.Bruce said there were no real issues: the Police Report looked the same as last month just with different numbers. Anti-social behaviour continues to dominate. He has had a long chat with Sgt Grainger. The Police are in the same boat as we are: they do not have an answer as it is very difficult to police every area. Issues rely on them being in the right place at the right time in sufficient numbers, which is not possible. There has been a suggestion that perhaps we should be thinking of going down the route of street workers, to engage with the young people who are causing the issue. Sgt Grainger is supportive of this idea but is also slightly cautious. Underage drinking brings its own issues and the prospect of somebody going out on their own and potentially engaging with someone who could be under the influence of drink or drugs could be a concern. M.Bruce has also been speaking with Sgt Rourke of the Community Action Team by email. Sgt Rourke is the lead on anti-social behaviour in the Borders. Sgt Grainger hopes to engage with all the relevant people who may be able to help, including Dave Hodson of Tweeddale Youth Action. Otherwise everyone is doing the right thing including phoning 101 where appropriate. Another issue is that most of these people are underage, and as the Police do not want to criminalise them if at all possible then only softer options are available.

The Chairman invited Dave Hodson from Tweeddale Youth Action to join the conversation, and wondered if there was anything more we could be doing, perhaps jointly with TYA and/or the Police to help the situation? D.Hodson agreed that street work is not without risk and working with such youngsters is very skilled work which requires no condoning or condemning. Volunteering to do street work is possible but a lot of training is required. Finding people who are willing and able to work in the evening is difficult. Then there is the specific issue of retaining staff. There is a real skills drain: the jobs are not usually sustainably funded, and so are not secure forever. There is a pattern of people joining the sector, learning how to engage and make a difference, but then moving onto more secure employment.

The youth club is there as a preventative measure, but at the moment (due to the pandemic) numbers are restricted to just 15 at a time, whereas before there would be 40/50 youngsters on a Friday and Saturday night. They cannot play music and are very restricted in the activities they can do. Some young people are not worried about being caught by the police, or their parents finding out. It can be a cultural issue with underage drinking: their parents did the same and so they do not see a problem. There is a core of young people, absolutely committed to bad behaviour, some that are quite involved, and then on the periphery there are approximately 50/100 young people that are 'reachable', the ones that they would like to target. It will require a sustained approach. There was previously a conversation involving M.Bruce, S.Hamilton and Sgt Rourke, to discuss the issue. One suggestion was to have a bus, called a Crib, but that idea seems to have stalled.

The Chairman thanked D.Hodson for his contribution. He felt the issue of anti-social behaviour had been bubbling away for at least 6 months now with no progress. The youngsters have no fear of getting caught. He asked Cllr Tatler if we are getting value from the Community Action Team? Local residents find that when they call 101 they may not get through, or by the time someone attends the youths have gone. Sometimes no Police are available to attend.

Cllr.Tatler responded that he gets a monthly report from the CAT Team and that they are doing a lot in Peebles. SBC has no control over the 101 system. However all the 101 calls are logged and then SBC Cllrs get a monthly report. Over the past couple of months the number of calls related to anti-social behaviour has reduced. The Chairman expressed surprise and cited a couple of instances where anti-social behaviour occurred and local residents were unable to get a response when they dialled 101. He asked that the CAT team be more proactive in the town. Cllr Tatler said it would be helpful if the emails which have been sent to the PCC were forwarded on to the CAT team. He will raise the issue again with the CAT Team at the next monthly meeting. The Team respond to other concerns such as drugs, thefts, etc and not just anti-social behaviour. They go wherever the analysis of the 101 calls directs them.

Cllr. Haslam said that the Council gets a quarterly report with a breakdown of figures from the CAT Team and she will send the latest one to A.Snoddy for circulation to Community Councillors. Cllr Tatler thought they were already circulated (*Secretary's note: they are not*).

L.Hayworth empathised with the difficulties of training good staff and retaining them, and asked if there anything else Tweeddale Youth would like to have if funding was available. D.Hodson responded that there are two challenges. Funding is one as always, especially for sustaining workers and keeping them. Secondly, perhaps it is time to think about radical alternative solutions. Although the Youth Club has a 'no drinks, no drugs' policy a safe space would be useful for someone who was coming down from a high or needing to sober up. They currently take the person into the office, call police/ambulance and look after them. It would be helpful to have a warzone type of drop-in centre where, late at night, youths could go to be safe. TD1 has piloted this in Galashiels and it has proved effective. The people causing the issue do not always come from bad homes. It is teenage experimentation. There is almost a case for supporting what these groups want to do naturally but making it safer. Before Covid there were sometimes 80 or 90 young people coming in from other Borders towns for gatherings. It would be useful if there was some way of supporting these events to be safer, for example with a First Aid tent, drug testing kits, and to help with the clearing up afterwards. He also asked if it would be possible to get smaller bottle banks in places where young people congregate. It may help with bottles being smashed and litter being left everywhere.

Cllr Tatler will take the suggestion of smaller bottle banks forward to the SBC Parks and Environment team and will report back after his meeting. He also added that we must remember not to tar all young people with the same brush. The groups he comes across are just socialising with friends and are very polite.

S.Rae cited instances reported on Facebook recently where Police seemed to have responded to complaints of anti-social behaviour with a 'drive by' rather than getting involved. Where incidents of anti-social behaviour are reported on Facebook the complainers are encouraged to ring 101. However if they do not get through they give up. S.Rae wonders if this is why the number of 101 calls has decreased? The Chairman asked Cllr Tatler and M.Bruce to raise these incidents with Sgt Grainger when they next meet with him. Cllr Haslam said she was uncomfortable following up incidents reported via Facebook. S.Hamilton has first hand knowledge of a particular example which she will send.

Cllr Chapman said he was very grateful to Dave Hodson and Tweeddale Youth Action for all they do in the town. He wondered if there could be recruitment of Special Constables within the Peeblesshire area? Cllr Haslam felt sure that if this is something the Community Council would like to find out more about then the Police would be willing to come along to a meeting and give a presentation. L.Turnbull has raised this on numerous occasions with the Police but nothing has ever happened. He would be grateful if someone else could pursue the matter.

S.Watson suggested that we are paying for the CAT Team as well as the Police with our taxes and the system does not seem to be working. The Chairman said that is a fair comment but it is not an issue we can resolve here. We have to work with the system we've got.

Cllr Chapman, addressing D.Hodson, wondered if there was any particular young individual who could provide a link between the youth workers and the youngsters as had happened in the past? D.Hodson replied that there was no-one at the moment. However the Kickstart Scheme could be an opportunity to employ someone aged 16-25 who is not in education, employment or full time training. If young people at the heart of the activity could be identified and perhaps employed under the scheme it might be a catalyst for change. It is undoubtedly a high risk strategy, there could be a danger employing them and they could go forward to cause further mayhem. This is absolutely not a suggestion but might be worth further discussion.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

Children's Cemetery - A.Mackenzie had a meeting at the cemetery with the Macivor brothers of Beltane Studios and the ladies who initiated the idea of a permanent memorial. Removal of the two trees will open up the site and further ideas were suggested resulting in a different design which will be passed on to Craig Blackie and Diane Munro at SBC. They in turn will involve BGH who will have some input. There are detailed plots for every grave but the sculpture will be on the tarred area of ground. Hopefully A.Mackenzie will have a detailed sketch for the May meeting.

Taxis – The Chairman said the matter would be dealt with later in the meeting

Social Media Policy - Scott Rae has circulated this.

Biodiversity and Ecology group- At the last meeting it was suggested that we donated some of the money which came from the Venlaw Community Woodland in 2016, to this group. Further information was subsequently circulated and it was now agreed that £500.00 will be donated.

Chairman's report -

The Chairman attended the Tweeddale Area Partnership meeting last week where grants from the Community Fund were approved for Outside the Box, Peebleshire Youth Trust, Tweed Togs and Go Tweed Valley. Two further applications – from Peebles and District Men's Shed and Peebles Tennis Club – were held over until the next TAP meeting. There was a presentation by the SBC Localities Transport Officer who outlined plans to move the bus stop from the Eastgate to the Edinburgh Road car park. This will reduce journey times, save bus miles through the town and save on fuel. However, this was a fairly major policy announcement. All the money to pay for this repositioning would come from a grant from Scottish Government. The Chairman wrote to Cllr Tatler the next day and as a result the plan has been put on hold until there is full consultation with the community and PCC.

Jedderfield Farm- This is the application by Tweed Green for a Community Asset Transfer and they are seeking a 25 year lease. The original application asked for favourable terms. PCC prepared and circulated a draft response, and the quick replies to it by Community Councillors was appreciated.

However one comment prompted P.Maudsley and the Chairman to meet with 3 members of Tweed Green. It was a useful conversation and they did explain more than was in the public domain, that a 3rd party is prepared to assist them with the lease and they were in the process of revising their plans for the farm. L.Turnbull and P.Maudsley have now met with that 3rd party and found they share some of the concerns PCC had. The public consultation is still ongoing and dependent on the outcome we may submit comments on behalf of PCC. The draft letter prepared two weeks ago has not been sent. The consultation closes on Sunday 11th April, so time is tight.

Chambers Institution Trust - At the last meeting we discussed the notion of community representation on the Board of Trustees. The Chairman has written to Cllr Chapman in his role as Chair of the Trust outlining what we thought was the legal position regarding this issue, and copied in the Chief Executive of SBC, the Head of Property and the Head of Legal Services because they are all involved with the management of the Trust. There has been no response yet, which is understandable as it may take time for SBC to look at the various issues that have been raised.

Cllr Chapman responded that he had spoken with the Chief Legal Officer prior to the meeting and the questions raised are being considered. It is hoped the response from SBC will be received by the time of the Community Council meeting on 13th May.

Councillors Reports

Cllr Tatler - Following the last PCC meeting he spoke with BT OpenReach but was not entirely satisfied with their response. They indicated that they inform SBC of every road work, which is not correct. BT do recognise that perhaps their communications had not been the best in relation to what they had been doing in Peebles. Interestingly the week after his meeting with them BT put an article in the Peebleshire News detailing future works in the town. They also undertake to communicate better with SBC as they roll out their programme of installing the infrastructure for ultra fast broadband across the Borders. Cllr Tatler will pass the Minutes of his meeting to the PCC Secretary.

Cllr Tatler would encourage the Community Council to get involved in discussions about the way forward for TAP. At the last TAP meeting grants totalling £39,000 were awarded from the Community Fund. to various groups. SBC have decided the different localities within the Borders can decide how best to allocate Community Funds and a small working group has been set up in Tweeddale for that purpose.

A Community Council review is underway. Alison Wilson from Clovenfords is the new substitute representative in Tweeddale. Two meetings have been held so far, and another one is coming up shortly. Minutes are circulated and are also available on the SBC webpage.

Cllr Tatler is having a meeting next week with Paul Franklin of SBC to discuss the path at the rear of Haylodge Health Centre. He hopes Mr Franklin might attend the next PCC meeting to give more information about the scheme and what is involved.

It was asked at another Community Council's meeting if the Police Reports could be shared on social media. The Police have agreed. A.Snoddy will ensure they are posted on the various sites used by PCC.

Cllr Bell - Cllr Anderson is still pursuing the issue of the traffic Island on the Glasgow Road. Cllr Bell can recall the traffic island was put in place to enhance the restriction of the speed of vehicles. It is part of a sequence of measures – broad white lines, traffic island and rumble strips – put in place to reduce the speed of vehicles due to the proximity of the school.

Cllr Small – There are incidents of anti-social behaviour in West Linton as well, in fact, it is all over the Borders. There is to be a new housing development in St.Boswells, which will be more environmentally friendly with solar panels etc. In Langlee, Galashiels, old houses will be demolished and new houses built.

Cllr Chapman - The easiest way to report potholes and overfilled gullies in the town is through an app called Fix My Street. It geotags the actual location which then gets sent automatically to the council. Alternatively you can email SBC directly. Cllr Chapman has received complaints from residents about anti-social behaviour which he has passed on to Sgt Grainger and reminds everyone that it is appropriate to notify elected Councillors of any concerns. However if it is an emergency then phone 999.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Chapman and emphasised his point that 999 should be used whenever there is an emergency or prompt action is required (such as someone lying down on Cuddy Bridge as was recently reported). He also said it is the responsibility of all of us to report potholes when we see them.

Cllr. Haslam – At a recent council meeting the digital strategy was passed and part of that is looking at how SBC vehicles can identify and report back any potholes they see.

She would encourage everyone to respond to the current Anti-Poverty consultation. There is also a consultation about accessing and using SBC services, how to move forward digitally without leaving behind the vulnerable members of the community and how the Council and the public can work better together.

The Borderland Growth Deal has been signed. It is a £390m deal covering 5 local authorities including the Scottish Borders. It includes £19m for the Mountain Biking Innovation Centre in Innerleithen and also funding for Destination Tweed which is the route from one side of the country to the other taking in the sights and the sounds of the Borders.

There have also been discussions about the Peebles to Eddleston cycle path. Sustrans have been unable to fund it. However SBC have been working with David Mundell (*MP*) and Alister Jack (*Secretary of State for Scotland*) to identify other sources of funding. There will also be further discussions about linking up the cycle paths through Peebles.

Permission has been given to install lights in the Eshiels Tunnel following work with environmental groups. Cllr Haslam paid tribute to the folk who campaigned for this safety measure.

The toilets in Haylodge Park are now open.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Haslam for her contribution and encourages everyone to take part in the consultations she referred to.

Treasurer's Report – the Report was circulated prior to the meeting. The balance in the account is £1,365, and the balance in the Project Account is £1,123. £500 from that account will be donated to the new BioDiversity Group. The Chairman will pass the group's contact details to the Treasurer.

Planning report – The Report was circulated prior to the meeting. P.Maudsley raised 2 subsequent issues. Kingsmeadows House: there will be a live and interactive online consultation at www.kingsmeadowspeebles.co.uk between 3pm and 7pm on Thursday 29th April. It is a 'major' application which implies that it is going to be construction of over 50 houses. We are looking at this with some concern as it could impinge on the ancient woodland within the grounds of Kingsmeadows House. It would be worthwhile for all members to have a look at the interactive consultation event.

P.Maudsley recently circulated an email about the proposed change of use for the ex TSB building., The majority of the Community Councillors objected to the proposals and so P.Maudsley submitted an objection on behalf of the Community Council to the Planning Department.

L.Hayworth asked P.Maudsley for the link to the interactive consultation to be circulated nearer the time. He would also encourage everyone to look at the proposals and make comments, which then go forward to the Planning Department when the application is considered.

Peebles Community Trust – a report was circulated by M.Bruce prior to the meeting. There were no questions.

AOB

Adopt a Phone Box. A.Snoddy reported that J.Mitchell had contacted SBC and BT about the possibility of adopting the phone boxes in the High Street and Edinburgh Road, and awaits their response.

Great Borders River Clean 15th and 16th May PCC received an email from Tom Rawson about the project. The Chairman has had a conversation with G.Ramsay, who has arranged litter picks in Peebles previously, and they have decided we still have to wait until restrictions are lifted before we can get involved with litter picks and the river clean. We did have a presentation from Simon Ritchie about litter picking last month, and it is nice to see he is on the case. He is currently looking at the issues around insurance, and L.Hayworth did offer to help with this under the auspices of the PCT. A.Snoddy has also suggested to Simon that he contact Tom Rawson for advice regarding insurance.

Places of Interest Sign: We are aware that the old wooden sign on the north wall of Tweed Bridge, highlighting places of interest in the town, has deteriorated and suggestions have been made that we ought to try and get it repaired. M.Bruce reported that the Callants have the matter in hand and will be funding a replacement. Elmbank Print have been approached to reproduce the image in a weatherproof format. M.Bruce and A.Mackenzie will work together on a frame. Due to covid restrictions they have been unable to do this. A.Snoddy will respond to the members of the public who raised the issue recently.

The Gypsy Glen Hill race has been cancelled and rescheduled for October.

Proposals for the introduction of cycle lanes, etc: The Chairman said there is a proposal by SBC officers to introduce cycle lanes in the Eastgate, the High Street, Tweed Bridge and Kingsmeadows Road as well as a puffin crossing in the Eastgate and removal of the loading bay. Without getting into the right and the wrongs of cycle lanes we need to look at the process and how we seem to be being pushed into making a decision by next week. There is concern that we will end up with a policy decision by SBC officers with no consultation with those it will affect the most. The issue of encouraging walking and cycling is admirable and there is no issue with that. However there is an awful lot going on in the town. There is the controversy surrounding the location of the taxi rank, the possibility of moving the bus stop, and the stalled review of car parking. There are a number of other issues which this will also impact. Sustrans are looking at creating a link between the cycle path to Innerleithen and the proposed Peebles to Eddleston cycle path. There needs to be a whole Peebles Transport consultation which caters for everyone. Trying to rush through the cycle path is not the right way to do it.

The email came out on Tuesday and the Chairman wrote to our elected Councillors yesterday (*Wednesday*) asking for plans to be put on hold whilst we consult the community, but he has not yet received a response.

G.Mackie agreed that any measures should be part of an overall strategy. The Chairman agreed and reiterated that we need a Whole Town Transport Plan.

P.Maudsley stated there was very little support for these changes, and there is a huge amount of concern, especially from businesses which line the High Street. The new pedestrian crossing would cause the loading bay which was fought for, for three years, to be removed.

Cllr Haslam stated that when Spaces for People project was launched 6 months ago (which brought in the 20mph speed restrictions) the introduction of cycle lanes was also discussed. If we do not access the Scottish Government funding for cycle lanes now we will not be able to do so in the future. There is a public consultation and everyone should send their views in. The Chairman responded that if the plan is the wrong plan there is no point in doing it just for the sake of it.

G.Ramsay sent an email to Philippa Gilhooley who responded to him. He has forwarded it to A.Snoddy who will circulate it.

E.Rae said we should lose the money.

M.Bruce agreed with E.Rae. He does cycle, and would not like to use the proposed cycle lanes due to cars manoeuvring in and out of parking spaces, car doors swinging open, narrowing the width of the High Street for the timber lorries that travel along it. He suggested that if cycle lanes are wanted then they should be put along Tweed Green and through Kerfield.

Cllr Bell said, focussing on the process rather than the content, that the timing has been challenging, however the possibility of cycle lanes in Peebles High Street was raised over a year ago. We have to remember this is a consultation, no policy decision making has been made but he does agree it does not give people an awful lot of time to think and decide. Regarding the content of the proposals this is a consultation and everyone's responses will be taken into consideration by SBC Officers. The Chairman responded that a week does not give much time for people to submit their views.

S.Watson said we don't need the proposals nor want it. We need to get the roads sorted before we do anything else.

E.Rae responded to Cllr Bell that just one sentence about cycle lanes over a year ago does not constitute a conversation.

Cllr. Chapman emphasised that what is proposed would be a trial, and at the end there would be another consultation to see if the changes should be made permanent.

S.Rae said everyone is looking for a solution to a problem but perhaps cycle lanes along the High Street is not the answer. Are there any alternative constructive suggestions we can make in a week, such as putting cycle lanes along Tweed Green and through Kerfield?

The Chairman will liaise with P.Maudsley, and formulate a response on behalf of the Community Council. There will not be time to circulate it but he has got a flavour of what the opinions are. We should all submit our individual responses too, whether for or against the proposals.

Cllr.Tatler supported everything that had been said by the other Councillors and said PCC should encourage all residents to input to the consultation. The Chairman responded that we will do our best but time is against us.

Cllr.Haslam encouraged people to be specific in their responses (the crossing, the cycle lanes, the loading bay, etc) and clarified that the money available is for trials only, not permanent changes. Road cyclists travel along roads and would not use a cycle path through Kerfield but they would use cycle lanes on roads.

E.Rae said it is a 6 month trial, starting in May, just as we come into summer, and just as we come out of lockdown. It is not what Peebles wants or needs. If there has to be a trial can it not be in winter?

P.Maudsley asked if the pilot was not successful who would be liable to pay for putting it back as it was? Cllr Haslam said that cost was included in the funding. She will find out what happens to that part of the funding if it is not required.

Peebles Cemetery A.Mackenzie thanked SBC for filling in the sunken graves at the cemetery and also asked if SBC has done any more about the possibility of procuring a new graveyard? Cllr Tatler will ask the question of Diane Monroe. There was also a query raised about a record of the plots for the main cemetery, again Diane Monroe at SBC is the person to ask.

A.Snoddy reported on behalf of C.Forsyth his concern about anti-social behaviour in Victoria Park. It will form part of the discussions with M.Bruce, D.Hodson and Sgt Grainger. He is also concerned about people keeping their dogs on leads where appropriate. Cllr Tatler will email the name of the relevant SBC Officer to her to pass on to C.Forsyth.

Next meeting to be held on Thursday 13th May at 7pm via Zoom.