



*Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District*

Minutes of the 304th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 9 March 2023 at 7pm in the Peebles Community Centre, Walkershaugh. The meeting was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.

Present: A Mackenzie, A Snoddy, C Forsyth, F Richardson, G MacDonald, G Mackie, H Young, J Crawley, J Shearer, J Wilson, M Bruce, S Coe, S Watson, Cllr Begg, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Small, Cllr Tatler, Cllr Thomson

In attendance: M Davey of the Peeblesshire News

Members of the Public: S Renwick, T Compton

Apologies: P Maudsley, S Hamilton, G Ramsay

G Mackie, the Vice Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chairman was unable to attend due to ill health.

The presentation by Marion Livingston and Malcolm Dickson about designating the Scottish Borders as a National Park has been postponed due to ill health.

The Vice Chairman started with some notes received from the Chairman in his absence:

As you are aware, there is an SBC fund to help people celebrate the King's Coronation. When it was the Queen's Jubilee, there was a similar fund and we received criticism from some members of the public for not supporting this. This time we have a plan to bring some joy to a group of perhaps isolated pensioners. The Secretary will tell you about this later in AOB.

Meanwhile, a petition has been raised against Scottish Borders Council using COVID recovery cash to fund coronation parties called "Fund Borderers Not Bunting" and can be found at www.change.org. A request has been received to debate this possible use of funds. However, the Chair considers this a political issue in nature and thus outwith the PCC's remit. Our SBC councillors are elected to act on our behalf and the subject has been debated by them at SBC. The subject has been democratically decided and there it should rest.

It is important to add that a community council undoubtedly adds value for the community, but that communities by their very nature have a range of views and that defining what those views are is not easy. A pressure group may feel strongly about a subject and thus will make a lot of noise. Those who are happy or neutral make no noise at all. We rely on the public to help us to fairly represent them. We have to represent all residents, not just the majority.

248 people had signed the petition to date, but there was no way of knowing who these people are and whether they are Peebles' residents or not. The petitioner has not contacted the PCC. Our position is to go ahead with the Secretary's proposal.

Peebles High School: The Chair had considered the Parent Council report on their visit to the four High Schools and the press release drafted by them. It is in his view an excellent report and very professional. The press release notes the new spirit of engagement by SBC and the improvements to the high school design that this has brought about. It also highlights that some concerns remain. Few if any of the positive changes would have been made had it not been for pressure from the community, aided by our elected colleagues; and our new school would have been the poorer for it. Community involvement from an early stage could have been valuable. Peebles community has many professionals, both working and retired. SBC through community involvement could tap into this expertise. He commends the report to you and asks that we endorse it and give the Parent Council our support.

The Vice Chairman asked if everyone was happy with that. Yes, they were.

Chambers Institution Trust : Apparently, there is a Janitor's Flat in the building which is not in use. This should be reviewed and considered as affordable housing, a holiday let or offices, etc. It is a resource that could be making an income. None of the Cllrs had any knowledge of the flat. The Vice Chairman suggested the Trustees consider what to do with it.

Peebles Community Trust: Crick Carleton had held a meeting on 8 March. Part of the discussion related to how big Peebles could actually expand to. The Chair thinks we are looking at this the wrong way. Developers, SBC planners and all are all looking at flat, dry areas and thinking, yes they could be new houses. There are two questions that must be answered.

- We know that the mini roundabout by the Old Parish Church is close to capacity, we know that the High Street suffers from a level of congestion and the car parks are also full. The question is, "How many additional cars can the system take"? From that it may be deduced what the maximum number of new houses can be.
- Once that question is answered, the next question is how this constraint can be mitigated by say, a ring road, new one-way systems, etc. However, as all roads to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Galashiels, etc, converge on the High Street, this will not be easy.

The Vice Chairman said that C Carleton's report suggested that the population of Peebles may double over the next 20 years and the current infrastructure could not cope with that. Rather than planning around this, we should consider whether we want Peebles to be twice the size.

Cllr Begg said if we look at the national records the population is predicted to grow and then fall, but there is no sense the population is going to double. There is no way to know for sure. Certainly, we have to look at planning across regions but we must also look at data driven decisions, not speculation. S Coe said it is important that people take in what C Carleton is saying, which is if the town is expanded how should it be arranged. There was a study done in 2015, a landscape capacity study to look at the physical capacity of Peebles and if it was not possible to expand Peebles, that new satellite towns should be considered. Planning should be done in a controlled way. There should be a dialogue about how Peebles could be shaped. Cllr Thomson said it is about people getting involved in place making. All developments across Scotland can do that. How big do you want it? What do you want the community to look like? The Vice Chairman said it is a very important subject and we ought to postpone the discussion to future meetings.

Open forum: Nothing

Approval of Minutes: Proposed by C Forsyth and seconded by M Bruce

Matters arising from previous Minutes:

Sign at Mercat Cross: Cllr Tatler confirmed it was being dealt with.

Coronation celebrations: The Secretary confirmed that the Eastgate Theatre is booked from 10am to 2pm. Guests will sit at tables and chairs, and the theatre was going to help provide tea, coffee and traybakes. Local Brownies were making bunting and table decorations which forms part of an initiative they're doing. The Secretary had visited the Mary Allen and Laura Scott is going to be meeting with the Peebles Pensioners Association. There will be a publication in in the *Peeblesshire News* this week and the Secretary will publicise on social media. The event is not restricted only to pensioners and is for anyone to come along who may otherwise be at home alone watching the coronation. The free event will be broadcast as a live stream on a big screen, and people are invited to apply for tickets to secretary@ccrbpeebles.co.uk or by telephone 07980 587 139. The last date to apply being 30 March 2023.

A Mackenzie pointed out that the number of objections raised on the petition was sizable and asked what will happen to any money left over? The Secretary said it would have to be returned to SBC who had arrived at a democratic decision about distributing the funding. Cllr Tatler pointed out that, on a technicality, even if the petition was such that SBC were called to reverse their decision it cannot be done immediately, they would be obliged to wait 6 months.

The Vice Chairman said that not everyone was going to agree about the funding.

Litter Pick: This was going ahead on Sunday 26 March. G Ramsay was not in attendance, but it was understood that everyone should meet in Kingsmeadows car park at 9.45am. G Macdonald agreed to be the first aider and Cllr Tatler will look at the risk assessment from last time and the Vice Chairman agreed to help review it with Cllr Tatler.

Walking festival: SBC had asked if PCC would be able to organise a walking festival. This festival is held in a different Borders town each year. Peebles last hosted it in 2016 and Douglas Wright chaired the working party. He is unable to do it this time and, unfortunately, could not recommend anyone. The Vice Chairman pointed out that it is very involved and there's a lot to coordinate. PCC does not have the resources to do it this year. The Secretary will contact the local Ramblers Association.

Peebles High School: T Compton had sent the PCC a copy of the Parent Council School Visits Report. The report had been circulated. The Parent Council subgroup had met with the Chief Executive, Director of Education and Director of Infrastructure of SBC which had been productive. There had followed a presentation at PHS which showed real improvements to the designs, notably the assembly hall. The number of open classrooms had been reduced from 58% down to 27%. More people feel comfortable with the plans, although there are some who are not. There is still discussion around the details. T Compton wanted to extend his thanks to the Chairman of PCC for all the support he and the PCC have given them. They were told that SBC would not listen, this was not true. T Compton thanked the SBC councillors. The Equality Impact Assessment still needs to be done. The plans cannot be finalised without it as it may raise equality issues. The subgroup of the Parent Council plan to remain involved with the project at a suitable level and there needs to be ongoing consultation. T Compton asked the Cllrs to ensure that this continues. Cllr Pirone said there is a meeting scheduled with H Young regarding the acoustics.

The Vice Chairman said he had been with PCC since 2014 and this was one of the most satisfying matters he'd been involved with. It was the result of good work between the Parent Council, PCC,

SBC and the elected Cllrs and he was proud of everyone involved. It was agreed that T Compton could return to the PCC meetings periodically should he have notable updates. The Secretary will speak to the Chairman.

H Young endorsed what had been said, there had been real improvement and a lot of it positive. The evidence of changes suggested the views have been listened to. SBC had said they were going to do a “you said, we did” matrix, to capture the feedback and she wanted to know if that had been done. S Renwick said, yes a summary report is being prepared and will be loaded onto the SBC website. The report will also include an integrated impact assessment. H Young expressed her surprise that the Director has said there will be no further design changes given there is no Equality Impact Assessment. The assessment should have been done before, not after the plans are completed. S Renwick said a draft has been prepared to recognise where the project is at this moment in time. They will talk about doing something towards the end of project but there are several things to be finalised before the final version can be put in place. The Director’s position regarding the design being fixed is about the construction stage. Cllr Thomson said her understanding is that it was a layered document. H Young pointed out that last year there was a local authority that was judicially reviewed because of a decision it took where it had done an EIA, a ticked box exercise, after the decision was taken to close a care home, without consulting service users and that local authority was SBC. It is quite clear what the principles are.

S Renwick said that the Parent Council Report said the project is being operated under a governance arrangement, and the Parent Council’s report is going to be presented to the board for consideration.

Cllr Begg wanted to echo what the Vice Chairman had said, that this was likely to be one of the biggest investments ever in Peebles, and he had also been impressed by the coming together of everyone. He asked everyone to be careful about language going forward; there will always be different views. Those engaged on social media should be careful with their words as it can affect those looking at their screens. The new school is going to be fabulous. Cllr Begg asked if everyone could move away from the words “open plan”. These spaces are flexible spaces or closed spaces and not truly open plan. Cllr Thomson said the children can be in closed classrooms when needed and as their learning moves on then there is a flexible option. We need to be honest about what is being given, and there are classrooms with doors and walls. S Renwick: Lesley Munro had been at the recent meeting with PHS and talked about the vision for the future and about forward movement in education. The building is going to be here for many generations and it has to respond to the future. Cllr Begg said when he talks to people it is acknowledged that future teaching is going to be different. There will be a lot of learning done online.

The Vice Chairman commended the way the six Councillors are working together for the people of Peebles and District.

T Compton wanted to point out that the term “open plan” has been understood and it is difficult to get away from it. He said he has stressed that it is about flexible spaces. There will be challenges in the timetabling as more subjects are introduced. The more rooms we have the more flexibility there is to timetable. The presentation S Renwick gave needs to be communicated to the wider community and they are waiting for SBC to publish the detail. He made a plea to the Councillors to get that out as quickly as possible and make it available for all.

J Wilson suggested a possible agenda item for the future is that we should look at what are the lessons learned by PCC in undertaking the support of the High School. PHS had strong voice already

but liaised with the PCC for help. There are smaller local groups e.g. the GP surgery, or local dentists, who have not got a group or a voice to come to us. Where's their forum? The Vice Chairman said this is a good point and we will follow it up.

Police report: The report had been circulated together with M Bruce's report on youth behaviour. Firstly, M Bruce wanted to note his disappointment that no local police officer is present again. It was agreed the Secretary will invite Police Scotland to attend the next meeting. Cllr Pirone will also chase again. M Bruce did want to recognise the good the local police are doing around youth issues. The recent Costa initiative had been very successful, seeing around 150-200 young people attend the first session. M Bruce had put together costing for a shelter and was looking to SBC and Cllr Pirone to help find funding. It is really important that the young people are assured we take them seriously.

Cllrs reports

The Tweeddale West Report had been circulated.

Youth parliament Cllr Douglas said the Cllrs have all been invited to attend the PHS's youth parliament. Cllr Pirone said they will go to the event and see if they can get some of those involved to come and take part in PCC. H Young said this sounded positive. Even if some of the young people came along to the meetings just to observe that would be good.

Cllr Douglas said the budget had been set, it was a cross-party budget. There would be a 5% increase in council tax. The poorest in society will get rebates. It was a positive budget where all services had been preserved and unanimously agreed.

Tweeddale Area Partnership are meeting on 28 March. A representative from PCC is welcome to attend the meeting. Lots of local issues will come up. Placemaking is very much a part of the meeting. C Carleton will make a report at the meeting. The meetings are still online. The National planning framework changed on 13 February. There is a hold up with planning applications because of the new framework. The Cllrs are currently being trained. The Small Schemes Funding money for local issues has been increased. The money is for all of Tweeddale and all six Cllrs are involved. Next financial year they are considering splitting the funding between the two wards, East and West Tweeddale. Cllr Douglas also wanted to say how tremendous the collaboration has been for PHS.

Cllr Tatler: Destination Tweed is creating a path that runs from the source of the Tweed to the sea. It is a huge £25m project. They will be helping Peebles with the Haylodge obstruction. It might be useful to invite them to PCC to update us. They have started with the path at the Hydro and will be putting power in the tunnel at Eshiels. The other big project is the Whitestone project, and it would be good to have an update about that too. There will be a consultation process at the Gytes on improving sports facilities in Whitestone Park. This also involves moving Peebles Rovers to Violet Bank. Adrian Lucas is chairing this project.

On street car parking. Cllr Tatler is campaigning to have parking decriminalised in the Borders. What does decriminalisation mean? How it stands now is that if someone parks on a double yellow line, or inappropriately, it is the police who issue the ticket. The money from the ticket goes to the Scottish Government. If it is decriminalised, it is the council's responsibility to deal with the way people park, e.g., meters. There is a lot of bad parking in Peebles. Northgate is particularly bad where vehicles park on the pavements. Cllr Tatler would like the PCC to have a discussion around this to decide if they are in favour or not. They could then ask SBC to write to the government. Only 8 local authorities in Scotland have not decriminalised parking and SBC is one of the 8. The Secretary asked

why are we told it will cost millions to be decriminalised? Cllr Tatler said why have 24 other local authorities done it? Cllr Pirone said she takes different view on decriminalisation as you would have to consider parking charges like they do in Edinburgh and Glasgow. All communities would have to take that into account. She believes there are other ways to do it. It is an important and big debate, and it would take a long time to implement. People would be paying more money to park in all our towns and villages. H Young asked how the parking would be “policed”? Would it be by traffic wardens? Cllr Pirone said, yes, but to pay for traffic wardens there would have to be high parking fees. This debate only applies to on-street parking, not the car parks.

Cllr Tatler had chaired a recent meeting of the Common Good which had gone very well. There was a questions and answers session where lots of suggestions were made and will now be looked at. They have committed to making more information easily available about the Common Good. They have agreed to look at costings for the Common Good to take on the Kingsmeadows toilets and re-marking the car park.

The development at Tweedbridge Court is scheduled for June. We need to remove the mural panels and store them. The PCC will need to take it forward.

Cllr Begg had recently attended an informal traders association with Cllr Thomson which had been heartening. It was recognised the traders need to come together and we all need to look at what shopping local means. Business is tough at the moment.

Cllr Pirone: As well as working with young people she had been involved with Recovery Borders looking for café space. They are looking for a venue, so if anyone knows of anywhere, please let her know. It is needed in Peebles, and she would like the PCC support. G Macdonald asked if this is for evenings or day time? Cllr Pirone confirmed that it alternates in Galashiels and is likely to be similar here depending on demand. She is still pursuing project Speedwatch with Police Scotland and is anticipating an update next week. Halyrude School: there is a meeting scheduled to discuss what happens next. The Director of Education is looking at redefining the plan, but there is still a lot of work to be done. Leader Valley is being encouraged to set up their own group to represent their views. The Enduro World cycling championships: there had been an informal presentation recently from the organisers. SBC councillors made it clear they would have to reach out to PCC and other organisations about everything as soon as possible. Sales of tickets are buoyant and there are economic benefits and tourism opportunities to be had. People need to know what is happening. Cllr Pirone suggested that the PCC reach out to the community justice team or the community payback team who might move the murals from Tweedbridge Court to the wall behind Boots. If it's scheduled, they ought to be able to do it. Cllr Pirone will pass on contact information to the Secretary. It's a good resource.

Cllr Small. Everything has been covered, he has nothing further to add tonight.

Cllr Thomson said she had attended one of the citizenship ceremonies recently at SBC and it was a lovely occasion, they happen around every 8 weeks and involve small groups of people.

Treasurer's report: This had been circulated. The Treasurer confirmed that at the end of February there was a surplus of £455. There are still expenses to go through which will mean we end up with deficit of around £200-£300 at the end of the financial year. We have sufficient funds to bear this.

Chairman's report and planning report. In the Chairman's unexpected absence there would no report.

Chambers Institution Trust: S Coe's report had been circulated. J Wilson asked if there was a plan for the other occupants of the buildings? S Coe said they had been looking at feasibility; what do we need to have in there. The architects are going to be organising a briefing workshop to brainstorm and establish priorities. We need to consider the core functions and work out what we need to support and improve. We will deal with that first. If there is too much to go in the building, a decision will need to be made to see what's best. One of the ideas would be to create more space which is an option to go to public consultation. Putting in another floor would create a lot of space. Good for a library. There are lots of options and we need to think beyond the boundaries. It would be helpful if they had more people helping. Cllr Tatler thanked S Coe who is doing a power of work. S Coe now attends the CIT as an observer. S Coe said he appreciated the positive dialogue with the trustees. This has moved things on quickly as a result. Cllr Tatler confirmed they are talking about an event when the Burgh Hall opens. A volunteer fair, and this can be discussed nearer the time.

PCT: M Bruce said that the PCT covers a huge variety of subject matters with only 8 volunteers and it's really difficult to maintain. The Trust is desperate for people to come forward to help at board level. School Brae Hub is shaping up to make multi-million-pound decisions on capital expenditure and the current volunteers do not feel qualified to make these decisions. Ideally, they need a retired solicitor, accountant, or building professional to give them some time. This is public money. M Bruce put out a plea for 2 vacancies on the board. S Coe asked if there was any funding for a manager. M Bruce confirmed there is not. Also, it is a huge task applying for funding. School Brae is only one item that needs managing. The community needs to step forward and help.

Parking Group: S Watson said there is a consultation soon. Cllr Tatler said the consultation is underway and they had received 100 responses so far from the parking survey. S Watson pointed out that surveys would be conducted in the car parks as well.

Town bus. Cllr Tatler confirmed that the Access Panel had raised issues. Other people had too, including regularity, timings, routes, etc. He had had a meeting with Gordon Grant of SBC and Lee Young of Borders Buses. They agreed to start again with the town bus and there is an initial meeting to scope it out. G Macdonald said she has heard several complaints from the residents at Rose Park because currently the bus turns on Rosetta Road and goes up Eliot's Park. Cllr Tatler invited G Macdonald to attend the meeting, which she agreed to do.

AOB

G Macdonald: She had been approached by parents regarding Victoria Park. As there is a lot going on there now, families were going for a "day out". However, there are no toilets, no ice cream van and no picnic tables. M Bruce confirmed the picnic tables are in hand. They also reported to her that the Kingsmeadows toilets are dirty.

What about the Victoria Park Centre? There is a gate, could the toilets there be used? M Bruce confirmed that SBC would not allow the general public to use the facilities there. C Forsyth confirmed that the Food Foundation do run a café on a Tuesday and Thursday and the public can use the toilets if they are using the café. The centre homes vulnerable residents which is the reason that the toilets are not for the general public.

The Vice Chairman said that toilets are needed. M Bruce said composting toilets are around £8k.

S Watson confirmed the physical survey, for parking, would take place on a Friday, Saturday and Monday. The Vice Chairman encouraged everyone to engage with the parking survey.

PCC Website: The Secretary flagged up that the website is very out of date. PCT receive our documents regularly but nothing has been uploaded since September. A member of the PCT is going to overhaul it and it will be updated in due course. Unfortunately, the out-of-date information cannot be removed meanwhile.

Jubilee Wood: The PCC had been approached by a member of the public who felt the woodland was not being well looked after. However, it is not clear what the specific issues are, and the Secretary agreed to return to the person to find out.

AGM: The Vice Chairman reminded everyone that the AGM was held last year in November, because of post-covid delays. It has since been realised that, according to the constitution, the AGM needs to be held within 60 days of our financial year end. As a result, we will be reverting to our AGM timetabling in May.

The Vice Chairman thanked everyone for their time.

The meeting ended at 8.52pm.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 13 April 2023 at 7pm in the lounge, Peebles Community Centre, Walkershaugh.