



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 310th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 14 September 2023 at 7pm in the Burgh Chamber, Peebles. The meeting was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.

Present: A Snoddy (Secretary), F Richardson, G Mackie (Vice Chairman and Treasurer), G Ramsay, J Crawley, J Shearer, J Wilson, L Lovell-Henderson, M Bruce, S Coe, S Watson, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Small, Cllr Tatler.

In attendance: M Davey of the Peeblesshire News, K Guiney Chair of the Peebles Business and Retailers Association, A McGilvray of Radio Borders.

Members of the Public: C McKay; M Marshall, D Thorpe, J Douse and K Young.

Apologies: P Maudsley, G MacDonald, S Hamilton, A Mackenzie, H Young, Cllr Begg, Cllr Thomson, Cllr Douglas.

The meeting was recorded for the purposes of minuting and reporting.

The Vice Chairman welcomed all to the meeting in the Chairman's absence. The meeting will continue in the Burgh Chamber until the acoustics have been addressed in the Burgh Hall.

The Vice Chairman then welcomed the PCC's newest councillor, Lennox Lovell-Henderson. L Lovell-Henderson is 16 and it was agreed a young person's input is going to be very helpful. The Vice Chairman also welcomed Kerrie Guiney of the Peebles Business and Retailers Association who was in attendance in the public gallery.

Open forum: D Thorpe and J Douse wanted to raise concerns on behalf of neighbours and residents of Kingsway and Kingsmeadows Gardens regarding planning permission to erect a double garage on land adjacent to 2 Kingsway. The land had been purchased in 2011 by a Kingsmeadows Gardens' resident for garden use and who has since moved away. There were concerns, the first one being that the initial drawings had shown a greater area than had been purchased, another being the purpose of the garage, and about safety issues for local school children as the land is adjacent to a busy bus stop/turnaround and footpath to and from the local primary school. The architect had since corrected the drawings so the boundaries are now correct. The architect had initially been instructed to draw up plans for a single-storey bungalow, which were recently modified to a double-garage. D Thorpe is concerned that when the land was sold to the current owner by Eildon Housing Association the sale agreement restricted use to a garden. This is a busy area around the school day for collecting and dropping off children and there are safety concerns because access would cross directly over the route children and pedestrians walk along. The residents had also met with Cllr Tatler who had visited the site and where it was agreed the area had been a green space since the houses had been built. Cllr Tatler has been in touch with Eildon and is awaiting a response. There appears to be both a legal issue and a planning issue. D Thorpe asked PCC to support the residents' objections and the Vice Chairman agreed that the PCC would raise a formal objection.

Approval of the Minutes of 10 August 2023: M Bruce proposed, and G Ramsay seconded.

The Vice Chairman took the opportunity to extend the PCC's thanks to F Richardson who takes the Minutes. There had been no dedicated Minute Secretary for many months and her work was greatly appreciated.

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Matters arising from the Minutes:

Tree Preservation Order: The Chairman had written to SBC in support of the application for a Tree Preservation Order for the trees around Kingsmeadows House.

Campbell Johnston: The Secretary had written a note of appreciation to Campbell Johnstone of SBC for all his efficient work.

Bench on Edinburgh Road: M Bruce and J Shearer had organised a bench on Edinburgh Road and it was being well used. It was in need of some fresh paint and it was decided that the Secretary would write to the Community Payback Team to ask if they can do this work.

Eddleston Path Safety Audit: The Vice Chair asked if a safety audit had been done of the Eddleston path? Cllr Tatler confirmed it was done before it was opened. Cllr Begg will be asked if there is going to be another one done.

The proposed crossing at Innerleithen Road: Cllr Tatler has a meeting next week and will report back. The plans have been revised and will be delivered at the meeting.

Pharmacy lunchtime: The new pharmacy who had taken over Lloyds had been asked if they would stagger their lunchtime closure with Boots. They said no. For one hour every day, there is no pharmacy available in Peebles.

Cross Kirk. Historic Environment Scotland was asked if someone could cover for the single keyholder when they are away on holiday, to open Cross Kirk. They confirmed they cannot transfer that responsibility. There are also no immediate plans to repair the structure.

Police Report: Police Scotland sent their apologies; no officer was able to attend. The report had been circulated. M Bruce had nothing to add. The Peebles Youth Voice report had also been circulated.

Councillor Reports:

Cllr Pirone: There will be another consultation, regarding the proposed youth shelter, to be held in Victoria Park on 23 September. This is also to get people's views on the lighting. The procurement process may be lengthy. She thanked everyone for coming to the Community Conversation at Peebles High School. It was also good to meet the young people and discuss safety in the town and the shelter. The Live Borders Consultation has closed. It had been their biggest consultation review to date, and 2,500 took part.

Cllr Small: Not much happening on planning in Peebles right now.

Cllr Tatler: Cllr Tatler had visited Hawick flood protection. It was impressive. It had cost £92m and will give the town 100% protection by end of this year. He had looked at it to see what could be done in Peebles. They are still working on a scheme for Peebles. There are different options and they will need to work out what is the best option and obtain costs. Meanwhile, he has put in a bid for 1,000 metres of demountable barriers from Hawick to be brought to Peebles and Walkerburn. Colin Kerr of Walkerburn and District Community Council has set up a flood group which is a sub group of the Area Partnership.

Following the Innerleithen Road crossing completion, attention will turn to the "obstruction" in Haylodge. Removing it will allow the riverside path to be accessible all the way along.

There is no update about the Baptist Church.

There has been a request for additional spaces for disabled spaces on the High Street and for some bicycle stands in Kingsmeadows car park and on the High Street. East Station car park and Kingsmeadows car park are

going to being lined in two weeks' time. It will be done in sections. There had been comments on social media about the recent roadworks at the Tweed Bridge. Cllr Tatler reminded everyone that the Cllrs do not have control of these, it is normally down to the utilities companies.

The Secretary confirmed that Paul Spence from Peebles Resilience Group has been invited to attend at the Community Council meeting in November.

Cllr Tatler said there is no update regarding the use of Victoria Park Centre, but there are proposals in discussion.

S Watson suggested Greenside car park for bike stands.

Cllr Pirone said the current board of the Eastgate Theatre had resigned this week because they received notification from the Eastgate Partnership asking for some existing board members to be removed and for some members of the Eastgate Partnership to take their place. The entire existing board decided to resign. Four members of the Eastgate Partnership are now on the board. The work will also be passed over to the new board. The new board may have to renegotiate the recent loan secured with SBC as the terms of the agreement were agreed with the previous board.

J Crawley had attended the meeting at The Estate Theatre on 17 August which had been acrimonious. However, events have overtaken, and superseded much of what was discussed. There was a lot of support from within the community for the theatre. The Vice Chairman had attended the meeting of the Friends of the Eastgate Theatre which had been very positive. All councillors and the PCC agreed that they would have supported giving the resigned board more time to turn it around. It takes time to make changes in any organisation.

Treasurer's Report: G Mackie has circulated his report. He will report back in the next meeting in respect of the Peebles In Bloom expenditure once it has all been settled.

Chairman's report and planning report: These had been circulated.

March Street Mill: This has not moved forward yet and a proposal is still to be agreed.

Chambers Institution Trust: S Coe has not heard back from the architects about the Burgh Hall study which is disappointing as it was supposed to have been completed by mid-March. There had been a meeting in June and the architects were going to produce a draft which has been chased. It will be raised at the next beneficiaries meeting on 26 September. The acoustics will also be discussed at both the Beneficiaries meeting and the Trustees meeting. There was discussion about putting up curtains, and some other measures. An acoustics expert will need to be involved. Cllr Tatler said that the spending for the new curtains at the stage had been approved. The lobby area is to be redecorated and the paintings previously discussed will be going up. A roof repair is also required.

Peebles High School: S Coe had attended a meeting at the school on 12 September and his report is below. He also brought the plans to show the PCC.

Present: Steven Renwick (SBC project manager), Karen Mooney (PHS depute with faculty responsibility for Expressive Arts), Sam Swinton (drama teacher), Mark Bisson (music teacher), Tristan Compton and Morag Stevenson (Parent Council), Viv Thomson and myself. The date was not suitable for several others including the Head Teacher, but the meeting was nevertheless quite productive.

The meeting was arranged by Tristan Compton of the Parent Council to get a clearer understanding of the size of the hall in the new build compared to the size of the present hall, which many have not been able to

picture up to now (including some senior SBC officers it has to be said), and to understand the various implications of this.

The outline of the new hall was set out on the floor of the existing hall.

It was noted that the new auditorium would be approximately half the length of the existing, while the drama studio that would double as an extended stage area would be approximately twice the depth of the existing stage. There will be no raised stage.

It was clear that the school staff had not fully appreciated that the new hall would be so much smaller than the existing, which emphasised that there had been no real consultation with the relevant staff at the earlier stages of the design process.

Use of the hall as a theatre: It was generally agreed that the proposals would create a nice theatre space, and Mr Swinton considered that it would be a good space for drama teaching. Arrangements for lighting, sound equipment and other details are to be confirmed in due course. With the space expected to be used for drama 90% of the time, and with increased uptake and thus a need for additional drama staff expected, Mr Swinton envisaged the potential for conflict with other curricular demands in future.

Use of the hall for shows: It was agreed that there would be no possibility of having an orchestra or band in front of the stage with the bleacher seating fully extended, and in any case the lack of a raised stage would mean any musicians in front would compromise the view of stage performers for the lower levels of seating. The idea of having musicians playing in another room with remote communication with the show was considered unworkable. Mr Swinton ventured the idea of a small upper level musicians gallery on one or both sides of the hall, and it was considered that this might be made possible by providing sliding screens between the hall and first floor corridor and relocating corridor doors. Mr Renwick agreed to discuss this idea with the design team.

Use of the hall for music performance: There was general concern about the reduced space that would be available for the traditional larger scale end of term concerts, which normally take up the stage plus almost half of the existing hall floor, with up to 120 young musicians performing and others waiting to go on. The department was now also working with the primary schools which could add another 30 to the gathered groups for performances. It was explained that the main space available for larger scale music performance would be the single height drama studio with the moveable partition opened up. On viewing the size of the space as marked out, Mr Bisson noted that while this was larger than he had previously imagined (10 metres square), it would still be restrictive for the largest groups, due to the lack of width versus depth. However, of further concern was the comparatively low ceiling, the deep structural beam crossing the space, and the acoustically absorbent ceiling, which would all make for a poor music performance acoustic. Currently the preference is for music performance to be within the main hall volume for best effect for both audience and performers, and Mr Bisson pointed out that the music performance experience should be primarily for the benefit of the pupils.

Regarding the structural beam crossing the performance space, it was pointed out that this would likely impact on sightlines from the raked seating, particularly if the rear rows of players were raised on staging. Mr Renwick explained that the angle of the raked seating could be adjusted to optimise the audience sightlines as far as possible.

Mr Renwick acknowledged the concerns about the suitability of the drama space for music performance and agreed to consult the project acoustician about how to improve the acoustics of this space for music performance, and whether there would be any acoustic benefit in reducing the depth of the large beam.

The possibility of being able to adjust the extension of the bleacher seating to allow more floor space for performance with correspondingly less audience seating was discussed as a means to provide additional flexibility for performance use. Mr Renwick agreed to look into this.

Asked why Peebles High School, by far the largest school in the Borders, would conversely have the smallest hall in the whole of the Borders, Mr Renwick explained that the space allocated was in line with current design metrics and limited by the available budget. However he also confirmed that the hall had not actually been modelled for music performance, or to accommodate the specific requirements of the PHS music department. Morag Stevenson pointed out that the new Paisley Grammar school that was currently in for planning would be getting a new assembly hall of similar size to the existing PHS hall, so it seemed that the priorities of that authority were different from SBC. The difficulty of balancing all competing priorities in such a large project was nevertheless acknowledged, and that other than this significant issue, many of the other qualities of the new school design were to be welcomed.

While the use of the school gym hall had previously been discounted for other uses due to the need for the flooring to be protected, Mr Renwick said that he did not know where this came from. It was agreed that there was a possible option to use the gym hall for larger scale music performance, which would likely be large enough for both players and audience. It was agreed that a trial should be undertaken during school time with a rehearsal and even a performance to see if this would offer a workable option from acoustic, space and other practical points of view.

The potential retention of the existing hall as a community asset was briefly touched upon, and both music and drama teachers said that they would welcome the availability of this additional space on campus if this was possible. This would however be a significant undertaking by the community that would require full support and cooperation from SBC, and would require careful consideration depending on the outcome of the potential mitigations discussed at the meeting.

The Peebles Parent Council was due to meet last night to discuss the outcome of the hall meeting, and no doubt we will receive a report in due course.

F Richardson had attended the Parent Council meeting on 13 September. One of the topics covered was the new build and it had been led by T Compton. Full minutes of the meeting will be available on the Parent Council website should anyone want to read those. T Compton had brought the plans of the school to the meeting and talked about them with the attendees. There were sixth year students in attendance which led to discussion and concern around study space for current sixth year students, as well as provision for study space in the new build. S Renwick had also been in attendance and had taken away some queries. S Coe said that some of the concerns can be looked at during and after the build. Cllr Pirone agreed, once the school is up the configuration can be looked at. S Renwick attends all the meetings and is well aware of the issues. The gym is a good space and could be used for other things. If SBC take too long, the Scottish Government may come withdraw funding.

The Vice Chairman asked L Lovell-Henderson for his views as he is currently a sixth year student. L Lovell-Henderson said that it is important to get it right for performances. When these events are happening it gives the students and whole school a real buzz. He would like to see the issues resolved somehow.

Peebles Community Trust: M Bruce had circulated his report.

Parking group: There is a further consultation open and a survey available to complete online, by paper or using a QR code. This will close on 14 October. Cllr Tatler had a meeting with the Peebles Business and Retailers Association to take their views. A further meeting of the parking group will follow to ingather all information and make some decisions.

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M Bruce had received a payment from the parking fund for the Christmas Lights Association for which thanks.

Town bus service. A report has been produced and gone to SBC. They have committed to keeping the bus service and to expanding the timetable for some earlier and later services which means that some students can use it and perhaps this will lessen some of the traffic at the school. The key message to the community is to use it.

Peebles In Bloom: The Secretary, in G MacDonald's absence, said that this had been a massive undertaking but it was all worthwhile and had been a huge success. We now all look forward to Peebles in Bloom 2024.

AOB

New Water Treatment Works: The Vice Chairman had been invited to the opening of the new water treatment works at Bonnington Road. It was a state-of-the-art building with impressive technology and had cost £30m. It was very smart and efficient and will serve the town well. Cllr Tatler confirmed Bonnington Road has been scheduled for resurfacing. Scottish Water will be making a contribution.

PHS Freshers Fair: H Young and J Mitchell were not at the meeting to report back on the PHS Freshers Fair.

Greener Peebles: F Richardson would be representing PCC at the Greener Peebles AGM on 16 September.

The Bridge offices: Tenants are being asked to vacate the premises by Borders Community Action on School Brae. This is the PCC's official address. No one seemed to know what is happening with the building. The Secretary will contact Borders Community Action.

Tourist signs: The Secretary said that Campbell Johnston is going to arrange for the correction and update of the tourist signs.

School transport: A member of the public had contacted the PCC with concerns that her children were having to walk along the back road into Cardrona to reach their school transport and that it was unsafe. The school transport had previously picked up the children at the end of their road. SBC had said the decision to no longer do this had been made, but that decision is now being appealed. Cllrs Pirone and Tatler are assisting.

Unofficial Cycle Trail in Venlaw: This is on Common Good land. Cllr Tatler was aware of the path that had been created, and photos had been submitted and reported. It was currently under legal review.

PHS common rooms and space: L Lovell-Henderson confirmed there is a lack of study space for the students. Post-fire the space available is really tight for the entire school across the school day. L Lovell-Henderson said that it is a big issue. Cllr Pirone is going to check that there is going to be study space in the new build as her understanding is that there will be. This falls under the Headteacher's domain.

900th year anniversary of King David's accession: A member of the public had been in touch to say that 2024 is the 900th year anniversary of the accession of King David I of Scotland. It was also around this time that Peebles became a Royal Burgh, being the second town in Scotland to receive this title. It was pointed out that this status was awarded in 1152, 25 years later, so technically we should celebrate that in 2052. The person who contacted the PCC would like to encourage the community to celebrate next year. It was agreed this would be put on the agenda next month to consider to what extent the CC should become involved, if at all.

Round the table:

S Watson: The Highland Games had been a very successful event and he thanked the Common Good for helping purchase the new marquee. A plaque had been placed to commemorate 50 years in Haylodge Park. K Guiney wanted to add that the Retailers Association all agreed that it had been an amazing event and the best Saturday the retailers had seen for a long time. It had brought lots of footfall into the High Street.

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J Crawley: There had been feedback that there was a lot of cigarette debris outside a carry out shop on Northgate. It was agreed Cllr Small would look into this. There was also concern that a local trader had been approached by Police Scotland for offloading shop stock from their van outside their shop on the High Street and asked to move immediately. The van was parked in a designated parking space. The shop has no rear door. There is no loading bay. K Guiney said that the BBC had been talking to the shopkeepers in the High Street about the lack of wardens and police issuing tickets. The BBC had contacted Police Scotland, but they refused to comment. The following morning there was police presence in the High Street from 8am. There is a huge issue for retailers because people are parking on the High Street all day and no tickets being issued. It was not clear why this trader appeared to be targeted by Police Scotland whilst parked in a designated parking space when there was a work van parked in a disabled bay across the road, and a van on the double yellow lines outside Costa. It made no sense. Cllr Pirone will raise this with Police Scotland and report back to M Bruce. Cllr Tatler said that he is still keen to start the process of decriminalisation of parking, and we should put it on the agenda for proper discussion.

J Wilson had heard complaints about the bottle banks not being emptied in Kingsmeadows car park. Cllr Pirone said there had been an issue with the collection vehicles. If it happens again, Cllr Tatler advises reporting it on the SBC website. J Wilson said that in respect of the High School roll numbers, looking at the numbers coming up from the primary schools there is clear evidence that the numbers should reduce.

S Watson said that some businesses are using the bottle banks. The Cllrs said that he should report it on council website.

J Shearer said she thought it would be pleasant to have a bench or two on the High Street for members of the public to sit on.

Member of the public K Young asked for an update about the crumbling wall on Rose Park. Cllr Small will ask Cllr Thomson to respond to Community Councillor G Macdonald.

The Vice Chairman had been asked if the UCI cycling event organisers had been charged for erecting their marquee on Tweed Green and for the use of Haylodge Park as a car park. Cllr Tatler confirmed there were no charges levied for either as it was considered that the town benefitted from the event.

The meeting finished at 8.59pm. The next meeting will be on Thursday 14 September 2023 at 7pm in Burgh Chambers, Peebles.