



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

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2022

Held on 10th November 2022 at 7pm in the Burgh Hall. 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 Shearer, J Wilson, L Turnbull, M Bruce, P Maudsley, S Coe, S Hamilton, Cllr Begg, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Small, Cllr Tatler, Cllr Thomson

In attendance: M Davey of the Peeblesshire News

Members of the Public: Catherine McLeod and Jim Brown

Apologies: G Ramsay, J Crawley, S Watson, J Mitchell

The chairman welcomed everyone and there was a round-the-table introduction.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the last AGM held on 11 November 2021 were approved by C Forsyth and seconded by P Maudsley.

Chairman's annual report

It feels like it has been more than a year since our last AGM; a lot has happened since then and I am hopeful that some progress is being made in areas of concern for our residents.

You will recall that at this time last year, I was accused by councillors of breaching the data protection act; I offered an apology which was not accepted and further attempts were made to bully me into apologising. I referred myself to the Information commissioner who felt that if there had been any breach it was so minimal as not to warrant any investigation. This debacle then led onto someone making an anonymous complaint against me which was investigated by members of the PCC and found to be without foundation; this caused those volunteers a great deal of extra work. I thank them for their diligent approach in the face of continual sniping from the anonymous complainant.

You will also recall that the PCC along with the Civic Society were trying to obtain community representation on the management board of Trustees for the Chamber Institution trust. SBC refused to allow this in light of legal advice that they had received. I might add that the legal advice was at odds with advice previously obtained. Since then the Trustees have formed a Beneficiaries group to help develop strategy and improve the management of the trust. This has met twice and I am encouraged that there appears to be progress with community inclusion in the running of the trust.

The parking group has stalled; it was formed about three years ago and to date no progress has been made in reviewing the current situation let alone developing a strategy for the future of our car parks. In March of this year a draft questionnaire was produced by SBC officers with the intention that a survey would be conducted during the summer months when lots of visitors were around. We submitted suggestions for amendments to the consultation questionnaire, but have heard no more.

There needs to be rapid progress made to try and ensure that there is a proper parking regime in place for next year; failure in this regard could mean substantial financial loss to this community.

One of the major issues facing us this year has been the failure of SBC to listen to the concerns of the Community Council and broader community regarding the puffin crossing in the Eastgate. I recently met with a senior officer from SBC and we discussed the need for a holistic review of the traffic situation in the town. It was a very constructive meeting, Peter who was also in attendance will provide more detail.

Anti-Social Behaviour has been a major source of concern for the community over the past year. It ill-behoves councillors to belittle the work of this community council by suggesting that we have been exaggerating the extent of the problem especially when I have been told by an SBC officer that staff in Peebles are frightened; many of our residents remain very concerned. Councillors should be careful of the language they use. We have continued to work to resolve these issues. In May I arranged for a special PCC meeting at the High School to address these concerns; it was attended by Councillors, Police, SBC officers, teachers, youth workers, parents and some students. The results of an earlier poll of students, arranged by Malcolm, was revealed. To try and develop some of the emerging themes we are in the process of developing a working group, led by Malcolm which will meet soon. In addition we have been working with others to try and form a street pastor scheme in Peebles; work is continuing and we are hopeful that soon we might have street pastors on our streets at weekends to help young people.

It is disappointing that I find it necessary to remind Councillors and members of statutory bodies that community councils consist of volunteers who work for the good of their area, they seldom, if ever, have a personal agenda and are forbidden by their constitution to be political. The role, indeed the duty, of a community council is to ask questions and represent the views of the community and that might mean asking difficult questions; they deserve and expect to be taken seriously. I know that this community council will continue to ask those questions as they work with others to try and find solutions to our many issues.

Finally, I would like to thank present and past members of the community council for their support over the last three and a half years. In particular Scott Rae who decided against standing again for reasons similar to myself. I will watch your progress with interest and wish my successor and you all the very best for the future.

L Turnbull then stood down as chairman and a member of PCC and handed the chair over to Cllr Begg.

Cllr Begg thanked all the office bearers for their work over the last year and acknowledged that the work done is entirely voluntary and that the people of Peebles benefits greatly from everyone's efforts. The election of office bearers took place.

Position	Nominee	Proposer	Secunder
Chairman	P Maudsley	A Snoddy	A Mackenzie
Vice Chairman	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
Secretary	A Snoddy	P Maudsley	G Macdonald
Treasurer	G Mackie	A Snoddy	M Bruce
Planning Convenor	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
Independent Examiner of Accounts	D Pye	G Mackie	F Richardson

The meeting resumed with P Maudsley in the chair and there followed a presentation to L Turnbull to thank him for his enormous contribution to PCC.

P Maudsley said he would like to begin with a statement, which was as follows:

Before I look at the wider issues, I would like to say a few words about our past Chair. The effort that Les Turnbull, put in, has been prestigious and has effectively been a full-time job. No one could have done more, and no one could have expected more of him. I believe the town and Tweeddale owe him a great debt of gratitude. He will be missed. We would like to award you this certificate in recognition of your service to the PCC and the community at large. We all thank you.

Now, I would like to thank all our team for the hard work they have put in over the past three years. In particular, Scott who has left us and who balanced home, work, the PCC, and the Peebles Community Trust and who I hope will continue this vital work with them. All of us around this table, and I include our elected councillors serve this community and it is important that we continue to do so and that always we endeavour to place the needs of the community foremost.

A change of Chair and Vice Chair marks a sea change, and this is especially true when we consider that we also have a new body of recently elected councillors. Going forward, we must work together for the common good and we must do this working as one team and not as two separate entities that are sometimes in conflict. We are all professionals, and we need to recognise each other's strengths and indeed each other's weaknesses. Honest debate is one thing, conflict is another.

Let no one dispute that Scottish Borders Council, and indeed any council is a complex and vital organisation, working across a myriad of subjects for the good of the community, and their website clearly demonstrates this complexity. There is no doubt that most officers are competent and worthy of our trust but as in any organisation not necessarily all will provide such high standards. One example should have given pause for thought, not necessarily a change of direction, but certainly a pause for thought! When this Community Council raised questions about the positioning of the Puffin Crossing, we were informed that the crossing was a recommendation in a Sustrans report. Following a Freedom of Information request we were able to demonstrate that such a report did not exist. I suggest this was a moment to pause, not to double down. The argument changed to inform us that the location was also an accident blackspot. This was also demonstrably incorrect. I am sure that we were provided with information in good faith, but it wasn't correct and there must be a lesson in this for some to take away.

It is important for us not to forget that SBC do much good work and where we can, we should highlight anything that we consider to be excellent, just as we should question anything that gives us concern.

We have several items that carry forward from the past and most are routine, but there are two that I believe we should recognise as of especial importance: the Chambers Institution and the reported Antisocial Behaviour.

I think that with the CIT we are all agreed that there is now a mechanism in place that can move the institution forward. It must, the inertia of the last few years cannot be acceptable. Peebles is a vibrant place, but the façade of the institution now is more in keeping with those many failing towns that we see up and down the country. I propose that the beneficiaries' group be fully supported by this committee. However, it is ultimately the trustees who will be held accountable if the initiative fails.

Constantly over the last three years, residents have come to us and reported concerns about antisocial behaviour, vandalism and the 101 service and just as constantly we have been told not to worry and that it is in hand or that it is exaggerated. It is true that serious crime other than perhaps the theft of bikes is low in Peebles. It is also true that noise is a nuisance and that the younger you are the more noise you are likely to generate. In most cases this is neither criminal nor really antisocial. I think most of us will have had our moments when young; I certainly did!

However, children and adults know right from wrong, and damage, assault and bullying are wrong at any level and will get worse if not adequately addressed. Les Turnbull and Malcolm Bruce started an initiative which I hope Malcolm will continue to lead. It holds promise. It is also good to hear from our elected colleagues that other agencies are finally starting to work together to address these issues. Feedback from parents, and the police reports, demonstrate clearly that there is a job to be done and they provide a marker to measure against. Let us see if between us working as a team we can make a difference.

You have elected me as your Chair and have placed your trust in me. I will do my level best to live up to this trust, but Les Turnbull is a very hard act to follow and there must be many far better qualified for the task than I. We always need volunteers and finally we must all communicate with, and listen to, the public that we aspire to represent.

The chairman then announced that, sadly, L Hayworth has stepped down, for personal reasons, and we should note L Hayworth's immense contribution over the years.

Treasurer's report. The report had been circulated. G Mackie thanked David Pye for acting as our independent examiner of accounts. He did not accept a fee. Our expenses exceeded our income this year by £250, which is not of great concern, and we have still got reserves of over £1,000. This has been an unusual year because we are still recovering from the effects of Covid-19. Peebles in Bloom normally generates income but did not this year because we were unable to host a presentation night, but we ought to be able to resume as normal next year. There is also the ongoing cost of the Zoom meetings at £14 per month. P Maudsley is looking at an alternative.

Appointment for the following representatives:

- Peebles Community Trust: M Bruce
- SBCCN: vacant
- Common Good Committee: P Maudsley will represent us in November with G Ramsay taking it on thereafter.
- Peebles Civic Society: Sam Coe who has been a member for a number of years. He has a great interest in the Chambers Institution. We are going to invite S Coe into the PCC as a co-optee. P Maudsley proposed and A Mackenzie seconded.
- Parking group: G Ramsay.
- Planning convenor: Vacant. It was agreed to defer the discussion to next meeting.

Scottish Borders Council Code of Conduct: All community council members agreed to abide by the code. This is essential to allow for application of the grant. The treasurer will let SBC know.

AOB. None.

The date of the next AGM is 9 November 2023.