



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

**Minutes of the 295<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022 via Zoom. The meeting was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.**

**Present:** L.Turnbull, S.Rae, A.Snoddy, G.Mackie, P.Maudsley, H.Young, A.Mackenzie, M.Bruce, S.Hamilton, J.Shearer, S.Watson, O.Olesheva, J.Crawley, C.Forsyth; Cllr Begg, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone

**In attendance:** M.Davey of the Peeblesshire News; E.Smith and S.Ritchie regarding the commemoration of witches in Peebles.

**Members of the public:** G. MacDonald, M.Pearson, R.Welander, M.McEwan

**Apologies for absence:** L.Hayworth, G.Ramsay, Cllr Tatler, Cllr Thomson, Cllr Small.

**Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed the newly elected SBC Councillors attending this meeting. Tweedsmuir CC had postponed their monthly meeting (usually held on the first Thursday of the month) due to the local elections so some of the new Councillors were attending that rescheduled meeting this evening.

**Presentation: Commemoration of Peebles Witches**

Elisa Smith is seeking the support of PCC for the raising of a monument to 27 Peebles residents who were executed in 1629 in the belief that they were witches. A report, based on a recent survey of local people, had been circulated before the meeting. The survey asked whether people had been aware of the Peebles 'witches' previously, whether a memorial would be appropriate, what form it should take and where it should be located. There were 205 responses from the community. 96% of respondents were in favour of a monument, some suggesting Venlaw where the executions took place and some favouring the more central location of Tweed Green. Currently there is a national campaign run by the 'Witches of Scotland' organisation which includes Clare Mitchell QC and author Zoe Venditossi. As a result of their campaign, on International Women's Day on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon issued a pardon to all those who were tried for witchcraft. Any memorial would be funded privately. Several Community Councillors spoke in support of Elisa's initiative. L.Turnbull explained that if Tweed Green was the favoured location then they should put in a written request to the Chairman of Peebles Common Good Fund.

**The presentation by John Dalrymple**, Building Convenor of Peebles Baptist Church, has been postponed until the Community Council meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

**Open Forum:** M.Pearson, organiser of the Gypsy Glen Hill Race, thanked Cllr Tatler and Community Councillors who supported the event by registering entrants and marshalling the race. Special thanks went to Chris Forsyth who once again went to the top of the hill! Mr Pearson always shares the proceeds with PCC and G.Mackie clarified that the cheque should come to him as Treasurer.

### **Tweeddale Councillor Introductions**

**Cllr Begg:** He said he was delighted to be at the meeting as one of the 3 newly elected Councillors for Tweeddale West. He was the Lib Dem candidate, Viv Thomson was the SNP candidate and Eric Small was the Conservative candidate. (The last two were attending the Tweedsmuir CC meeting this evening). The 3 Councillors plan to have a constructive and collegiate approach. He looks forward to working with the Community Council over the next 5 years.

**Cllr Pirone** is also delighted to be at the meeting in her new role as an elected Councillor. She was the Conservative candidate for Tweeddale East. She looks forward to working with Cllr Tatler (Independent) and Cllr Douglas (SNP).

**Cllr Douglas:** He has been Chairman of Innerleithen CC for the past 6 years so is very aware of the valuable work done by Community Councils. He looks forward to working with the other SBC Councillors and they will try their very best.

The Chairman thanked the new Councillors and said he looked forward to developing a good working relationship with them to improve life for everybody in the town.

**Approval of the Minutes** of 14<sup>th</sup> April: proposed by S.Watson, seconded by P.Mausley

### **Matters arising from the Minutes**

**Minute Secretary:** The Chairman said that it is the lack of a Minute Secretary that is holding PCC back from returning to in-person meetings. He wondered if a Minute Secretary should be more adequately remunerated? He suggests £25 a month to attend a meeting, prepare the Minutes and write them up. He has spoken with the Treasurer, G. Mackie, who confirmed that PCC can afford it. To make life easier for a Minute Secretary Mr Turnbull suggested PCC might invest in recording equipment which could be used in face-to-face meetings to capture all that is said. Everyone supported his suggestion. He asked the Secretary to compose an advert to be placed in the Peeblesshire News and posted on Facebook.

**Meeting at Peebles High School** at 4pm on 24<sup>th</sup> May. This is a special meeting of PCC to be held at Peebles High School to discuss measures to reduce anti-social behaviour. The Chairman urges all Community Councillors to attend if they possibly can. He hopes that our SBC Councillors will also come along. Representatives from the Police and SBC, Dave Hodson from the Youth Club, some High School pupils and members of the Parents Council will attend. Representatives of the churches in Peebles hope to come along with a view to looking at the Street Pastor system. The head teacher, Campbell Wilson, will present his ideas on how to improve the culture at the school. It is planned that the meeting will finish by 6pm.

**Parking Consultation:** The Parking Group will be reconstituted following the local elections. Cllr Tatler may or may not continue to chair it.

**Post Office of Glen Road.** A.Snoddy has confirmed with shop staff that the post office counter will close for good (*for clarification the decision has been taken by the shop owner, not the Post Office*). Cllr Pirone said she used to work for the Royal Mail and Post Office Services. Apparently the Post Office are obliged to make every effort to find alternative premises in these circumstances. She volunteered to pursue the matter with them.

#### **'Parents issues' sub group.**

Traffic calming measures to improve safety on the Glasgow Road outside Kingsland Primary School were discussed at last month's Community Council meeting. Community Councillor H.Young passed on our comments to SBC and awaits the resultant draft plan. She hopes to hear back from SBC before our next meeting.

#### **Police Report**

It was circulated prior to the meeting, as well as Community Councillor M.Bruce's comments on it. He had little further to add, other than pointing out that overall crime figures in our area are reducing. Sergeant Granger is very supportive of the steps PCC are taking to address anti-social behaviour and will attend the meeting at the High School on 24<sup>th</sup> May even though it is his day off.

P.Maudsley said he has been analysing the reported crime figures over the past 18 months. Several aspects concern him: the possibility that there is 'double accounting' – e.g. drugs seizures being reported by both Police Scotland and the Community Action Team; the fact that when police officers respond to reported incidents there are often no offenders found, or if there are groups of youngsters there is no evidence of a crime being committed and thirdly Mr Maudsley queried the justification for having to pay twice for policing in this area through central taxation for Police Scotland and through council tax for the Community Action Team.

L.Turnbull said that Mr Maudsley had raised valid points and that he, too, wondered about the efficacy and value of the CAT team. This was a subject raised at the recent hustings. A review of the CAT teams is planned but it is not known when it will take place.

#### **Chairman's Report.**

PCC hosted two successful hustings prior to the local elections. The Chairman thanked Father Tony Lappin for hosting the Tweeddale East event and retired minister Calum Macdougall for hosting the Tweeddale West event. He also expressed his thanks to John Swanson for providing the audio equipment, and those Community Councillors who attended.

L.Turnbull and M.Bruce recently met with Ian Gibson who is a member of Peebles Baptist Church to discuss anti-social behaviour and what role the churches could play in helping to address the situation. Ian, with others, hopes to come along to the meeting at the High School on 24<sup>th</sup> May.

### **Chambers Institution Trust.**

L.Turnbull explained to the newly elected SBC Councillors that this Community Council, together with other organisations, have been trying for some time to get community representation on the Board of Trustees. At a recent PCC meeting Mr Turnbull asked the Trustees to use the term ‘beneficiaries’ rather than ‘stakeholders’ when referring to people who have an interest in, or use, the Chambers Institution. Cllr Bell said at the time that a letter should be sent to the Trustees explaining the difference in meaning between the two terms. A letter with the explanation was prepared and circulated to all Community Councillors who indicated their support for it at this meeting. That letter will now be sent to the Trustees.

Mr Turnbull has spoken with a chef who was hired to cater for a wedding party in the Burgh Hall. The chef was dismayed to find that the newly installed kitchen was a very basic domestic kitchen unsuitable for the provision of meals for 100 people. P.Maudsley said this campaign (*to get community representation on the Board*) has been going on for about 2 years, during which time he has produced numerous reports and analysis. During the hustings a former SBC Councillor said legal opinion precluded members of the community joining the Board of Trustees. That is incorrect: previous legal opinions said that such membership would be in order and indeed would comply with William Chambers’ bequest. Mr Maudsley quoted from his report of February 2022 for the benefit of the new SBC Councillors who will become members of the Board of Trustees:

“Because of the previous lack of effective management and oversight it appears as though the cart is being put before the horse! Common sense, never mind accepted management practice is to identify the needs of both users and beneficiaries, stakeholders if you will, tease out ideas and then instruct architects/consultants to work within the guidelines set. It may well be that such a process in advance would influence the report’s proposals. The recent kitchen improvements, welcome as they may be, could also have been influenced by such a process. For example, the Burgh Hall is adjacent to the Registry Office. Perhaps the hall could be hired out for weddings. Would this have influenced how the kitchen improvements were designed? Was this ever considered?”

J.Crawley has been involved in organising many Scout coffee mornings in the Burgh Hall and could have advised the Trustees on what was needed in a new kitchen.

Cllr Pirone asked that the new SBC Councillors be given time to look into the matter. She asked P.Maudsley if he would send them a copy of his February 2022 report, and if L.Turnbull could ask if the chef he referred to earlier would be willing to speak directly with the Councillors about the kitchen. It may be appropriate to have a special meeting with the Community Council to discuss this specific issue. L.Turnbull will speak with the chef concerned. He added that the chef had had to hire equipment to cater for the wedding because of the inadequacies of the new kitchen, and P.Maudsley pointed out that such equipment would have to comply with health and safety rules. He will send the new SBC Councillors all relevant reports about the Chambers Institution Trust from the past 2 years.

**Treasurer’s Report.** It was circulated prior to the meeting. There were no questions.

### **Planning Report**

P.Maudsley explained to the new Councillors that the Planning Report is circulated to Community Councillors and Tweeddale Councillors each month prior to the meeting. Any questions on it are then

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taken at the meeting. He colour codes his report and explained what the different colours represent. Topics of current interest are Tweedbridge Court – he understands that there is nothing new to report there at present, the proposed development at Kingsmeadows House which has attracted over 500 objections, and a couple of windfarms. The development at Castle Venlaw, and an application to use part of the pavement in the High Street as a place for tables and chairs, are examples where planning approval has not been adhered to and yet SBC Planning Department have not followed them up. Edderston Farm and its application to become an events venue – no change. The holiday pods applied for by the Park Hotel – no change.

His report also covers the Scottish Borders Community Council Network, the proposed puffin crossing in the Eastgate (no further developments) and Peebles Parking Working Group.

**Common Good.** Mr Maudsley read out the following from his recent report:

“It is worth noting though, that the writer as the representative of the PCC has some concerns.

1. The Common Good Committee discusses some subjects within private session that this writer considers should be visible to the public and sees no good reason for some aspects other than those that are commercially sensitive to be kept secret.

2. In relation to Jedderfield. Everything has been kept private and at the time of writing still is. Further, the chair has intimated (18-04-22) that he is not aware of what information may or may not be released and must consult with SBC. So far, no answer is forthcoming. This all appears to be wrong on several counts.

a. Surely the Chair of an independent committee representing the people of the town should ensure timely information is presented?

b. The Chair must be ultimately responsible (jointly) as a Trustee for ensuring that good practice as laid down, is observed and that legalities are maintained. This cannot be delegated to non-trustees within SBC

c. The whole town seems to think it knows who the new leaseholder is. It appears that a new lease must be in place as reports note that the land is back in use. Further, contractors have been seen reviewing the property to consider how a new or improved access can be made. And yet, there is no official confirmation of the decision, let alone an explanation of how the decision, if it has been made, has been made!

d. If a lease has been executed, we are not aware of its duration. A long lease may be interpreted legally as a “disposal”. A disposal requires an 8-week consultation period.

e. A question has been raised by a member of the public over the type of use that a new leaseholder may put the farm too. Is it likely that a change of use may have been required?

f. Another member of the public has expressed concern that his own privately owned access road was being surveyed without his permission by a contractor considering new means of access.”

The Chairman, L.Turnbull, said he had hoped that the Chairman of Peebles Common Good, Cllr Tatler, would have been at the meeting so he could put these questions to him. It seems to be common knowledge in the town that the land has been leased to Kailzie Equestrian. Given that the process has been gone through and that the lease has been signed, why has the information not been made public? He asked the SBC Councillors present if they would find out the current situation and let us know. Before the election P.Maudsley, as our Common Good representative, sent a list of questions to Cllr Tatler. He, in turn, forwarded them to SBC. We have not yet received a response.

Mr Turnbull went on to reiterate Mr Maudsley’s concerns that if he is representing the Community Council at Common Good meetings then he must be able to discuss the issues with the

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Community Council in order to represent their views. (Of course commercially sensitive information such as rents cannot be shared.) Further, Mr Turnbull has it on good authority that Chairs of other Community Councils in the Scottish Borders have been privy to private information so there is no reason why it cannot happen here in Peebles. Mr Turnbull hopes that the newly elected SBC Councillors, as the new Trustees of the Common Good, will take on board his concerns.

Cllr Begg said that a word used at both husting events was 'reset', and he would like to explore how that could be achieved. Perhaps a chat outwith a formal meeting might be appropriate. Mr Turnbull agreed and said PCC is keen to work with both SBC Officers and SBC Councillors on an equal footing.

Cllr Pirone expressed concern about some of the issues raised. She will ask Officers why things are done in a certain way. Regarding the Planning Report she will chase up the two issues – Castle Venlaw and pavement seating on the High Street – where there have been no recent developments.

**Peebles Community Trust.** Mr Bruce's report was circulated prior to the meeting. There were no questions.

### **Any Other Business**

**Peebles in Bloom 2022:** The Secretary A.Snoddy wants to hand over the project to some one else. After organising it for many years she said she felt it was time for a 'refresh'. L.Turnbull asked anyone willing to undertake the task to contact Mrs Snoddy directly.

**Eric Bogle.** PCC has received a suggestion from a local resident that the town should recognise the achievements of singer songwriter Eric Bogle who was born and raised in Peebles. A.Snoddy said that Cllr Tatler had advised her that the landlord of Boots the Chemist has given permission for the Michael Jessing murals, currently adorning the hoarding round Tweedbridge Court, to be relocated on to the long wall in Pennel's Close. Cllr Tatler had also shared with her his idea of using a part of the wall to display plaques honouring worthy residents of Peebles. Perhaps this would be a good way of recognising Eric Bogle? Cllr Pirone said she thought there was a scheme in Scotland, similar to the 'blue plaque' scheme in England, which would provide the plaques. The Chairman asked Mrs Snoddy to follow it up.

**Peebles CAN** have changed their name to **Greener Peebles**. The information has already been circulated. They are having an event on 3<sup>rd</sup> June and would like a member of PCC to attend it. The Chairman asked Community Councillors to let the Secretary know if they plan to go.

**Eastgate Car Park toilets.** They are currently open from 9am to 6pm. S.Watson proposed that as we are coming into the summer months that they should be open from 9am to 9pm. Everyone agreed, and the Chairman asked the Secretary to inform Craig Blackie at SBC of the decision.

**Face-to-face meetings.** The Chairman said that we are considering returning to in-person meetings. He understands from Cllr Tatler that we are the only Community Council in Tweeddale still holding online meetings. The Secretary has written to Live Borders to see if PCC could use the Burgh Hall rather than Burgh Chamber which can be a bit tight at times. Cllr Begg said a number of other Community Councils are having hybrid meetings which can help with capacity. S.Rae said that in that

situation it would be important to have a rotating camera. There is one on Amazon for £140. It could connect to the Secretary's laptop which would be running Zoom. Cllr Begg said sound is probably more important than vision. Tweedsmuir CC have a hybrid kit which seems to work quite well. The Chairman asked S.Rae to speak with Cllr Begg to find out more.

J.Crawley thought the hybrid system would be a good solution in that some people are still very wary about face-to-face meetings. P.Maudsley said that PCC is one of the largest Community Councils so it might be harder for us to run hybrid meetings than a smaller CC. S.Rae said that without vision everyone who spoke would have to go through the Chair and be identified. Audio is definitely the key, however. A single microphone might have to be supplemented with others. S.Watson wondered if there is wifi in the Burgh Hall. S.Rae said that there is but that we have never had access to it. Without access we might need a 4G or 5G dongle.

### **Round the Table**

J.Crawley commented favourably on the recent BBC Scotland Debate Night programme which was broadcast from the Eastgate Theatre.

S.Watson spoke of an instance where a cyclist rode across Priorsford Bridge and was abusive towards pedestrians. Further discussion suggested that the sign asking cyclists to dismount is missing from the south side of the bridge. The Secretary will investigate and write to Neil Pringle at SBC for a replacement if necessary.

A.Mackenzie said that the bollards along Cuddyside need to be painted. The Secretary will raise that, too, with Neil Pringle of SBC.

S.Hamilton said that Community Councillor Jenny Mitchell was prepared to take on the Peebles in Bloom project.

J.Shearer said the provision of rubbish bins on Tweed Green is still inadequate. The Secretary will follow that up with Neil Pringle.

**Finally the Chairman reminded the meeting that the next meeting of the Community Council will be a special one at 4pm on 24<sup>th</sup> May in Peebles High School to discuss anti-social behaviour and what can be done to address it. He looks forward to seeing as many Community Councillors at it as possible.**

**The next regular meeting will be on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022. It is currently planned to be online.**