



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 300th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 10 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, 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: Les Turnbull, Catherine McLeod and Jim Brown

Apologies: G Ramsay, J Crawley, S Watson, J Mitchell and Corinne Bird from Police Scotland

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the last meeting held on 13 October 2022 were proposed by S Hamilton and seconded by C Forsyth.

Matters Arising from the Minutes:

Considerations to designate Scottish Borders a National Park: A speaker is coming in January to speak to the PCC.

Witches Memorial: A Snoddy and F Richardson attended the unveiling of the memorial which lasted around a half hour and was well organised.

Puffin crossing: The chairman and L Turnbull met John Curry (Director Infrastructure and Environment) and Jason Hedley from SBC and discussed the history and issues surrounding the puffin crossing. The meeting was positive, and it was agreed that a joint working party should be constructed, possibly led by PCT in conjunction with PCC and supported by SBC to holistically consider all transport related issues in Peebles. This is what the CC has been asking for since the crossing was first proposed and although it cannot stop the construction of the crossing and nor does it propose to remove the crossing, it is seen as a positive step forward.

L Turnbull explained that he had spoken to Jeremy Cunningham, who had done work for Sustrans to look at the safe routes to school. When L Turnbull told J Cunningham that he had spoken to SBC and there may be funding available, J Cunningham was excited that the work that had been done could be brought to fruition. L Turnbull had prepared a paper for the PCT to see if they want to lead on this as a matter of principle. If there is funding available the detail can be worked out.

Separately, it has been reported that there was a head-to-head traffic collision, presumably at reasonably low speed at the junction in the last two weeks. The amount of damage is not known nor if there were any injuries.

C McLeod asked what the PCT is, and the chairman explained.

C McLeod asked about the safe routes to school. In particular she wanted to address the issue of large lorries going down past Halyrude Primary School. This was the reason she had attended the meeting. The lorries are coming along past Tesco, driving down George Street, past George Place and George Terrace on their way to a depot. These are artic lorries and double-loaders for cars and are doing this all day, starting at 5am. This has been going on for several months now.

The chairman said the PCC would make some enquiries. C McLeod said a fence had been removed and she considered this to be a safety concern for the children going to the primary school and to the nursery. There are cars driving to and from the depot driving at excessive speeds. The chairman confirmed that the 20 mph zone is an issue across Peebles and is not being policed as there are no resources. If anyone has issues with policing they need to email our MPs. C McLeod has all the details of the lorries and the cars, and the chairman suggested she speak to the transport company. G Mackie suggested also writing to the owners of the depot, as they may be unaware of the issues. That would allow them to address it. Cllr Pirone advised that the police ought to be contacted if there is dangerous driving near a primary school and asked if she could be given the information to take it back to the police board. Also, she wanted to let the PCC know that there are 50 new recruits with Police Scotland for the Borders.

Police report: M Bruce has circulated his report. The street pastors project is progressing. It is a combined churches initiative and is independent of us. It will take time as it is a huge commitment for the churches.

The anti-social steering group is moving forward. Youth behaviour is still a problem and we are still looking for solutions. There is a meeting next week and they have recruited one of the SBC appointed ASB officers, who will be a valuable asset. He also lives in Peebles so has vested interest.

The chairman said Police Scotland did a good road show in Peebles recently.

SBC Councillors' Reports:

Cllr Begg has been busy with emails and face to face surgeries. There have been significant issues with missed bin collections and he acknowledges there is an issue. He had recently visited Easter Langlee recycling centre. There are issues with recruitment and keeping lorries on the road and they are working hard to rectify things. Cllr Begg said it is fascinating where our waste goes, and for those interested he suggests looking at <https://www.frmrecycling.co.uk/organics-recycling/>, <https://levenseat.co.uk/>, and <https://regenwaste.com>. SBC is the fourth most successful council with their recycling in Scotland, but we are still all below target. March Street Mill has now been purchased and John Falla has been contacted regarding the transition of allotments. All councillors visited, but he is the lead councillor and is looking forward to working with the local team at the allotments and the new owners constructively. Chambers Institute Trust tours and presentations on the development plan can be booked through EventBrite, although some of them are fully booked already. Cllr Begg said this is a good opportunity for everyone to reset the relationship and hopes to work together constructively with the PCC.

Cllr Douglas said that it is very much in everyone's interest to push on with the development for the Chambers Institute and the beneficiaries' group will be of great benefit. A lot has been said about past relationships between councillors and hopefully we can refresh after the May elections. The six SBC councillors are determined to work move forward. The chairman agreed this is a good start. Cllr

Douglas also met with roads officers for Tweeddale East. Lots of areas were discussed, particularly Victoria Park. Officers are aware of concerns with paths, lighting and ASB. The ASB in Victoria Park has been mentioned at the Police Scrutiny Committee and has been added to the task list. Another issue is the swimming pool. There has been supply chain problems in getting right materials. Work was supposed to start this month, with a view to opening in the new year. This has been delayed slightly. The chairman asked if there is any estimate? Cllr Douglas said it was dependent on the materials but that once started it should take a couple of months. Cllr Douglas has now been elected onto the executive council now, and this means there is a better political balance.

Cllr Pirone: Regarding the swimming pool, they thought work would have started by now. SBC officers have appointed a new project manager who will be starting shortly. In respect of ASB, the CAT team are tackling particular issues. The number of incidents and calls regarding ASB in Peebles has halved because of all their hard work although they were disappointed with incidents in Victoria Park this week. As a result the police will do extra checks. The chairman had passed her the information about youths in the park at lunchtimes and she had asked someone from the CAT team or the Police to visit at lunchtime and it can be fed back to the school. The chairman asked if the police were always in uniform and suggested that they occasionally wear plain clothes. Cllr Pirone didn't think this was possible but would ask. Cllr Pirone was on the walk around Peebles with her fellow councillors noting what was needed to be done and is making sure concerns are listened to. There have been some issues at the High School and the education department are carrying out checks re safety issues. There have been incidents of children being attacked outside the school and they are looking at what else can be done. They are looking at bullying in schools to see what can be done from an education view and they will continue to monitor progress. They are looking at study spaces in the school as this is not resolved, although some changes have happened. The chairman asked if they'd looked at the school toilet problems in school? Cllr Pirone, said yes this had been raised. Cllr Pirone pointed out that we still have lots of Ukrainian families in two local hotels and those families have their children in local schools and ultimately want to remain in Tweeddale. She asked if there are any community events, we should endeavour to integrate the families, perhaps by using some Ukrainian language in promotions. CAB have translators available. We welcome them to stay in our community, and we want them to stay. There are currently English lessons being provided for them at the hotels.

Cllr Small: Cllr Small has been busy on planning. There is a backlog. The planning for the house at The Croft in Chambers Street has been granted and the skate park has been started in Victoria Park.

Cllr Tatler had the list of items discussed on the walk round Peebles with the SBC officers, which included, among other things: High school construction, Bonnington Road, the Baptist Church, Victoria Park lighting and paths, the skate park, lighting and cctv. The Green Flag status for Victoria Park and the Victoria Park centre, the river path and Haylodge obstruction, Whitestone Park and the move to Violet Bank, the Kingsmeadow Road puddles, pavement issues and the dismount sign. It was a good discussion. The chairman asked about the plans for Victoria Centre. Cllr Tatler said he did not know yet. He will update us about the various issues discussed when he hears back from the officers.

Cllr Tatler had attended another meeting with Peebles Accessible Paths Group on Monday to discuss the accessible paths. The Destination Tweed project is fantastic and we are moving closer by the day to the removal of the Tweed path obstruction. The chairman asked about the tree survey and Cllr Tatler confirmed that had been passed. There are consultations and drawings to be done and

Sustrans are going to spend some money doing drawings. They are looking at other bits of work too, including the Eshiels tunnel lighting and resurfacing some bridges out with Peebles. Longer term they are still looking at lighting the Neidpath tunnel. Regarding the Green Flag status for Victoria Park, there was a group set up to produce a plan but this drifted. It needed a strong chairman and now Stevie Matthews from the Rugby Club is going to get it moving, and they have a meeting on 28 November in the lounge at the Community Centre. C Forsyth will attend for PCC. Cllr Tatler will get involved on behalf of the accessible paths group looking at pavements and dropped kerbs.

Cllr Thomson had attended the Tweeddale Club Sports Event on Friday which was a lovely event and very heartening. The children seemed to have a good time. She had been contacted about traffic issues in March Street where there were concerns about the speed people are driving. This has been raised and they are going to put in a flashing 20 sign. There is concern that there may be more traffic now the March Street Mill site has been bought and as she is on the planning committee, she will pass these concerns on. G Macdonald said that the junction where Montgomery Place meets March Street is a bottle neck because of parked cars. Cllr Thomson agreed that it is a difficult road. They were going to put the sign in at the bottom, but they may need to put it further up. Turning to the residents whose trade bins are not being emptied, she is waiting for a response. She, Cllrs Drummond and Small had had their first joint surgery which had been useful. Cllr Thomson had been up at Glentress and there is lots of work going on up there building the infrastructure for the Cycling World championships 2023 and it's looking good. M Bruce didn't think that Peebles had properly embraced this opportunity. They forecast that 1 billion people will be watching Peebles on screens across the world. This is a huge opportunity to promote Peebles. Cllr Tatler said he had attended an event called Ride Here, Ride Now, a tourism workshop. There are workshops going on with local businesses as everyone becomes aware of the opportunities but there is no communication yet about what to expect. Cllr Tatler says we need to try and find out. Cllr Pirone has also raised with officers that we need to think about traffic management, parking, and the routes in and around Peebles, as we need to work in harmony. Officers are planning on putting up electronic signs at Glentress saying bikes crossing. No one seems sure at this stage how the parking will work. This event is happening on 3 August 2023. The Chairman asked for it to be put in the parking group agenda. Cllr T agreed, and also suggested we invite someone to come and speak to us about plans. Cllr Thomson said that a lot of towns want to get involved across all of the Borders. Cllr Small said there are going to be thousands of visitors to the area around the event. [It will be necessary to identify overspill parking and probably a shuttle bus. Also crowd control will need to be considered with extra police and adequate first aid and assistance with SBC's additional costs – what discussions are taking place now?]

The chairman welcomed Tristan Compton to the meeting. T Compton is a member of the Parent Council from Peebles High School and had come to discuss the proposed design of the new High School building and the large number of concerns that had been raised. The chairman had circulated his report to the councillors following a number of emails and verbal exchanges he had had from concerned members of the community.

T Compton thanked the PCC for the opportunity to speak at the meeting. He had just left an ongoing meeting at PHS. A meeting which had been called because of the large amount of issues.

T Compton has been part of the property sub group of the Parent Council since the fire in 2019. As a result of the fire the school lost 23 classrooms. They now have 6 portacabins and 3 other additional classrooms. They are very short of space. Since the fire they have had over 100 new pupils bringing

the roll to over 1400 pupils. It is cramped and the school is in poor condition. There is a reluctance to spend money, not many solutions, and today's pupils are suffering. SCB have £50m to build the new high school. It will be the largest building built in Peebles for decades and will impact every teenager that grows up here. There is currently work ongoing with plans to begin the main part in new financial year. The build time is approximately 2 years, and the school should be ready in April 2025. Demolition of the existing school and re-landscaping will be done by the end of 2025. SBC has planning permission for the new school building and at the planning stage, many concerns were raised by parents particularly to do with the internal layout. There has been relatively little concern about the external building. Internal layout was not discussed at the planning stage and there was to be further consultation regarding the internal layout before the building started. The school is designed on a roll of up to 1400 pupils. Today's roll is already over 1400. SBC say the roll is predicted to drop because of a birth rate drop in the Borders. However, more and more people are moving to Borders. There are huge pressures in Midlothian where they are building houses and we are not going to be immune to that. There is real concern that the size of the school is going to be too small. More information regarding the claim that the school roll will fall has been asked for from SBC, but they are yet to provide it.

T Compton was at a consultation event at PHS 2 weeks ago where a project team came with information. It has since been described as show and tell, not a consultation. It was poorly advertised and poorly attended. They have since received over 20 written responses and a lot more feedback verbally with key concerns. To summarise, in no particular order:

Lack of space; are there compromises being made? The new school is smaller than the current school and everything is being squeezed. Assembly area is too small. Performance area is too small. There are issues round toilet space, staff spaces, lockers, music areas, drama space, exams space - all space is squeezed.

Design; the design is open plan. Open plan classrooms seem odd to a lot of parents. There are certain bodies of evidence with clear data that show the impact is not always positive for all pupils. This has raised a lot of concern. Noise is also a worry.

Assembly and performance space, this has been raised time and time again in feedback. The current assembly sits 300, with wings for all things like orchestras, and it has a raised area. The proposed space is single level (the only school with a single level that has been built in Scotland in the last 10 years) it is sized for 250 and it has no wings, or space for lighting, orchestras, offstage areas. Everything you would need to put on a performance. This is extremely short-sighted.

Dining and social space; this is another huge issue. As things stand, it is a struggle for everyone to get lunch in the allocated time, and then there's the issue of having nowhere warm to go to eat your lunch. The new design is potentially even worse.

Failure to effectively consult. No one has been consulted. Not the teachers, pupils nor parents. The consultation so far has a box ticking exercise, not a listening one. This needs to change. The concerns raised today are not new. This has been ongoing for 3 years, we have been talking about this for 3 years.

What now? We want to find a positive way forward. This is £50m of local tax payers' money. This is the largest build we've seen here in around 100 years. T Compton said he was pleased to see all the elected councillors here. We have the ability now to get it right, or to get it wrong. Thousands of

local people will notice. The Parent Council want it to be successful but the current plans do not meet that expectation.

The Parent Council's proposal is to bring together staff, pupils, parents and representatives of the wider community to work with the project team, and to work together, and they would like to discuss this with the PCC and ask for their support. We need openness and for the project team to listen and be receptive, and we need the councillors to be open to suggestions. It will be wrong if nobody listens. There are time pressures, and cost pressures, but we need to pause. The Parent Council are willing to facilitate. T Compton asked if all the councillors would give an undertaking not to allow the project to proceed any further without discussion with stakeholders. This seems only reasonable. Everyone knows compromise will be necessary but let us all make every effort to make this school right for the children.

The chairman asked about the sum of money that had been made available for the enhanced consultation, being £350,000. What has that been spent on? T Compton confirmed he is not sure where it had been spent. There were outlays for online content created because of Covid-19 but that is unlikely to have cost £350k.

The chairman asked if one of the councillors would take this on.

Cllr Pirone said they will all take it on. They all agree it was not a consultation. The councillors, as a group, have made it very very clear to the education officers and to the project team. The councillors have asked for further, and more, consultation and will not be happy if it does not happen. The councillors do have an undertaking from the project team that they will do that and they want to see what that consultation looks like. The parent council has the undertaking from the councillors as requested. Planning on this scale will need some compromises but it's also about listening to concerns and taking the concerns on board. The councillors are committed and the

Parent Council has their support. It is important for all to sit down and plan the best school we can. The Parent Council has the councillors' agreement that they will be listened to. They may not agree with everything that is said to them and officers may not like or agree with everything that's put to them, but this is their job as elected representatives, and they will find a way forward.

Cllr Tatler pointed out that this is not just a school for Peebles but a school for across Tweeddale. He agreed with everything Cllr Pirone said. The chairman said that concerns that had been given to him had come from other areas too. Cllr Tatler said, for balance, we have to appreciate the Renwick team held up their hands and said the consultation was not good. They are willing to do it again, and speak to any groups. We need to remember we only have a finite space and a finite budget, but we need to make sure it's right. The chairman pointed out that even now, following the fire, there is the ability to have different sizes of music groups, and assemblies. They still have a hall that takes 500-600 people. If at end of the new process there is no ability, as before, the school is belittled. SBC will never be forgiven for spending £50m and the facilities found to be inadequate. Cllr Tatler agreed.

The chairman said that there had been a view that the consultations were adequate. We all agree now they were not. Going forward, we should add every point raised in a spreadsheet and ensure it is addressed, this needs to be done urgently. T Compton said they have already started that and happy to share that.

Cllr Tatler said it would be useful to have a record of the work done over last 4 years. He remembers this consultation process starting in 2018, before the fire. We talked about how we needed a new High School, but there was a 10 year waiting list for a new school, so this is not the starting point of the process. Somewhere along the line it has got derailed, but now we need to get everyone back on track.

Cllr Douglas said there is innovative use of space put in there by the designers. Jedburgh High School is a good example of innovative use of space. Jedburgh HS will extend an invitation for groups to go and look at it. T Compton said the Parent Council did go to see Jedburgh HS but was disappointed at not being allowed to attend during the school day, which meant that they could not hear the issues they had concerns about, in the open plan areas. He would like to go again. Jedburgh HS is big, but Peebles HS is much bigger.

H Young asked if anyone can clarify, or find out, about the acoustics and open plan. There have been a number of parents concerned about the open plan particularly for sensory-impaired children, who may be disadvantaged. This may fall under the Equality Act and even be discriminatory. They would need to show compliance. Has an Equality Impact Assessment been done? And, if so, can we have a copy of it? Cllr Tatler said there are areas that are enclosed for those with additional learning needs. It is not all open plan, and there are enclosed spaces. Acoustic experts are doing tests and assessments. Cllr Pirone agreed to check, but she was sure that they would not be allowed to open a school without everything being checked.

T Compton wanted to confirm that two of the Cllrs have agreed there will be a better consultation, and that the consultation should be transformative. He asked that there is a check point before the school is built and that the stake holders are happy to proceed. Can the Cllrs give him this assurance? All the Cllrs said yes. T Compton thanked everyone for their time. The chairman asked if everyone was happy to support the Parent Council and everyone said yes.

M Bruce asked if we can make this a standing item on the agenda as it is so important? Cllr Tatler will ask Steven Renwick to come and talk to the PCC.

Treasurer's report: This had been circulated and covered in the AGM. Nothing to add.

Planning report: The report had been circulated by the Chairman. Tweedbridge Court. The rubble will stay until they start building. Milne & Pickles have had their licence granted. Castle Venlaw and Edderston Farm, still no updates.

The chairman will be standing down from SBCCN and if no one is willing to take this on we will not be represented. After tonight there will be no Tweeddale representative.

Parking working group: The chairman had a question, that he directed to Cllr Tatler. Greenside Car Park is common good. Where has the money that's been taken going?

Cllr Tatler said it is a good question and does not know why that anomaly exists but he is going to try and find out at the next Common Good meeting. The Chairman asked if we could find out where it's gone, how much it is and to transfer it back to Common Good. Cllr Tatler said in respect of parking, if we're looking at off street car parking, if we look at 2015 when we changed the way it was charged it done not simply from financial point of view. It was about traffic management in the town and it was what effect changing the charges to off street car parking has on street car parking. If you put charges up in car park, drivers go and find another space. So it's not just a financial consideration. The chairman said that is accepted, but there are new issues such as the overnight campervans. Cllr

Tatler pointed out that Peebles has been benefitting for some time as the agreement to raise the charge to 50p last year has not been implemented yet.

CIT: The chairman said we have discussed the CIT and that he had asked S Coe to join us a co-optee. S Coe will report back to us.

Cllr Tatler: said he could bring us up to date as he attended a recent meeting. They had been looking at putting together a brief for the facilitator. Beyond the tours that are happening next week and the event on 27 November, the next stage is to get a facilitator to do a piece of work looking at outcomes of what we expect with this process, and the work that the facilitator is going to do to get to those outcomes. There is a draft brief will go to the next meeting on 16 November. They are also meeting with the beneficiaries to look at work on the Burgh Hall ceiling.

Puffin Crossing: This was discussed earlier in the meeting, and most of the PCC agrees that the crossing is more dangerous now than it was before. J Shearer does not agree, she finds the crossing easier. Cllrs Tatler and Pirone also said they have had a number of the community approach them to say they think it's really good.

Peebles Community Trust: this has been covered by M Bruce in his report.

AOB: Everyone now has Jeremy Cunningham's report regarding school buses. Cllr Pirone said school transport officers met with J Cunningham and had had a good discussion. The school transport officers said they would be willing to come to speak to the PCC. The chairman invited feedback but thought that the conversation should start with the school Parent Council. Cllr Pirone said she would feed that back. Cllr Tatler mentioned this should also be taken into the review of transport and traffic. G Macdonald suggested there would be no harm in accepting the offer for them to come and present. The chairman said we would only get the view from the SBC in that respect and would need J Cunningham to attend too. A Snoddy reminded the PCC that we have a lot of guests attending meetings over the next few months. T Compton said he would welcome a copy of the report and A Snoddy said she would forward that to him. T Compton invited a member of the PCC to the Parent Council meeting when they discuss school transport.

A Snoddy wanted to say the PCC had received some very supportive comments since the resignations of our chairman and vice chairman were announced.

Cllr Small said he had been invited to the Jedburgh campus whilst the children were at school and it was beautiful and well accepted by the teachers.

S Coe asked about the Jedburgh performance space? T Compton said it had a hall, yes and he had seen a picture of it. It is double height space. As it is a 3-18 campus it has a variety of spaces.

H Young asked Cllr Pirone about the speed guns. Cllr Pirone said she was still working on it, Community Speedwatch, with the police. It will take time to set up, but she is keen to proceed.

G Macdonald mentioned prescriptions. There appear to have been no issues the last few months. Good feedback only. Bus drivers can provide first aid, if anyone requires it. She wanted to recognise that Garry and Lindsay Rennie from Peebles Auction House along with Joyce Finlayson have put a new defibrillator at Halyrude Court. Also that it would be a good idea to put a pedestrian crossing of some description at Horsburgh to Glentress. The chairman pointed out that Cllr Pirone is pushing for warning signs on both sides, and the chairman had supported this. Cllr Pirone also confirmed that

following a recent road traffic accident near Eshiels involving a young person, the roads department and traffic management officers are looking at the placing of bus stops.

Cllr Tatler handed out leaflets for everyone to distribute, to assist with the Foodbank information.

J Brown had attended the meeting to ask about the weeds and rubbish on the streets. Who's going to clean the streets during the cycling world championships? He picks up rubbish. In Cuddyside the bollards have been painted but there is lots of moss and weeds below, on the road, and it does not get cleaned. Cllr Tatler said that the team do the best they can and suggested that J Brown contact SBC and report it. A Snoddy agreed to also contact the team.

A Snoddy wanted to point out that this is the 300th meeting. She also recommended to everyone a programme on the BBC Radio 4 called Flight of Ospreys which featured our ospreys in Glentress.

The meeting finished at 9.05pm and the next meeting will be on Thursday 8 December at 7pm.