



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 308th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 13 July 2023 at 7pm in the Burgh Hall, Peebles. The meeting was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.

Present: A Snoddy (Secretary), F Richardson, G MacDonald, G Mackie (Vice Chairman and Treasurer), G Ramsay, M Bruce, P Maudsley (Chairman), Cllr Pirone, Cllr Tatler, Cllr Thomson.

In attendance: M Davey of the Peeblesshire News; Police Constable V Carsley, Superintendent A Hall and Sergeant J Harrison from Police Scotland; M Piper of Destination Tweed.

Members of the Public: D Bilsland, I Bilsland, G Bowie, J Miroslaw, C Petersen, L Petersen, G Powell-Evans, K Young.

Apologies: J Crawley, H Young, S Coe, J Wilson, S Hamilton, S Watson, J Shearer, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Begg, Cllr Small.

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting would be recorded for the purposes of minute taking and reporting.

The Chairman announced that he had accepted Chris Forsyth's resignation from the Community Council, due to personal reasons, and said the Community Council was sad to see him leave and thanked him for all his hard work over the years.

Peebles Community Council is actively looking for new members and if anyone is interested in joining, they should contact our Secretary on secretary@ccrbpeebles.co.uk.

Presentation: Destination Tweed

Marina Piper, the Project Manager from Destination Tweed, was in attendance to give an update on what is happening. M Piper gave a slide presentation, and a copy of the presentation is available from secretary@ccrbpeebles.co.uk.

The update included:

Destination Tweed's vision, their partners and projects. M Piper talked about the economy, the community, and the environment. She introduced the project delivery team and the river's trail. There were stories from the Tweed together with updates on the threads including the Southern Uplands Partnership and the audio-visual project. There was an update on the land and water management, excavation and surveys done. M Piper gave an update on funding. There were further slides on the wildlife, woodlands, designed landscapes, and planting including a piece about pollinators with Buglife Scotland. Biggar Water was mentioned, and M Piper talked about the various volunteer days and workshops that had been set up.

The Chairman referred to reports of walkers having altercations with cyclists on the multi-use path. It was important for the public to acknowledge it is a multi-use path, not strictly a cycling path, and clear signage should be considered. M Piper agreed to pass these comments on.

G Powell-Evans was in attendance, with some of the residents from the immediate vicinity of the proposed crossing on Innerleithen Road, Peebles, because they had real concerns they wanted to raise with M Piper about the works and crossing on Innerleithen Road at the Hydro Hotel entrance. They felt that there were several hazards that would need to be looked at in more detail. These issues had been raised by the group, in writing, with M Piper already, and she acknowledged this and said she understands their concerns.

Destination Tweed are working with the designer at SBC to tweak the plans following the group's feedback. Time was allowed for a discussion where the members of the public explained why they were unhappy with the current proposals. The Chairman agreed the PCC would take a closer look at the proposals and the PCC could have a vote at the next meeting. Cllr Pirone also requested sight of the correspondence between the members of the public and Destination Tweed, together with their names and addresses, and agreed to read it.

Open forum: nothing.

Approval of the Minutes of 8 June 2023 as amended: G Ramsay proposed, and G Macdonald seconded.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

Tweed Island: A Snoddy gave an update about the gravel island in the Tweed. Following correspondence from various parties it was concluded that the responsibility for the island falls to the town and not the Crown. SBC are satisfied that it has not increased in size since 2009 and that it is relatively stable, and there are no concerns it might exacerbate flooding. The Common Good will be asked if debris can be cleared from it. Cllr Tatler agreed to put it on the Common Good agenda for debate.

Police report: The police report had been circulated and the PCC welcomed three visitors from Police Scotland: Police Constable V Carsley, Superintendent A Hall, and Sergeant J Harrison. Sgt Harrison is the community police officer, although based in Galashiels he covers a large area in the Scottish Borders including Peebles.

The Chairman pointed out that the level of violence seems to have increased over the last 6 months, there were 6 assaults in the June report, and it appeared to be a lot higher than in the past. There was a perception that anti-social behaviour and vandalism was on the increase and members of the public had brought this to the PCC's attention. There had been discussion across social media. The Chairman asked the attending officers what their intentions were.

Sgt Harrison said he was not aware of previous figures so could not comment, but was aware there were problems to address now. The previous weekend there had been a robbery and subsequently someone had been charged with robbery and assault. The Police would be charging others in due course and were speaking to witnesses. Sgt Harrison said that there had been meetings with all agencies and there is often frustration in the length of time it takes to conclude cases. Cases are outwith Police Scotland's hands once they go to the Children's Reporter.

Going forward they need to assess how best to address the youth disorder in Peebles. The Police know there is a core group, which is small number of individuals, and he is confident the Police can deal with it. Sgt Harrison said it is important that people report everything. There is sometimes a fear to report because of potential repercussions. He would like to reassure the community that it is safe to report and encouraged the community to do so.

There was a discussion around how many officers are available for Peebles at weekends. Superintendent Hall said that the area covered is from West Linton to Eyemouth and this is a huge challenge, but they deployed officers where required. They were now able to bring officers in from other divisions when necessary. He said that if more officers were needed in Peebles, for example if there is an incident, they would get them.

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CLlr Pirone said that with the multi-partnership approach sometimes procedures can be slow and some of the legislation needs to be looked at. The police officers are as frustrated as everyone else. There will be extra patrols over the weekend coming for reassurance. The partnership does work well but it is too slow. Police officer S Moody, youth worker, has a programme of workshops and events over the summer and is doing exceptionally good work.

M Bruce enquired about the ASB orders that SBC can request urgently from a Sheriff to give the police immediate permission to act, for example, with dealing with children roaming the streets late at night. Sgt Harrison said it's a long process, and these orders are not handed down by Sheriffs on the same night. Sgt Harrison wanted to point out that these are 12- and 13-year-old children who often do not have any parental guidance as we know it. To them it is normalised behaviour, and this is why it is important to work with the partnership and with Police officer S Moody to divert the core group from the wider group. Some members of the community see this as rewarding these children but that is not the case. The Chair suggested an article written by the police on this for the Peebles Life would be beneficial.

CLlt Tatler said that it was interesting how CCTV was so pivotal in this recent incident as it provided helpful evidence. Sgt Harrison said that CCTV can help. Superintendent Hall said that he wanted to make a plea to the people of Peebles saying, if you are having issues please come forward. Now, people are not making reports and the police cannot deal with issues if there are no reports. He thinks it might be because people are fearful. He said reports can be made anonymously, although the police do prefer statements. He said that Peebles is a safe town.

The Chair reported there had been street pastors out during Beltane and the pastors had given positive feedback. Youths appear more likely to chat to the pastors than to the police. Putting street pastors in Peebles will happen, but it is going to take time.

The Chair shared a press article that stated that having a bobby on the beat in Carlisle had reduced ASB by 47%. Superintendent Hall confirmed that PC Carsley is Peebles' bobby on the beat, as is Officer S Moody.

Acoustics: It was discussed, and agreed by all, that the acoustics in the Burgh Hall are poor and that an alternative venue may have to be considered.

Chairman's report: This had been circulated.

Town maintenance: There are some items in Tweeddale East that would justify walk a walk around from the SBC Councillors. For example, a wall on the south side of the Tweed adjacent to the Tweed Bridge Eildon Site had collapsed. This is now three times the problem than it was when first reported and is being vandalised. CLlr Thomson confirmed that a priority list will be drawn up.

Public toilets: There has been a recent survey of toilets and SBC will consider supporting them. They are expensive to maintain and the Chair does not understand why Peebles has a problem with vandalism in the local toilets when other areas do not. G Macdonald pointed out that not having public conveniences in Peebles would deter visitors, particularly families. The Chair suggested finding alternatives such as using the Eastgate Theatre for toilets and asking SBC for a contribution towards maintenance, for example.

NHS Borders meeting. The Chair had attended the recent NHS Borders meeting in the Burgh Hall, however the sound had been so bad that it was difficult to hear what was being discussed and some members of the public had left. There was an action tracker for the meeting but it only had 4 items on it and this seemed very thin when considering that this is the NHS Borders Executive.

Treasurer's report. G Mackie had circulated the treasurer's report and had nothing to add.

SBC Councillors' Reports

Cllr Pirone had been working around the issues with ASB mostly. She had attended the Victoria Park consultation and had found that 78% were in favour of a shelter. The funding was in place. They hope to host a further engagement session in August. She'd been involved with the recent funding discussions with the Eastgate Theatre. Things were not looking good for them, and many of the problems had existed for some time. Cllr Pirone was pushing forward with Speedwatch together with Police Scotland and more information would be coming out around that.

Cllr Tatler said that he had also attended the engagement session in Victoria Park which had been good. The shelter had been talked about as well as toilets and lighting. There was overwhelming agreement for the lighting, 80% in favour. He acknowledged there is a small group who have concerns where the lighting is nearest to them. They are going to look into low level lighting, which had not been looked at before. He pointed out that there are works scheduled for the road bridge in early September which will involve temporary traffic lights, for three way traffic, over a period of three days. These would be manually operated lights. This is going to cause some disruption.

Cllr Thomson had two things to mention, firstly the retailers had been in touch regarding missed refuse collections. The bins had been collected now. The cause had been staff shortages. There were new vehicles which would assist but staff shortages are still a problem. She also said that the trees and bushes on the road between Peebles and Galashiels was reducing visibility on the road and this was going to be checked and dealt with.

Planning:

The Local Development Plan 2 had been approved. Local resident M Marshall had made a lot of recommendations to debate with the reporter regarding ecology and green initiatives. The changes the reporter wanted are good. Cllr Tatler had also had a constructive meeting with M Marshall.

Peebles High School New Build: There had been a lot of pressure from the Parent Council and, as a result, SBC had made a large number of changes which were mostly good. There are still issues outstanding. S Coe has raised his concerns. Cllr Thomson said recent comparisons, using overlay drawings, were incorrect and S Renwick was going to produce a revised, accurate, version. A copy will be sent to the Chairman. Cllr Thomson confirmed there will be no retained buildings left on site. There are no funds to do this. The build is slightly behind because of the weather but it is predicted that it will catch up. The Chairman said that if there are no buildings going to be retained then it needs to be explained why so the community is clear as to the reasons. Cllr Pirone repeated that there is no more funding available.

New planning applications: There is only one that might invite comment and that is for the 71 houses on March Street. If anyone has any comments, please pass to the Chairman. G Macdonald said that there is concern with increased traffic on March Street following the proposed new developments. The Chairman confirmed he had raised concerns already regarding Peebles' capacity to absorb more traffic. His view is that they cannot keep adding to the town without planning effectively and understanding the potential impact in advance. The mini roundabout by the Parish Church is almost at 100% capacity.

Chambers Institution Trust: Cllr Tatler said they had received complaints about the acoustics and were working with Live Borders to find a short-term improvement. Cllr Tatler said there had been water ingress in the hall which needed to be fixed. It was agreed to put Susan Mitchell's paintings on the agenda for the next meeting. The Chair said the new hall was beautiful and everyone agreed.

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Peebles Community Trust: The report had been circulated. There is still a lot of work to be done.

Parking group: Cllr Tatler said there had been a good meeting recently where they had resolved a lot of issues and that everything would be implemented by next spring. The minutes from last meeting can be circulated. The Chair asked if SBC had paid the parking money from Greenside Car Park to the Common Good? Cllr Tatler confirmed he's still pursuing it. There was a discussion around the parking charges in the town, but no decisions about the future.

Town bus service: G Macdonald said there had been a good meeting with all relevant parties in attendance. They'd received 140 returned questionnaires which demonstrated without doubt that the community wanted the service. The bus company will look closer at timings and producing paper timetables. It's up to the community to make good use of the service. Cllr Tatler confirmed the bus company has listened. The Chair agreed that this had been a good piece of work. L Scott of Peebles Pensioners has also made a good contribution.

Peebles in Bloom: This is all on schedule. Thanks to the team for organising thus far. The PCC councillors would be out and about in Peebles from 15 to 23 July looking at the gardens.

AOB: The Chair reminded councillors that Live Borders are arranging a drop in consultation on 31 July. Also, the Tour O The Borders cycling event is happening on 3 September.

Do we want to order 20mph stickers for wheelie bins? Yes was the consensus. A Snoddy will contact SBC.

M Bruce is appalled at the state of the west side of the road bridge, it is very overgrown.

G Macdonald raised a concern because the classroom lights are left on overnight at Halyrude Primary School. Cllr Pirone agreed to find out why. The public path from Rosetta Road to Eliot Street has a wall on one side that is being held together by braces, but is crumbling badly. Cllr Thomson agreed to pick this up.

The meeting finished at 9.05pm.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 10 August 2023 at 7pm in Burgh Hall, Peebles.