



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 313th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 14 December 2023 at 7pm in the Burgh Chamber, Peebles. The meeting was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.

Present: P Maudsley (Chairman), A Snoddy (Secretary), G Mackie (Vice Chairman and Treasurer), J Shearer, A Mackenzie, G Ramsay, H Young, G MacDonald, J Wilson, L Lovell-Henderson, S Coe, Cllr Small, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Tatler and Cllr Thomson.

In attendance: M Davey of the Peeblesshire News.

Members of the Public: S Mackay.

Apologies: M Bruce, F Richardson, S Watson, Cllr Begg, PC Carsley.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was recorded for the purposes of minuting and reporting.

Open Forum: Nothing.

Approval of the Minutes of 9 November 2023: S Coe proposed, and G Ramsay seconded.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

Badges for Community Councillors: Enamel badges were too expensive. A Snoddy has bought some cheaper alternatives. There are also some lanyards available.

Peebles Parking Fund awards: Why are these taking so long to be paid to local groups? The Chair had emailed Cllr Tatler who has chased SBC and is also finding it frustrating.

Chairman's Report: The Chairman had circulated his report.

Flooding: The chair had attended two meetings on flooding, one in Peebles with Cllr Tatler, Paul Spence and others. The second meeting was hosted by Colin Kerr in Walkerburn. This was very positive, and documentation has been circulated. There is now a bigger store for sandbags at Walker's Haugh and more sandbags. The Peebles Resilience group are proposing going door-to-door to find out how prepared the community is and to advise with preparation. A Snoddy said she hoped that the role of the flood group was to supplement SBC's responsibilities and not replace them. The Chairman agreed but said the community support was important as police and other emergency services were very limited and that in a major flood would be overloaded as the area to be covered includes the whole Tweed river catchment area. G Macdonald asked about the walkie-talkies and if there were now sufficient sandbags? The Chair said there are around 600 sandbags, but Peebles has asked for an additional 400. They are waiting for an update on the walkie-talkies. The groups are liaising with one another about funding and what that might support. It is a large operational project.

Planning report: The Chairman had circulated his report. G Macdonald asked why there has been no update for Tweed Bridge Court? This is because Eildon purchased the site but rising costs have prevented the development moving forward. The Chair noted that the wall adjacent to the site alongside the Tweed is falling

down. This is Eildon's responsibility, and it should be fixed as it is almost a year since it originally collapsed. This is a disgrace. A Snoddy agreed to write to Eildon again on behalf of the PCC. G Macdonald asked for an update on the Baptist Church. Cllr Tatler confirmed the site is now for sale.

Leithenwater Wind Energy Project: A public consultation event was held in Peebles Rugby Club on 15 November. The Chairman is supportive of this development. The visual impact may not be excessive and there is a strong possibility of healthy cash returns to be shared by the adjacent communities.

Police Report: The police report had been circulated. Cllr Pirone confirmed that the police are planning to do more patrols this weekend following a recent assault.

Peebles Youth Voice: M Bruce had circulated his report. L Lovell-Henderson confirmed that the work that Peebles Youth Voice was doing was acknowledged by those he talked to as hugely positive for the local young people involved. The Chairman pointed out how important consistent funding is. Groups working with young people had to know that they would be supported throughout the year and not on a stop-start basis. Cllr Pirone is already pushing for SBC to look at youth work and continuity of funding.

Cllr Reports:

Cllr Begg: Old School House on School Brae. Development is welcomed but this is currently held up by tracking down the legal owner. S Coe said that there are some legal issues to be resolved and hopefully a survey of the building will be done soon. There was a meeting with M Bruce and some of the Cllrs. M Bruce had raised concerns about safety. A letter was sent to SBC from the collective community groups offering assistance. SBC's legal officer has confirmed the legal department is looking at the case and will track down the legal owner and establish the legal status. Cllr Begg will ensure that it gets moved forward. Cllr Begg had noted the recent missed bin collections which was down to old vehicles breaking down. Cllr Pirone confirmed six new vehicles are on order. A Mackenzie said there was a particular issue on George Street where some of the bins had been there for a month. Cllr Begg is happy with what has been covered on the NHS consultations. He'd attended a constructive meeting with the Common Good. He will be having more surgeries in Tesco in Peebles. The young people of Peebles High School came across as clever and enthusiastic at a recent careers event.

Cllr Small: Cllr Small reiterated what Cllr Begg had reported. He had been involved with the same items.

Cllr Thomson: There is a meeting regarding the cycle path at Hydro Gardens next week and Cllr Thomson will update the PCC in due course. She has also had a lot of correspondence from residents regarding the bins.

Cllr Douglas: Funding of community councils had been looked at and it was agreed that it would rise by 10%. It will be 3 years until the next review. It's been 14 years since the last review. There is other funding available to community councils. The Chairman declared his disappointment in the funding increase as it is woeful in real inflationary terms. The SBC group had considered how to maintain the present financial position. They had not thought that community councils are severely restricted now and that maintaining the status quo does not redress the major deterioration in our finances since 2009. Cllr Douglas agreed and said that he, Cllr Tatler and Cllr Pirone are all on the committee looking at the next SBC budget. Decisions are dependent on the Scottish Government's budget which will be announced shortly. However, tough decisions were inevitable. Live Borders have just been awarded £1.4m and this is having an impact on SBC's financial commitments. The proposal to designate part of the south of Scotland as a Scottish National Park is not going ahead. The body promoting a Borders National Park are looking at wider options to see what might suit different areas. There will be a lot of consultations ahead. Each community should have their own representative.

Cllr Tatler: The initiative to install lights and a shelter in Victoria Park is going ahead. This includes inset lights in the paths which are solar powered. There has been discussion around an exhibition about the Common Good which might tie in with the anniversary of King David's accession next summer. Destination Tweed, the next

stage will focus on the section from Fotheringham Bridge to the Gytes. Once the plans are in place there will be further consultations. Flooding: as previously mentioned, there have been discussions to see if some of the barriers from Hawick can be used in Peebles. The SBC budget is going to be challenging. Inflation is still high. There is going to be a meeting regarding the town bus service in January following up all the work done to date. The Chairman pointed out how important it is for the flood officer to assess and make the decision as to where to place flood barriers, this is not something for local community groups to do due to issues of liability.

Cllr Pirone: The budget is very challenging and there is a survey available for the public to take part in and it is critical for them to let SBC know what is important to them. The money awarded to Live Borders is to stabilise and support them. There is a lot of work to be done but there is a plan in (the Chair and one other person considered the questionnaire poor). Cllr Pirone encouraged everyone to use the leisure facilities. Cllr Pirone had had a meeting with the police and the Traders Association and is looking at ways to support the Traders Association. Priorsford Primary has a new head teacher starting in the new year. Reports of ASB is down across the Borders which is good news. However, domestic abuse cases have risen. Cllr Pirone asked that anyone who is worried about themselves, a friend or a relative, should seek assistance. Monday food waste collections will be on 27 December, not on Christmas Day.

Cllr Tatler: It was raised in the last Minutes about the empty shop premises in the High Street. There is an incoming tenant now. There has been no update on the development of the school construction programme, so there is a meeting scheduled for January for an update.

A Snoddy asked the Cllrs if there was anything they can do to encourage economic growth in the area? Cllr Pirone confirmed they have an administration plan on growth which talks about bringing business into the Borders. The Borders being in the middle of the UK is attractive to a lot of people. They work with Dumfries & Galloway to consider growth across the South of Scotland. It's about bringing new businesses into the area and supporting the existing businesses to grow. Also, to encourage more tourist-based growth. There is a lot of work going on around growth and regeneration. S Coe said it's very important that SBC utilises local businesses for procurement. The Chair noted that the Place Plans presently being produced as let by Crick Carleton must be taken into account in this respect.

Treasurer's Report: The report had been circulated. G Mackie said the balance is slightly under £350 which is the smallest it has been since he took over as Treasurer. He is expecting some receipts this month however, so there should be nothing to worry about.

Chambers Institution Trust: S Coe had circulated his report. The big news to be acknowledged is the funding support that has been awarded. The Trust will still need to prove to the Government what it needs the money for. The projects will be deliverable, and the money will be spent. The trustees are working with the councillors to build up the response and a fundraising consultant is now on-board. Once cleared there will be a large task ahead to be done within two years. This funding will cover the first phase only. Matched funding should be available and other awards could be applied for.

Peebles High School: S Coe had circulated his report. S Coe had had a helpful conversation with Chris Virtue, the acting Project Manager. C Virtue's team is looking at all the outstanding questions. The issue with the beam in the new assembly hall is a non-starter. There was a discussion as to how to mitigate some of the issues. Some things will not be part of the new build but part of the management of the building.

G Macdonald read out an email sent in from Alison Cormack, a member of the public who, as a wheelchair user, has very restricted access to the 3G pitch at Peebles High School to watch her children play football. She would like the issue to be discussed with the SBC Cllrs because in 2023 to not have accessibility is unacceptable.

Cllr Tatler has provided a response from SBC to the Chairman and Secretary of the PCC. There is disabled access by way of a ramp. They are also going to build a fence which will allow further access. There is limited space. However, SBC has gone back to the designers to ask them to create space and a viewing platform. A report is awaited.

H Young asked the Cllrs to remind SBC that they have a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments for people who have a disability. They also have a legal duty to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate unlawful discrimination. This goes back to the initial problem when over a year ago H Young had asked for an Equality Impact Assessment for the school, and none had been produced. No consideration had been given in the planning and design of the school to ensure that all people were accommodated for, and their needs met. Now they're having to retro fit to take this into account. The Chairman said it would be helpful to know the name of the person at SBC who was responsible for overseeing the legal compliance for equality.

Peebles Community Trust: M Bruce's report has been circulated. They are all working very hard in the background and doing what they can with the various projects. Funding is still an issue. They are looking at taking on the School Brae toilets.

AOB

The PCC has been sent 100 pages of drafted rules and regulations for Community Councils from SBC. A Snoddy, P Maudsley, G Mackie and F Richardson are in the process of reviewing them.

The PCC will use the Eastgate Theatre's postal address with immediate effect.

P Maudsley, G Mackie and A Snoddy attended the AGM of the Eastgate Theatre. It is reassuring to see they have a new Board and we all wish them well. Everyone should do what they can to support them.

F Richardson had written an excellent article in for the Peebles Life on behalf of PCC this month. The Chairman has written an article for February's edition having missed the cutoff for January's.

Borders Community Action had only given a few hours' notice to attend their recent meeting and unfortunately due to the short notice no one could attend. The Chair considered this oversight unfortunate.

The PCC wants someone to create the PCC website and keep it up to date. The Chair noted that this will require grant aid as our £1,365 per annum is incapable of supporting the project and individuals don't have the time or skills necessary to do it inhouse. As discussed earlier in the meeting, SBC may have a solution, and we now need to wait before making any decisions. Cllr Douglas said he did not know what the timeline is. The SBC website is under construction now. He will ask them about our website.

J Shearer had been speaking to one of the bin men who had told her he collects large amounts of drug paraphernalia from under Tweed Bridge. Cllr Pirone agreed to report this.

A Mackenzie said that he had received positive feedback from some residents of Bonnington Road about the road re-surfacing. Also, he'd been asked why members of the Rugby Club who trained in the hut at Haylodge Park had been parking there? Should they not park in the car park? Lastly, as SBC cannot say where the new cemetery is going to be, can they make public where they have looked in the past and where they are looking at now? Cllr Tatler will take the questions back to SBC.

G Macdonald said that Laura Scott, Peebles Pensioners, had asked about access to the Burgh Hall. When will the acoustics be improved so they can get back in? Cllr Tatler said hopefully in 4-6 weeks' time. Also, from the local access group, parking on the pavements is a problem. What can we do about it? Cllr Tatler said a photo can be taken and sent to Police Scotland. It can be done anonymously on the website, or via Crimestoppers,

and is better than phoning 101. It is now illegal to park on pavements, and fines will be issued. A note in the Peeblesshire News to warn the public would be helpful.

Cllr Small: the DVLA is wheel-clamping vehicles in the Borders that are not road taxed.

Cllr Thomson: Kingsland Primary School is in discussion with SBC about the narrow pavement that the children are walking down. It is being investigated.

H Young said that it was icy recently and the area near Haylodge Park was gritted, but not Fotheringham Bridge which was very slippery and dangerous. Cllr Tatler said it should be reported on the SBC website. The Chairman said this had been brought up before and that it requires a special type of salt/grit.

G Mackie mentioned the plaque that was knocked off the gold post box when hit by a car a couple of years ago. It has not been replaced. A Snoddy will the Press Office of the Royal Mail and raise it as an issue. G Mackie had also seen the tapestry in Galashiels recently and he thought it was wonderful. The Cllrs agreed and encouraged everyone to go to see it and support it.

The Chairman reminded everyone that this was the last meeting of the year and thanked everyone for all their hard work in 2023.

The meeting ended at 2058hrs.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 11 January at 7pm in the Burgh Chamber.