



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 316th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 14 March at 7pm in the Burgh Chamber, Peebles. The meeting was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.

Present: A Cormack, A Mackenzie, A Snoddy (Secretary), F Richardson, G MacDonald, G Mackie (Vice Chairman and Treasurer), G Ramsay, J Shearer, J Wilson, L Lovell-Henderson, M Bruce, Dr M Marshall, S Coe, S Mackay, S Watson, Cllr Begg, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Tatler.

In attendance: M Davey of the Peeblesshire News, K Guiney Chair of the Peebles Business and Retailers Association.

Members of the Public: Dr C McKay.

Apologies: P Maudsley (Chair), H Young, Cllr Small, Cllr Thomson.

Cllr Small was not in attendance due to ill health and Cllr Pirone agreed to pass on to him the PCC's best wishes for a speedy recovery.

The Vice Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was recorded for the purposes of minuting and reporting. The minutes will be published with names of the public unless requested otherwise. Third parties outwith the meeting will not be identified unless relevant.

Open forum. C McKay, a member of the public, spoke on behalf of the Save Kingsmeadows campaign. Granton's planning permission expired last week. In 2022 their plans for development involved chopping down around 50 trees in a conservation area. They have now made 3 applications for new permission without providing any information of what their future development plans are. It is important to understand what Granton are asking for. They are asking for new permission as their old permission has expired. The new permission for 5 more years is being requested on incredibly narrow technicalities. Planning legislation has materially changed in that planners now need to give significant weight to climate and nature crises when considering any development proposals. The 3 applications are asking for the same thing. Granton are claiming that the planners should only consider these narrow technicalities and that any public comments relating to the principle of the development are not relevant and not material. This is not the case. The group have spoken to experts, and it turns out once permission has expired planners can consider the overall affect and impact of granting a new permission and should grant permission on the current planning legislation. C McKay would like the PCC to object to the applications and tell them why it is important to consider the principle of development as well as the narrow conditions that Granton are asking to be changed. Objections matter. Over 175 objections have already been lodged. The woodland is important to the community.

Community Councillor M Marshall declared an interest with the campaign, but it was agreed that he did not have to leave the meeting.

S Coe said it appeared that the planners were simply abusing the system, section 42 should not be used for this purpose and agreed that it should be considered under current legislation. The PCC objected before, and they should object again. It was agreed the PCC would object and the Vice Chair said that the Chair is going to draft

an objection on behalf of the PCC. M Bruce pointed out that more objections would need to be made against the new application (i.e. in addition to the two from January) to make a difference.

Approval of the Minutes of 8 February 2024: Last month's minutes recorded that S Coe had written to SBC re the Old Schoolhouse. It was Cllr Begg who had written to SBC. Also, the Chairman had sent a letter to SBC regarding the Rosetta site, not tabled as was written in the draft minutes. The minutes were approved as amended. S Watson proposed, and M Bruce seconded.

PCC Survey: The Secretary had co-ordinated a survey on Saturday 17 February in Tesco and on the High Street in Peebles. The Secretary, G Macdonald, J Wilson, F Richardson, assisted by C McKay, had spoken to local residents to ask them what they liked about Peebles and what could be done to improve Peebles. C McKay made a superb job preparing a summary of the results which had been circulated, and which is available from the Secretary to anyone else who would like a copy. A secondary purpose was to raise the profile of the PCC. The responses speak for themselves, but popular responses were the community, the countryside, local walks for things they liked and things that were not so good were predicably potholes and lack of parking. The SBC Councillors were given a copy each so they can consider the responses to see if they can assist with any concerns that were given. J Wilson said that there were several visitors who were all very complimentary about the local shopping.

Matters arising from the last Minutes :

Tweedbridge Court Wall has now been repaired.

Live Borders: Jim Hutchison the Interim CEO has been invited to speak at the PCC's June meeting.

New PCC website: M Marshall has been creating a new website for the PCC which is almost ready to go live.

Bin the Litter: A Mackenzie is co-ordinating this event and has invited other organisations to get involved. The event is on Sunday 24 March from 9.45am. There will also be school children from Peebles involved.

The Old Schoolhouse, Tweed Green: S Coe confirmed that SBC has been written to again. The Debt Recovery Committee had met recently, and the matter was raised but they were unable to decide. It has been referred to the finance department, but nothing has come back yet. M Bruce said this issue never seems to move forward and is like pass-the-parcel. Cllr Begg agreed to follow up as this is a matter of safety as well as appearance, both important issues and we should be persistent and keep asking for updates.

Chairman's report: The report had been circulated. Potholes are still a concern. The Chairman had sent in his comments regarding the Council Plan and had received a positive response from SBC to those comments. Motorhomes and overnight parking were discussed. There is nowhere for them to park in Peebles and SBC should look to Fife, for example, at how they make provision for overnight parking for Motorhomes which generates revenue. Noone seemed to know why there is no provision in Peebles. Cllr Pirone said the new tourism strategy group is looking at camper van parking for the whole of the Borders. Cllr Tatler will put it on the Common Good agenda. A Mackenzie thought that there was some sort of national funding available for facilities for motorhomes.

J Wilson asked what the PCC could do to support The Chairman, as he is recuperating. We should all ensure we help out where we can.

Planning report: The report had been circulated (available on the portal). New March Street Mills application 24/00181/FUL for an additional 12 flats plus 2 houses, to satisfy the requirement for affordable housing under 23/00884/FUL (50 units). Clarification had been received that "the 14 units shown on the application will all be affordable housing".

It was discussed and there is no objection from PCC and it should be supported on the basis that the properties are “affordable”.

Ukrainian meeting: M Marshall had represented the PCC at a recent meeting with the local Ukrainian refugees. Cllrs Pirone and Tatler had also attended. Scottish government’s hotels scheme funding is being reduced. The Ukrainian refugees are being moved out of the local hotels and housing is being sourced for them. Most of them want to stay in the local area but this is difficult as there is a shortage of accommodation. Meanwhile, no one will be removed from the hotels until accommodation has been found.

M Marshall had attended a planning meeting with SBC. We should aim to get the local place plan (LPP) registered by 2026, which is when SBC expect to feed LPPs into the next development plan. S Coe said we need to look to the future.

Police report: The report had arrived in good time and had been circulated. M Bruce thanked G Macdonald for her regular feedback and that he appreciated her support. Otherwise, he said there was nothing to follow up, the report had been neutral.

Peebles Youth Voice: The report had been circulated. M Bruce confirmed the groundwork has been done in Victoria Park for the new shelter and the official opening ceremony is on 27 March. He thanked the Cllrs for all their support. Cllr Pirone said that a bike rack is also going in. L Lovell-Henderson said the local youth are very happy about the shelter, and that they have been listened to. There is a survey about to be launched on behalf the young people to get feedback on what they want.

Peebles Community Trust: The report had been circulated. M Bruce confirmed they are working towards their AGM in May.

SBC Councillor Reports

Cllr Tatler: Equality impact assessments: H Young and the Chairman will look at the information sent and will consider the information on behalf of PCC and respond in due course, as H Young is not in attendance. Town Bus review: Border Buses now have a timetable and a route. They will promote the service on stops and via paper timetables. A Cormack pointed out that it is impossible for wheelchair users to alight on the High Street, outside Celebrations. The Secretary agreed to write to SBC to ask if the pavement can be built out at that point. Trees in Victoria Park: two trees had snapped, but they were dead so have now been removed. They will be replaced in another area of the park. Someone ought to get in touch with the Beltane Committee to ask where they would like to put the replacement. Haylodge Park: there had been complaints about council workers driving on the grass. They have been doing this because of the potholes on the path. The potholes were reported last year but were not fixed. They are listed to be fixed.

Cllr Tatler read a statement out to the PCC.

STATEMENT REGARDING COMPLAINTS MADE TO STANDARDS COMMISSION

“Some of you may have seen a report in the media in the last week about an “unnamed” Councillor in Tweeddale who has been cleared of breaching the Councillors Code of Conduct. The Councillor mentioned was me, and I am letting you know this partly to avoid any unnecessary speculation for my fellow Tweeddale Councillors and to draw a line under this episode publicly.

The complaints made against me were entirely unfounded and unwarranted, and, in my opinion frankly vexatious. They were completely dismissed by both the Ethical Standards Commissioner and the Standards Commission of Scotland, who confirmed that I did not have a case to answer.

Although I have been completely exonerated, it has been an unpleasant and distressing experience which has taken valuable time and attention away from serving my constituents in Tweeddale.

The issue that seems to have initiated these complaints relates to the non-charging for the use of Common Good land and this has previously been raised and discussed by this Community Council. In particular, there has been conversation here about certain cycling events. I would like to take this chance to also let you know that since my business circumstances have now changed, I anticipate that I will no longer have any cause to remove myself from discussions on this topic by declaring an interest. I will therefore be actively involved in future deliberations and decision-making on this subject.

Finally, this whole episode should serve as a reminder to both SBC Councillors and Community Councillors that we all sign up to a Code of Conduct which we must abide by. I am reassured that when such spurious complaints were made against me, there was a robust and efficient process in place that ultimately ensured the truth prevailed."

The Secretary asked about the parking in Haylodge park. Cllr Tatler confirmed that this is being investigated. The Secretary also asked about the "finger" tourist signs, several of which are in the wrong position, and it was agreed she would email Campbell Johnstone of SBC to ask if he and his team could correct them. She also asked for an update on the weeds on Tweed Bridge. Cllr Tatler confirmed the bridge was inspected recently and, as a result, there is going to be some minor works done to the bridge which will include addressing the weeds.

The Secretary asked for an update regarding the sale of the Baptist Church. Cllr Tatler confirmed the sale was being progressed. A local resident is concerned about the legal ownership of the land. Cllr Tatler confirmed the Baptist Church has legal deeds to the land.

Cllr Begg: Cllr Begg had attended the recent Go Tweed Valley AGM and commended them for their tourism initiatives. Peebles Retailers Association – everyone should bear in mind how precarious local High Street businesses are, and they should not be taken for granted. There is an independent shopping day organised and funded by the local retailers on 25 May. K Guiney, Chairperson of the Retailers Association, said this is not just for shopping they are going to be creating a community event. Oor Space Youthy have an event on the same day, and the Peebles Makers Market is also going to join in to tie it all together. This is a golden opportunity to showcase Peebles. There will be lots of entertainment.

Cllr Begg encouraged everyone to continue to recycle as much as they can. Check out the Levenseat website which has videos showing what happens to our waste and it is educational: <https://levenseat.co.uk>. The Secretary asked again about the local bin collection timetable that is still not available to be downloaded from the SBC website, although there is information online. Cllr Begg agreed to find out. He is also going to meet with all his fellow Councillors to discuss the bus routes 93 and 91. Eddleston Water Project; he is going to be meeting with the University of Dundee team to look at the evidence and to consider the natural flood defences.

Cllr Begg did not have time to discuss the following but asked for it to be added to the Minutes:

- 1. Cllr Robin Tatler and I will be holding our next surgery at 1800 on Monday 8th April at Peebles Tesco*
- 2. I met with the Eastgate team and am supportive of their fundraising efforts including the 'Hands Up for the Eastgate Theatre' campaign. Hands Up! for the Eastgate Theatre – Eastgate Theatre (eastgatearts.com)*

Cllr Pirone: Cllr Pirone is in discussion with Borders Buses to look at the x62 timetable, particularly the evening buses. She will come back to us with updates. The Peebles Cemetery is reaching capacity and there is an SBC team looking at other sites and they welcome any suggestions. Council tax bills have been issued, and because of the Scottish Government's freeze on Council Tax there is less money in the budget. Budget talks are continuing. The Cllrs welcome any constructive input as to how they should spend their money. The CAT team

will continue with less officers. K Guiney, Chairperson of Retailers Association said that the parking tickets recently handed out have made a big a difference and the feedback she, as a retailer, has had is positive. However, the tickets seem to be being issued in the High Street only, and not in other parts of the town centre. Cllr Pirone will feed this back to the CAT team. She thanked the CAT team for all their hard work and collaboration to date.

Cllr Douglas: Cllr Douglas will be attending the Tweeddale area partnership meeting on 19 March. The main item will be the current review on the area partnerships and how people want to see it develop. There will be an open discussion, and anyone is welcome to attend. He wanted to thank the volunteers of the committee at the Drill Hall for a sterling job running it, it is a credit to the town. The cross-party budget, as mentioned is tight and there have been some difficult funding decisions. He is pleased the CAT team is being kept on. There has been a complaint regarding the lift at the library in the Chambers Institute. Whilst it is being repaired, the librarians will come down and assist. G Macdonald asked about the timescale? Cllr Douglas said he has asked Live Borders and will feedback. The domestic waste timetable is being worked on as there have been computer issues. Cllr Douglas attended the Eastgate Theatre and spoke to the board and will continue assisting with fundraising.

Treasurer's Report. This has been circulated. The Treasurer mentioned the money that was promised last year for Peebles in Bloom has still not been received from SBC.

Chambers Institution Trust: S Coe confirmed no report had been circulated but everything is very close to the starting line. Governance of the project needs to be sorted. The acoustic panels are on order. There is a meeting of the beneficiaries to talk about the vision on 18 March from 4pm-7pm where the artwork will also be displayed. Cllr Tatler will forward the documentation ahead of the meeting. S Coe confirmed a fundraising manager is looking at all options for the next phases.

Peebles High School: Update from T Compton of the PHS Parent Council:

"...PHS now has a new interim Head Teacher (Kevin Ryalls) and the Parent Council group had a successful meeting with him last month to discuss the project.

Prior to this there was really no news or information available since the departure of Steven Renwick from the project, so I was unable to provide any update.

The minutes of that meeting, along with the latest version of the floorplans and some more visuals are available on our website now here: <https://phsparents.org.uk/minutes#NewBuild>

The project has very much moved into the construction phase as the massive crane on the Peebles skyline shows, and I'm hopeful that the promised October 2025 completion will remain on-track, and that the promised engagements over the details of the new building will take place as indicated. As you will see from the Minutes, some form of engagement session is planned for March and as soon as I have details for this I will share them with yourselves as appropriate."

The Treasurer asked if any of the funding of the new school was coming from a public-private partnership (PPP)? Cllr Pirone confirmed that it was not.

Cllr Begg confirmed that having spoken to BAM, the construction team, they reported being pleased with progress.

AOB

The Vice Chairman mentioned the King's Royal Company of Archers following an article in the Peeblesshire News. They come every six years to Peebles and have done so for hundreds of years to have an archery

competition. It was reported that there had been a complaint that women were banned from being involved and the Vice Chairman said that was not the case. Women are not allowed to take part in the competition but are involved otherwise.

The litter had only been cleared from one side of the traffic lights at Neidpath. Cllr Begg will thank the team for doing so and ask them to clear the other side.

There is now a litter bin at the top of Tweed Brae, as previously discussed.

The Secretary confirmed there will be an article in the next edition of the Peeblesshire News about the forthcoming Peebles Community Council election. Nomination forms should be sent to SBC Democratic Services who will run the election. Those members required to stand are:

Anne Snoddy, Malcolm Bruce, Alison Cormack, Sheila Mackay, Michael Marshall, George Ramsay, Scott Watson, Julie Shearer and Lennox Lovell-Henderson. The closing date is 9 April at 12 noon. Thereafter there is one week to withdraw nominations, and we will know on 16 April whether we will need an election or not.

The Chairman has asked if the parking fund would cover the purchase of a mobile projector and screen for PCC. It was agreed the PCC will put in a request.

A Cormack pointed out that the potholes on pavements is shocking. Cllr Pirone said all potholes should be reported. A Mackenzie said the Northgate pavements are in a terrible state of disrepair.

A Mackenzie asked about plans to put a hole for access in the wall on the Glasgow Road? Cllr Begg confirmed that there are no plans and that he was giving a full report to concerned parents at Kingsland school. He will share the report with the Secretary. The focus on the Glasgow Road will now be one on reducing the speed of the traffic.

A Mackenzie had been asked to raise concern about the number of cigarette ends being dropped around the taxi rank.

G MacDonald said the bin had gone from inside the Leckie Church area and that had led to rubbish being dropped on the floor.

Cllr Douglas clarified that regarding the issue of the archers he was informed by the representative that women would not be involved until 2025. M Davey, of Peeblesshire News, confirmed he only reports what he hears at meetings.

G Ramsay pointed out that the post box on Glen Road had been sealed up. Cllr Pirone will find out why.

Cllr Pirone confirmed that the plaque on the gold post box is being replaced.

M Bruce asked if the policy is still to have two public toilets available for the public? Edinburgh Road toilets are closed so there is only one open. Cllr Tatler said, yes, because one is being repaired. If the toilets are continually vandalised, SBC cannot afford to keep fixing them.

S Watson asked about the CCTV. Is it going to be replaced in Peebles? Cllr Pirone confirmed it was. The mobile CCTV is taking time to set up.

S Watson said that the Highland Games Association are looking for somewhere to hold their meetings. After many years of having free use of a room from the Tontine there was now a charge.

The meeting ended at 2100 hrs.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 11 April 2024 at 7pm in the Burgh Chamber.