



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

Minutes of the 336th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 13 November 2025 at 7pm in the Burgh Hall, Peebles. The meeting was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.

Present: A Mackenzie, A Snoddy (Secretary), D Ashmole, F Richardson, G Ramsay, H Young, I Dempster, J Holt Cabrera, J Wilson, K Guiney, M Bruce, M Marshall (Planning Convenor), P Maudsley (Chairman), S Coe, Cllr Begg, Cllr Pirone, Cllr Small, Cllr Thomson.

In attendance: K Peebles of The Peeblean; C Faulds, Editor, Peeblesshire News; PC G Beaumont and PC R Shiels, R Barley of the Eastgate Theatre, G Westwood from the Citizens Advice Bureau and T Compton of Peebles High School Parent Council.

Members of the Public: A Salsman, C Hamilton, D Anderson, M Anderson, E D'Arcy, J Topalian, J Todd, S Malcolm, C MacKay, G Traill, A Traill, M Pearson

Apologies: G Macdonald, G Mackie, S Watson, S MacKay, Cllr Tatler, Cllr Douglas

The Chairman welcomed all 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.

Reports referred to in the Minutes are available to view at <https://ccrbpeebles.co.uk/>

Gill Westwood from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) attended the meeting to provide background on the organisation and to update everyone on upcoming changes to their premises. She explained that CAB has been operating in Peebles since 1976 and is approaching its 50th anniversary. The service offers advice across a wide range of issues, including welfare benefits, debt, housing, education, relationships, consumer matters, utilities, and energy. CAB also negotiates on behalf of clients and hosts a number of additional support services, such as help with NHS complaints. The service is open to everyone but works particularly frequently with vulnerable members of the community. Between January and October, CAB recorded 2,324 client contacts and delivered 3,372 pieces of advice. They also track client financial gain, which reflects how much better off clients are after receiving support, providing a significant financial benefit to the Tweeddale area. The local team consists of five paid staff, fourteen volunteers, and a board of six to seven directors. Volunteers come with a wide range of professional backgrounds, and training takes around a year, with three volunteers currently in training. A Ukrainian volunteer also supports translation. Normal opening hours are 10am to 1pm, with additional availability for specific needs.

G Westwood advised that the reason for attending was to address concerns raised about the future of the service during forthcoming building works. She emphasised that CAB would remain operational in Peebles and that all seven outreach locations would continue. During the refurbishment of the Chambers Institution Trust, CAB will be relocated to Newby Court at Bridge Court on Tweed Green. Once works are complete, CAB will return to the Chambers Institution, though with a reduced footprint of around 50 per cent. This reduction will present challenges in how the service is delivered, but G Westwood reassured members that CAB will adapt

and that there will be no impact on the quality of service for clients. The temporary and future spaces will include four interview rooms, and the organisation remains committed to supporting the most vulnerable. She acknowledged that staff were anxious about the changes but stressed that CAB would ensure continuity throughout the transition.

The Chair thanked G Westwood for the presentation and expressed appreciation for the work carried out by CAB. M Marshall highlighted the organisation's recent support for Peebles Community Council in respect of Ballantyne Place and praised the dedication and professionalism of the volunteers. Cllr Begg noted the significant value CAB brings to the community and the importance of ensuring it remains fully functional. Cllr Thomson who noted she serves on the CAB board, raised concerns about the suitability and accessibility of Newby Court and explained that long-term accommodation is still under discussion. It is not guaranteed that CAB will remain in the premises permanently, and support from the community would be welcome. Everyone agreed that CAB provides an essential service, particularly for the most vulnerable. The Chair concluded by thanking G Westwood and emphasising the vital role that CAB continues to play in the local area.

Open forum:

Dr Catriona McKay, and several members of the public, addressed the meeting to raise concerns about the three Section 42 applications submitted by Granton Homes shortly before the expiry of their original planning permission in principle for Kingsmeadows. She explained that the community believes these applications are being used to secure a new five-year permission without proper scrutiny under updated, stronger environmental policies in NPF4. One of the applications, relating to a typographical change, was recommended for approval by SBC planners but was rejected by the planning committee in December. The remaining two applications, which seek to remove conditions protecting the woodland, are still undecided.

Dr McKay reported that Granton Homes submitted further correspondence in June, which SBC published on the planning portal. However, she noted that three separate emails sent by the Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS), acting on behalf of the community, have not been uploaded to the portal. According to her statement, the planning officer declined to publish the first letter when asked. She highlighted that these letters raise concerns about potential breaches of Habitat Regulations and the absence of required environmental assessments. Dr McKay stated that ERCS' legal advice is that progressing the applications without such assessments would be unlawful.

She expressed concern that the lack of publication means both the public and the planning committee are unaware of the ERCS correspondence and argued that this undermines transparency. She requested PCC's support in asking SBC why developer correspondence is published while correspondence from an environmental lawyer representing the community is not. Dr McKay asked the PCC to write to the planning committee and the Head of Planning to request that the ERCS letters be published, that the two remaining applications be refused and the developers be made to perform legally required environmental assessments.

Cllr Pirone responded by apologising on behalf of SBC for the lack of assessments and for the letters not being published on the planning portal, noting that they should have been and expressing concern that this had not happened. She advised that she would investigate why the correspondence had not been made public and why the developer had not been required to provide the necessary environmental assessments. She also confirmed that she would ask Cllr Tatler to support this and seek a full explanation from the planning team.

The Chair then addressed the recent planning decision regarding Ballantyne Place. As he had been unable to attend the planning meeting, he had prepared a written statement, which M Marshall read aloud. In the statement, the Chair expressed his disappointment with the decision and stated that, in his view, it was legally questionable and morally wrong. He noted that councillors had acknowledged that property deeds appeared

to carry little weight and that developers were effectively able to proceed as they wished. The Chair reflected that, in his opinion, the recent decision implied the previous 2020 rejection was a mistake, and that the Scottish Government Reporter had been wrong to uphold it. He also identified that the assurances in writing by SBC to a councillor relating to the site had been worthless. The statement criticised the argument made during the meeting that the housing crisis justified the development, suggesting that the small number of houses involved would make an insignificant difference. He further commented on the legal opinion provided by SBC, stating that he found it lacking in clarity and substance.

S. Coe commented that the information presented to the planning committee appeared confusing, potentially misleading, and in some respects incorrect, which in his view prevented members from clearly understanding the key planning and legal issues and contributed to the unexpected decision. He noted that the legal officer's comments during the meeting did not provide sufficient clarity and did not address the legal questions previously raised. Although the officer stated that SBC had broad powers to vary conditions, S Coe felt this did not remove the need for proper legal process and that the officer's opinion about there being no play area on the site was unhelpful.

He stated that greater clarity could have been achieved if the legal questions had been answered in advance of the meeting, or if the application had been withdrawn and resubmitted as a standalone Section 42 application focused specifically on whether the original play area condition should be removed. This would have allowed the planning policy issues, including the protection of green space under Policy EP11, to be properly examined.

S Coe observed that there had been no substantive debate on the removal of Condition 42 before members were asked to consider the new dwelling, and he felt that the officer's report incorrectly treated the land as brownfield despite the condition still being in place. He concluded by saying that, although he believed there could be grounds for judicial review, the cost would be prohibitive.

M Marshall declared his interest in the campaign and SCIO to save Kingsmeadows, reminding PCC he was initially seconded as planning convenor because of his work for Kingsmeadows. He stated that there appeared to be a shared view within the community regarding recent planning issues. While he normally comments on few planning applications, he believed the current situations were serious. Referring to Kingsmeadows, he noted previous legal advice from Harper McLeod in 2024 indicating that SBC had misapplied Section 42, and recalled that the application was withdrawn from the June 2024 planning committee meeting on the advice of SBC's Chief Legal Officer on that basis. He expressed concern that key environmental regulations, the Habitats Regulations, were not being followed and that SBC solicitors were not addressing the legal questions being raised. He believed similar legal issues underpinned both the Ballantyne Place and Kingsmeadows cases and stressed that Section 42 was central to both. He questioned why developers' interests appeared to be prioritised and emphasised that communities also had rights that SBC had a responsibility to enforce. D. Ashmole described the situation as scandalous, undermining public confidence that SBC can follow legal processes, and suggested that PCC might consider issuing a national-level press release as we are not getting the services we are paying for. The Chair advised waiting to see next steps but noted that concerns had previously been raised with the SBC Chief Executive, particularly around legal matters and competence, and suggested reinforcing these concerns in a further letter. It was also noted that some of M Marshall's correspondence had been posted publicly and misattributed as personal rather than representing PCC.

It was agreed that the PCC should draft a further letter to the Chief Executive and complaint, with the option of national press involvement thereafter. M. Marshall thanked Cllr Begg for his intervention in ensuring PCC's Ballantyne Place comments were published on the planning portal. S. Coe suggested that it may also be productive to meet directly with John Hayward, Planning and Development Standards Manager, and that the

Peebles Civic Society could also be involved. The Chair commented that SBC had acted constructively in other matters, such as the Old Schoolhouse, and that a further meeting with the Chief Executive could be requested.

M. Bruce highlighted that the Ballantyne Place decision could only be overturned by judicial review, which was not financially feasible for the community, and that there was a risk of a second erroneous decision at Kingsmeadows under the same constraints. He argued that SBC should defer consideration of the Section 42 applications until clear and agreed legal advice is obtained. Cllr Pirone recommended writing again to the Chief Executive and involve the Director of Legal Affairs and John Hayward and updating the Cllrs once a response was received. M. Bruce reiterated the concern that, without postponement, decisions could proceed and become final. Cllr Pirone advised making the need for a pause explicit in the letter.

A member of the public, C. Hamilton, expressed that she did not understand planning or legal processes and therefore relied on officers to act correctly, and found both situations very worrying. She felt the community had little chance of influencing outcomes. The Chair responded that the perception was that SBC understood the community could not afford a judicial review and proceeded regardless.

Tristan Compton, representing the Peebles High School Parent Council and the Friends of Peebles High School, provided an update following the opening of the new High School. It is a tremendous building and he paid tribute to the head teacher Kevin Ryalls. The whole community is invited to attend an open day on Saturday 13 December. He acknowledged that the school was working through some expected teething issues but emphasised that it was fully open and keen to strengthen links with the community. He reported on the successful auction of items from the old school, carried out within four days, with proceeds amounting to several thousand pounds being returned to the school. He thanked all involved, including Garry Rennie of Peebles Auction House, for their support and generosity.

T Compton highlighted two heritage concerns: the preservation of the school's Dux board and the large telescope donated in around 1900 by Dr John Connell. Both items are located in the old building, and he asked for support in ensuring they are saved. The Chair and members agreed on the importance of safeguarding these items, with reference made to the loss of a similar Dux board in West Linton. Cllr Pirone noted she was surprised, as both items had been included on the list circulated to councillors, and she undertook to raise the matter again with the school and the education department. She also expressed regret that West Linton board appeared to have been lost said she would try to help locate it.

Police Report: The report had been circulated. PC Sheils spoke about his new community role and highlighted a recent rise in thefts, which he attributed partly to the darker nights. Crime prevention packs are available, and both officers encouraged residents to take simple steps to protect their property, such as forming neighbourhood WhatsApp groups and installing Ring-type doorbells or security cameras. In relation to vandalism, there had been an incident at the Community Gardens last month. Both officers had intended to spend more time supporting the Greener Peebles Community Garden group but had not yet been able to do so. There had been a few calls relating to antisocial behaviour, mainly involving drunken youths, which they described as expected for the time of year. One assault had been reported, and CCTV is being obtained. The only other notable crime was at Provost Walker Court, but overall levels were described as "not too bad."

PC Beaumont added that it had been a very positive week operationally, with arrests made every day, long hours worked, and a significant amount of intelligence gathered. The Community Action Van had been available; it is essentially a minibus without seats, equipped with monitoring facilities, allowing officers to reach the wider rural area including Broughton and Skirling, which do not always receive as much police presence. Officers have been making full use of the speed gun through the Peebles system, carrying out speed checks on South Parks Road and Kingsmeadows Road. The police thanked residents who report speeding concerns, as this information helps them target their activity.

The officers had also been working with the Tweed water bailiffs and made arrests for poaching. All those involved were from outwith the area and had links to drugs and weapons offences. Two arrests were made this week. A bike-marking event is planned for next week, with around 60 people expected to attend. The police are also liaising with the Dogs Unit with a view to requesting a drugs dog to attend locally at weekends. They stressed that continued reporting from the public is essential, as data supports any formal bid. Data Tagging was also mentioned, with officers suggesting that residents may wish to consider tagging their vehicles or valuable items. The Chair thanked the officers for their proactive approach.

M. Bruce commented that it was positive to see officers now wearing body cameras. He also raised an issue from Bonfire Night, noting that volunteers manned seven entry points to the event. At each entry, there were street peddlers selling goods outside the event boundary. The event is licensed by the Round Table, who sell items within the boundary to raise funds. The presence of unlicensed traders resulted in a loss of revenue for the community, as visitors purchased from the illegal sellers instead of the Round Table stalls.

M. Bruce noted that the Peebles Christmas Lights Association, which holds its festive night at the end of November, will not tolerate this practice. While they understand the law and their rights, they require police support to enforce it. PC Beaumont confirmed that the police would provide full support on the night and noted that similar issues had occurred last year.

Cllr Begg reminded everyone that the more detailed information the police receive, the more effective their response can be. Specific details, such as vehicle descriptions and times, are important, and the presence of Police Scotland at events is highly valuable.

Approval of the Minutes of 9 October 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2025 were approved. Proposed by M Bruce, seconded by A MacKenzie.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

H. Young and F. Richardson reported that they had attended the Freshers Fair at Peebles High School. While there was some interest in the PCC, many attendees were below the target age range. Head Teacher Kevin Ryalls invited the PCC to consider hosting one of their monthly meetings in the new school. Joshua Holt Cabrera suggested that the PCC also attend the Enterprise Fair which is aimed at senior S5 and S6 students. It was agreed that the PCC would benefit from new banners for events. The motion to proceed was carried unanimously. It was agreed that costings would be provided to Cllr Thomson to explore potential funding.

The sign on the gold post box has been replaced with an accurate one.

The possibility of installing signs around Peebles for tourists and locals is being considered by Go Tweed Valley, and a proposal has been submitted. It was agreed that an audit of existing signage should be carried out first to assess current coverage and identify priorities. Costings will be obtained to determine what can realistically be achieved. It was noted that the PCC is not involved at this stage, and the focus should initially be on completing the audit. S. Coe commented that, given budget limitations, expenditure should be directed towards projects that can be delivered effectively, and that any signage initiative will require proper coordination.

Bus Buildout in the High Street: A question regarding the bus buildout had been posted on Facebook for residents, generating many comments. The Secretary also spoke to residents at a coffee morning and will be consulting local pensioners. The consensus was approximately 50:50.

Peebles Rugby Club: The club is currently considering improvements to the unkempt area behind their clubhouse.

Haylodge Path: S. Coe raised a question regarding the path at the hump at Haylodge, noting that no dates for work had been provided. Cllr Begg agreed it was time for an update. It was agreed that S Coe should email Cllr Begg and M Piper to request clarification on timing, copying all councillors.

Chairman's report: The report had been circulated. Updates from recent meetings were noted, including the SBC Community Council Chairs' meeting on 21 October, Burgh Hall Community Conversations, and working group sessions on non-financial support and the replacement of the SBCCN. Key issues discussed included CCTV for Selkirk, transport, wind farms, care support staff costs, and SBC's interface with community councils. Progress was reported as possible, with further online and in-person meetings planned. It was emphasised that any actions should align with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The Place Making – Town Action Plan shows no tangible change to date, and the Live Borders report is awaited.

Cllr Pirone said she hoped the Live Borders report would be published on 14 October and the SBC meeting is to follow on 20 November.

Planning report: The report had been circulated. Ongoing developments at Caledonian Court, the Baptist Church building, Victoria Park Centre, and the Old Science Block at Peebles High School. Applications of interest include Kingsmeadows House, Edderston Farm, and the 20-dwelling Horsburgh Ford site, with ongoing monitoring of planning submissions and approvals. Cllr Begg advised, for access to Horsburgh Ford site, that it is best for developer to speak to developer rather than Cllr involvement.

Peebles Community Trust Report: The report had been circulated. M Bruce reported that Eshiels Wood tree-felling has been completed on schedule, with the multi-use path reopened. Contractors are now removing timber to the SBC depot and processing brush for chipping to prevent flood issues. Plans are underway for replanting with native broadleaf trees. The public largely respected path closures and speed limits during the work. Progress continues on securing the unused toilet block on School Brae through the Community Asset Transfer scheme, with a short delay requested to focus on higher-priority matters.

Fundraising efforts are being developed for the refurbishment of the Old Railway Building, with professional architectural assistance considered but potentially handled in-house with input from local trades. The acquisition of the old Bank of Scotland is advancing, including discussions with a potential anchor tenant and Link UK regarding a banking hub. Completion is projected by the end of January 2026, with a planned opening around Easter. Meanwhile, operations at the School Brae Hub continue normally, and the Re Use Hub shows healthy turnover. The Board is no longer in crisis, with three new Directors contributing fresh perspectives to planning for the new High Street premises.

The Chair asked if there was any surplus expected from the Eshiels works and M Bruce said they were hopeful there would be.

SBC Councillor Reports:

Cllr Begg: Cllr Begg thanked Peebles Community Trust for their work, noting the impressive list of achievements. He highlighted the significant social work involved with transitions at client level, support for children, early adults, and care for older parents. He praised Peebles High School staff and pupils for moving 3,100 crates, describing it as a phenomenal effort, and acknowledged the contributions of SBC and the Scottish Government. He concluded that the work should be celebrated as it is built for the future.

Cllr Pirone: Cllr Pirone reported that the Live Borders report is complete. She praised Peebles High School, noting every child deserves facilities of this standard. She reminded members of the open day on 13 December and paid tribute to Kevin Ryalls. She highlighted that it is time for early learning enrolment and advised parents to register their children via the Council website. She also noted the SBC programme encouraging graduates to consider teaching degrees to help recruit and retain teachers locally. Cllr Pirone mentioned a survey on local cemeteries and urged participation and reminded everyone that applications are open for Tweeddale Citizen of the Year, encouraging nominations.

Cllr Small: Cllr Small noted that most matters had been covered and passed on the thanks to senior police officers for all the work done in Tweeddale and across the Borders.

Cllr Thomson: Cllr Thomson reported that a Common Good meeting is scheduled for 19 November. Parking fund monies have committed £40k to a range of initiatives, including work with officers on flood mapping. Six cinema nights are scheduled, and other funding opportunities are being explored. Signage costs will also be covered from this fund. Cllr Thomson said PCC will be reimbursed for the Peebles in Bloom costs soon.

Treasurer's Report: The report has been circulated. PCC has received £1,000 in relation to the proposed Leithenwater windfarm.

Old Schoolhouse: S Coe updated that progress is being made on resolving title issues, and involvement from the team has been crucial. Cllr Begg acknowledged the hard work and teamwork of M Bruce and S Coe in supporting the process, noting there is still more to do.

Chambers Institution Trust: The report had been circulated. S. Coe reported that overall project completion is now projected for December 2027, within the extended LUF funding timescale. RIBA Stage 3 (Spatial Coordination) is nearing completion and will enable submission of the Listed Building Consent application, likely at the beginning of next month. A drop-in session to view Stage 3 plans will be held at the Burgh Hall on 29 November, with design team and representatives available to answer questions. Decanting options for current tenants are being progressed, with site commencement planned for November 2026. Phase 2 feasibility and business plan work is ongoing, and the team is awaiting a response from OSCAR on the SCIO application. It was agreed that the CIT reports would be placed on the PCC website.

A Mackenzie has spoken to Mr Thorburn about the tourist notice board. It will be done over the winter period.

Sound System: The Chair reported the PCC is still at a loss as to how to take matters forward. Cllr Pirone noted there is no funding currently, so installation may need to wait until Phase 2.

Resurfacing of Eastgate: Cllr Tatler had advised that resurfacing is scheduled for 2029. PC Councillors expressed that this is not acceptable given the poor condition of the road. SBC Cllrs agreed to take this concern away for further discussion.

G MacDonald noted that the bins on Tweed Green at the shelter were being used. A council worker called Roddy should be recognised for assistance. Houses at Cuddyside would benefit from some more recycling bins. Not all homes have a blue bin. Stacks of bin bags are piled up, overflowing into the car park. G MacDonald's email should be sent to Cllr Begg and his fellow Cllrs who will take an action. Also gratitude to the Tweed Youth Action litter pickers who did a great job at Victoria Park.

The Secretary said that the Office Bearers are attending a session on the new CCTV system.

D Ashmole highlighted NatureScot's "Call for interest in beaver release to new catchments," noting that while the Community Council does not own land and may not wish to comment on hypotheticals, he wished to flag

the opportunity, acknowledging the mixed views but also the environmental benefits beavers can bring. PC Councillors unanimously agreed to the following press release:

Peebles Community Council recognises that beavers are a formerly extinct native species which arguably belong in our local landscape and may offer benefits including wetland habitat creation, improved water quality, and potential contribution to natural flood management. Nature Scot have made a "Call for interest in beaver release to new catchments". Consequently, we have discussed briefly the pros and cons of future reintroduction of beavers to Peeblesshire, with a variety of views expressed. Discussion is hypothetical at present given that no specific proposal has been made, however we note that, to be acceptable, any proposal would require the provision of a properly resourced plan including educational, management, mitigation and landowner support measures. As the introduction of beavers to a new area has implications that may be seen as both positive or negative dependent upon viewpoint, Peebles Community Council welcome feedback by email on secretary@ccrbpeebles.co.uk.

A Mackenzie raised concerns about Ballantyne Place, noting issues affecting local businesses and the Dovecot area, including the potential house site and the industrial estate, which appears to have been overlooked in planning. He stated that two cars had been written off at the entrance and that pedestrians, including schoolchildren, regularly walk through the industrial estate as there was no other access. He explained that the original requirement for a playpark arose because children would otherwise be forced to walk through the industrial area in order to play, yet the strategic location of the industrial estate has since been ignored by planning officers and the planning committee. The Chair noted that it was now too late to make changes and questioned why the industrial estate had been excluded by planning officers.

I Dempster, the new PCC member representing Peebles Guildry, raised concerns about the condition of the war memorial, noting that the arch to the left requires care and repair. He asked that the matter be formally raised. Cllr Thomson advised that it falls under the War Memorials group but agreed to make enquiries.

K Guiney reported that there is a lot happening on the High Street and encouraged everyone to spread the word. An Elf Hunt with 15 elves hidden around Peebles is under way, and a trophy will be awarded for the best shop window. She also noted that staff at William Hill have been made redundant and that Calzeat is closing, with the building going to auction. Retailers are concerned about the impact on that end of the High Street.

D Ashmole asked about several empty, poorly maintained buildings, including the lodge house at the caravan site and a property at Elliot Park. It was noted that SBC has limited influence unless a building is listed or poses a safety risk, as responsibility for upkeep lies with the owners.

H Young raised concerns about the poor condition of the pavement from Old Town to Kingsland Primary School, noting it is narrow and unsuitable for buggies and that large vehicles almost hit pedestrians on the route; she suggested a barrier or other safety measure. She also criticised the Ballantyne Place decision as unsatisfactory and containing factual inaccuracies such as the claim that the nearest play park is 500 metres away and asked that all relevant factors be fully weighed.

The meeting ended at 2102hrs.

The next meeting will be on 11 December 2025 in the Burgh Hall.

..... Chairman

..... Dated

DRAFT