



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 341st Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 9 April 2026 at 7pm in the Burgh Hall, Peebles. The meeting was recorded for the purposes of Minuting and Reporting.

Present: A Mackenzie, A Snoddy (Secretary), F Richardson, G MacDonald, G Mackie (Vice Chairman and Treasurer), G Ramsay, H Young, I Dempster, J Holt Cabrera, M Bruce, M Marshall (Planning Convenor), P Maudsley (Chairman), S Coe, S Watson, Cllr Begg, Cllr Tatler,

In attendance: K Peebles of The Peeblean; C Faulds, Editor of Peeblesshire News; PC R Sheills Police Scotland

Members of the Public: C MacKay, Z Turner

Apologies: J Wilson, S MacKay, D Ashmole, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Pirone; Cllr Thomson

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/>

Police report: PC Sheills reported ongoing proactive policing, including regular patrols using unmarked cars, which have led to the detection of drugs and offensive weapons. These operations are planned to take place monthly. Parking enforcement continues to address persistent issues on the High Street, and a recent scam awareness talk for elderly residents was described as beneficial. Community engagement remains positive, with a visit from the Brownies to the police station. A High Street raid resulted in an £8,000 fine, which was noted as a good outcome, and police emphasised they are keeping on top of such activity. Youth patrols are also in place, although anti-social behaviour is rising with the lighter evenings. Additional support is expected in early May with a van of special constables. Incidents of vandalism at the pavilion and in the Biggiesknowe and Elcho Street areas were highlighted, with CCTV successfully identifying those responsible. Theft remains a significant issue in supermarkets, particularly Sainsbury's, though suspects have been identified. Roads policing is active, with drivers being caught for offences including speeding and lack of MOT, resulting in fixed penalty notices. PC Sheills also indicated he may attend the upcoming hustings if available.

Members welcomed the update, with the Chair noting it was positive to see offenders being identified and charged, and councillors expressing thanks for the police response to community concerns. It was highlighted that the report sends a clear message that speeding and offending are increasingly likely to result in being caught, due to effective use of CCTV and intelligence-led policing. In response to questions about under-18s, it was noted that cases are handled depending on circumstances, including referral to the Children's Reporter and use of the vulnerable persons database. An initiative in Northern Ireland, where speeding offenders could choose between penalty points or appearing before a school pupils' court, was mentioned as a potential idea. Concerns were also raised about road safety near Kingsland Primary School, particularly involving lorries and narrow pavements. PC Sheills confirmed

speed checks are carried out. Cllr Begg also referred to the use of portable “pop-up” police figures to deter speeding and asked to be informed of any available locations for deployment.

Open Forum:

Dr C McKay, speaking as a member of the public, updated the meeting on plans to bring Kingsmeadows Woodland into community ownership. A Community Right to Buy process is underway, and a public consultation will be held 11am Sat 2 May at the Eastgate Theatre with support from the Community Woodland Association to gather local views. However, the presentation focused primarily on concerns about the planning process, which was described as a failure in democracy. Despite councillors having considered all the issues, refused two similar applications from the developer and all appeals being concluded, a third application, repeating the two prior applications, remains under consideration by council officers. This raises concern that, if officers recommend approval, against the will of elected councillors and despite no fresh issues being raised, it will give the developer a further opportunity to succeed, undermining democracy. Cllr Tatler agreed to contact the Chief Executive.

In discussion, councillors expressed frustration and confusion as to why the application has not yet been determined, noting it appears to duplicate previously refused proposals and increases unnecessary workload. It was acknowledged that the legal authority to take planning decisions vests in elected councillors on SBC’s planning committee, and other councillors have limited powers to intervene directly, although they can lobby, make representations, and raise the issue publicly or with senior officials. It was suggested that officers may be legally required to determine the application but without any new issues raised officers appeared to be required to follow the previous decisions of the elected planning committee. The possibility of Kingsmeadows SCIO taking legal action was raised, particularly in relation to environmental considerations. While the community council cannot take on legal or financial liability, members agreed unanimously to support this course of action in principle and to assist where possible, with Dr McKay confirming that legal advice is being sought.

Z Turner, a member of the public, attended to raise concerns about the lack of public toilet facilities in Peebles, noting that members of the public are increasingly relying on facilities at Greener Peebles and the community garden. The Chair acknowledged this as a longstanding issue, exacerbated by vandalism and recent closures, including the toilets at School Brae. Concerns were also raised about upcoming events such as the Beltane Festival, which will require adequate provision. Cllr Begg explained that local authorities have no statutory duty to provide public toilets, although there remains a strong case for provision given Peebles’ status as a tourist destination. Currently, there are two funded facilities in the town: the Eastgate toilets, funded by the council but restricted to office hours due to vandalism, and those at Haylodge, supported by the Common Good. While these provide some coverage, it was acknowledged they do not fully meet community needs, and challenges around funding for cleaning, maintenance and repairs persist.

Possible solutions were discussed, including future provision at the Chambers Institution once building works are complete, and encouraging local businesses to make facilities available to the public. Z Turner asked about crowdfunding for temporary facilities such as portaloos. Cllr Tatler advised that community grant funding may be available, including potential support from windfarm funds, and agreed to follow up on a previous enquiry that had not received a response. It was also noted that while the Beltane Festival already receives grant funding, this has not increased in line with population growth. Cllr Tatler confirmed that a consultation on the issue is ongoing. Members suggested that Z Turner attend a future Common Good meeting to share her views directly, noting that a report on toilet provision has been requested but is not expected until the end of June.

Approval of the Minutes of 12 March 2026: Following the meeting, clarification was received from Scottish Borders Council regarding the Community Asset Transfer request for the School Brae toilets. The full correspondence from Scottish Borders Council has been circulated to members. The minutes of were approved with the approval proposed by G Ramsay and seconded by M Bruce.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

It was noted that signage issues around Caledonian Court have been reviewed by managers on two occasions, with G Mackie advising that arrangements have changed due to access limitations with steps. It was also confirmed that the developer will attend a future meeting to discuss the matter further.

On the proposed bus build-out, survey results were shared showing strong public support, now at approximately 75/25 in favour. These figures have been submitted to P Gilhooley at SBC, although it was noted that there is currently no budget allocated. Cllr Tatler indicated he will raise the issue with the transport department to explore potential funding options after the Easter period. A member of the public also provided email correspondence highlighting guidance for disabled organisations and suggesting more detailed steps be incorporated into representations to the council. The Chair confirmed that while regulations had been reviewed, they are advisory rather than mandatory. Concern was raised about consistency, with reference made to a similar bus stop alteration on the opposite side of the road, and questions were asked as to why that scheme had been delivered, with funding suggested as a likely factor. The Tweed Access Panel has also raised concerns.

Chairman's Report: The report had been circulated. The Chair provided a general update ahead of the May AGM, noting that nominations for community council membership are closing shortly and encouraging any interested parties to apply. There were no updates on tourist signage, but it was highlighted that a recent police raid uncovered a large quantity of illegal cigarettes. Since the last meeting, he had attended a range of engagements including discussions on path signage, the Drill Hall, Kingsmeadows, and the Chambers Institution, as well as ongoing working groups where there has been little change. Concerns about the future of the Drill Hall were clarified, with no immediate threat identified, although longer-term changes are expected and it is hoped that Live Borders will provide a clear plan in due course. Progress continues on windfarm funding, with plans to launch both a grants programme and a recruitment drive for an oversight panel, aiming for initial awards by August. The upcoming hustings on 16 April were also noted, with good engagement from local schools.

A more positive update was given on the Fish Fountain, where local specialists have offered to carry out restoration work free of charge, with only materials needing funded, although coordination with the council is still required to enable access to a water supply. The Chair noted both the previous mishandling of the installation and the generosity of those now stepping in to resolve it. Finally, concern was raised about very short consultation timelines from the council, with a recent example giving only a few days for response, which was described as a recurring issue.

The Chair reported that correspondence has been received from SBC regarding non-financial support for community councils, with a further working party being established to consider both financial and non-financial aspects. The Chair confirmed previous involvement and noted the need for representation going forward, with ongoing efforts to secure grant support continuing. Members were also reminded that the Windfarm Benefit Fund requires Peebles Community Council to nominate a representative. There is an opportunity to nominate one or two representatives, with only two to three meetings per year. Members were asked to review the paperwork and consider taking part, with H Young indicating she would think about it.

The Chair also confirmed that arrangements for the upcoming hustings on Thursday 16 April are on track, running from 7pm to 9pm in the Burgh Hall. Members were reminded to submit questions to the Secretary as soon as possible to support preparation for the event.

Planning report: The report had been circulated. The report provides a detailed update on a wide range of planning matters, with particular focus on ongoing concerns around Kingsmeadows and related applications. It highlights repeated objections to the Granton Homes proposals (24/00030/FUL, 24/00031/FUL), both of which have been refused and appeals complete. The report argues that, given these refusals and concluded appeals, the remaining application 24/00247/FUL, which raises no new issues, should be refused by officers, in line with previous democratic decisions of elected councillors. It also raises ongoing concerns about compliance with Habitats Regulations, the handling of legal correspondence and objections, and delays or lack of responses from SBC on planning and environmental issues, including references to representations from environmental bodies and solicitors that have not been published with other representations on the planning portal.

The report also covers wind farm applications, including Leithenwater, Scawd Law and Cloich Forest, with mixed positions from consultees on environmental, landscape and biodiversity impacts, particularly in relation to golden eagles, peatland and cumulative landscape effects. Some applications remain under review, while others are awaiting decisions or have attracted significant objection from community councils, statutory bodies and campaign groups. In addition, stalled developments such as Edderston Farm and Horsbrugh Ford are noted as having little recent progress. The report concludes with mention of new SBC guidance for community councils, particularly around planning engagement and response times, reinforcing the importance of timely consultation responses and clearer communication between planning officers and community representatives.

Windfarms: M Marshall had provided a written update on wind farm and community benefit matters, noting ongoing work on a proposed PCC consultation under the working title "Windfall? Or shortfall?". The current plan is to link this to the Foodbank's Poverty Forum on 21 May, with invitations extended to around 75 representatives from 40 organisations, and the possibility of opening the session to the wider public. A separate event at the Eastgate on 17 May may now be released. A questionnaire is being developed covering issues such as inflation, benefits, ownership, renewables and democracy, and community benefit levels, in the context of Scottish Government consultation on revised guidance.

The update also highlighted concern that proposed community benefit rates have not kept pace with inflation, meaning their real-terms value is reducing over time, with reference made to previous guidance and inflation-adjusted comparisons. M Marshall stated that even the proposed increase to £6,000 per MW would represent a decrease in real terms, and that future frameworks should clearly reflect inflation and real value. Support was also expressed for a revenue-based approach to community benefit funding, in line with the Scottish Climate Coalition on Energy's proposals submitted to the recent consultation. These points were noted as consistent with previous PCC discussions and submissions.

Peebles Community Trust: The report had been circulated. M Bruce provided a brief update noting ongoing works at Eshiels Wood, where brash removal is continuing in preparation for replanting, with volunteer support being sought for future planting activity. At the East Station Office, a major grant application for refurbishment was unsuccessful, meaning urgent repair work to brickwork may now need to be funded directly by the Trust in the short term, although social media presence remains strong and further funding opportunities are being explored. He also reported that there was little to update on other umbrella group activity, suggesting things are broadly stable.

Members were updated on the acquisition of 70 High Street, confirming that keys have now been handed over and marking a significant milestone in bringing the building into community ownership. The achievement was welcomed and formally noted, with recognition given to the Community Trust directors, and Michael Ireland (Chair) for their considerable voluntary work in driving the project forward. It was emphasised that the building now belongs to the community and must be actively managed to ensure it remains viable, with a need for additional volunteers to come forward to help run the hub, estimated at a further 10–12 people required to avoid the risk of it being lost.

Further updates included discussion around the Men's Shed, which has met recently and is exploring the potential purchase of the Haylodge depot, although this is not being pursued as a Community Asset Transfer. Some concern was expressed about delays in making the building available and its current usability, with disappointment that progress has taken approximately two years. The Chair noted frustration that the Common Good process has not moved more quickly and that the building had not been made fit for purpose or suitable for letting in the meantime.

SBC Councillor reports

Cllr Begg: Members were advised that a walkabout is being arranged, with an invitation for Tweeddale West councillors to participate. These walks were described as effective for identifying local issues, and members were asked to submit any concerns for inclusion in a shared list, particularly matters in the north side area. Suggestions were also made that the unpaid work team could assist with small-scale improvements. PC Councillors were asked to email Cllrs Begg, Small, Thomson, or the Chair with any items for attention. It was also noted that, due to the pre-election purdah period, activity is currently limited until after the elections. The next surgery at Tesco will take place on 2 June.

A wider discussion was noted around environmental stewardship, with emphasis on the importance of the River Tweed and collaboration with community groups and organisations under the "Feed into Tweed" initiative. Cllr Begg highlighted the need for oversight of agencies such as SEPA and Scottish Water, and the importance of ensuring coordinated action at community level. Finally, concern was raised about the lack of provision for electric vehicle charging for residents without driveways, particularly in social housing, with Cllr Begg stressing that clearer planning and timelines are needed to avoid disadvantaging sections of the community.

Cllr Tatler: Cllr Tatler advised that a similar walk-round exercise will be undertaken on the south side of the town, with some funding available through the Small Schemes Fund. Attention should be given to the south side river path. The section from the hump to Fotheringham Bridge and towards the tunnel is next, with a report being prepared. He encouraged making the case for inclusion in the Tweed Trail project to ensure the south side is also developed. The Chair noted an issue in South Park Woods where rusted corrugated iron has appeared, which will be photographed and forwarded to Cllr Tatler for attention. Members were reminded of the Gypsy Glen Hill Run taking place on Wednesday 27 May, with volunteers still needed.

Updates were also given on wider local matters, including Cllr Tatler's participation in the ETAP Loch Ness where he is raising funds for Dementia Friendly via a JustGiving page. Regarding Tweedbridge roadworks, it was noted that SBC has no direct control over the works, but SBC Cllrs have raised concerns with SP Energy Networks about congestion and PCC has also made representations. Members raised concerns about emergency service access and suggested that parking restrictions should be enforced in the area. Additional concerns were noted about road and path condition near the bridge, including subsidence at steps leading down to the Tweed, with agreement that this may be an opportune time to carry out repairs while traffic restrictions are in place.

Treasurer's report: The report was circulated and noted. It was highlighted that there is currently a high end-of-year balance, although this does not all belong to the Community Council. A fuller financial report will be presented at the AGM. It was confirmed that some of the funds are earmarked for specific activities, including cinema screenings, and that funding for Peebles in Bloom has not yet been received. The transfer of the bank account to RBS is still ongoing.

Chambers Institution Trust: The report had been circulated and reported continued progress on Phase 1 of the project, with detailed design work (RIBA Stage 4) remaining on track for completion by 28 April. Planning is underway for enabling works by SB Contracts, which will commence once relevant parts of the building are vacated. Monthly board reporting has now been replaced by weekly informal updates to trustees, providing more current but less detailed information.

A key focus this month is the decant programme, with removal contractors appointed following competitive tender. Moves are scheduled to begin on 13 April and complete by the end of the month, with contractors liaising directly with tenants. Temporary accommodation arrangements are largely in place: Newby Court has been prepared for CAB, School Brae Unit 1 for Go Tweed Valley, and Eddleston Primary School for Live Borders staff and museum, library and gallery collections. Some outstanding issues remain, including the relocation of the Registrar's external post box and final arrangements for public access computers in the Burgh Hall foyer. Phase 2 feasibility work and the business plan are now in draft, with public consultation expected in mid-May. The Friends of the Chambers Institution have also held their first meeting, with a draft memorandum of understanding prepared to support ongoing cooperation.

In terms of building maintenance, essential works to address dry rot in the Burgh Hall dressing room and roof gutter repairs are expected to be completed, with minor roof leaks and kitchen external repainting also being addressed. A survey is being arranged to assess deteriorating stonework at the war memorial following advice from heritage specialists.

S Coe confirmed that the report and consultant-prepared business plan have been circulated and were well received, being described as a strong and professional document. The financial and funding elements will form part of Phase 2 development, and if approved, will provide a clear framework for delivery. It was noted that the SCIO will need to continue building internal capability to support the next stages of work.

Cllr Tatler advised that public consultation sessions are planned for Phase 2, with events scheduled for Wednesday 13 May (4.00–7.30pm, drop-in format) and Saturday 16 May (10.30am–3.00pm), providing opportunities for community engagement and feedback.

I Dempster thanked S Coe for the update. In relation to the War Memorial repairs, S Coe confirmed that this forms part of the Chambers Institution Trust (CIT) works currently being considered. S Coe also noted that recruitment of additional trustees for the SCIO is ongoing, with the intention of first recruiting members and then developing the trustee group from that pool.

Peebles in Bloom: G Macdonald confirmed that arrangements for Peebles in Bloom are on track, with all dates in place and further instructions to be issued to members in due course.

A Mackenzie advised that Rosetta Caravan Park is reinstating use as a touring caravan site in addition to static caravans and was operational over the Easter period. M Bruce suggested this may be an appropriate time to revisit the potential use of Kingsmeadows car park for overnight campervan parking. Cllr Tatler agreed to raise this with SBC officers.

The Old Schoolhouse on Tweed Green: The Chair confirmed correspondence had been sent to David Robertson to monitor progress. S Coe noted that discussions with SBC are still required, and Cllr Begg

advised that while there is currently a delay, there remains a route to resolution and acknowledged the ongoing work being undertaken.

AOB

It was confirmed that a Peebles Community Council election will not be required as there are sufficient members in place.

A Mackenzie noted progress at Peebles High School demolition works and commented that while it is positive to see work progressing, it is unfortunate that the science building is still being removed. He also asked whether a PCC litter pick would be arranged this year, and it was agreed that he and G Macdonald would coordinate this.

G Macdonald commented that the new railings at Ushers Wind look smart. An update was requested on bin provision at Cuddyside, but Cllr Begg confirmed there was no new information. Thanks were noted for the Rose Park wall intervention. In relation to the Baptist Church site, concerns were raised about rubbish accumulation, and Cllr Tatler confirmed there was no update at present. It was agreed that PCC would write to the Baptist Church requesting an update.

S Watson welcomed the reopening of the lane beside Rose Park. G Ramsay raised concerns regarding road repairs on the Earlston to Stow back road, noting they did not appear on the SBC website. Cllr Tatler advised that works should be included in the Roads Asset Management Plan (RAMP), which is published each spring, and agreed to contact the Eildon area roads team for clarification. The Secretary agreed to forward G Ramsay’s email to Cllr Tatler.

The Secretary asked I Dempster to confirm the closing date for nominations for the Young Person’s Award, which was confirmed as the end of May.

S Coe provided an update on interpretation signage for the spigot mortar site, noting that the Civic Society is leading on this work and that improved interpretation would help highlight the WWII heritage and enhance visitor interest.

The meeting ended at 2050hrs.

The next meeting will be on 14 May 2026 in the Burgh Hall.

..... Chairman

..... Dated