



Community Council
of the
Royal Burgh of Peebles and District

Minutes of the 346th Meeting of the Community Council which was held on Thursday 8 October 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), D Ashmole, F Richardson, G MacDonald (Treasurer), G Ramsay, I Dempster, C Moore, J Wilson, K Guiney, M Bruce, M Marshall (Vice Chairman and Planning Convenor), P Maudsley (Chairman), S Coe, S Watson, Cllr Begg, Cllr Douglas, Cllr Tatler,

In attendance: Chief Inspector D Rourke local Area Commander for the Scottish Borders, PC R Sheills, PC G Beaumont, all from Police Scotland, C Carson from Peeblesshire News; K Peebles from The Peeblean, A McGilvray, Journalist, Planet Radio.

Members of the Public: J Falla, A Newton.

Apologies: S Mackay, H Young, Cllr Pirone

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/>

Declarations of Interest

M Marshall declared that he is a trustee of Kingsmeadows SCIO and Planning Democracy and notes that he was coopted by PCC at its January 2024 meeting becoming planning convenor in March 2024 because of his involvement with the campaign to save Kingsmeadows Woodland.

Police Scotland

Chief Inspector David Rourke, Local Area Commander, PC Beaumont and PC Sheills attended to discuss local policing matters.

Chief Inspector Rourke explained that Roads Policing was a national function, with the Borders forming part of the Lothian and Borders division. Following a review of deployment and estates, officers had moved from Duns to Dalkeith. Members raised concerns about the distances involved, potential effects on response times and the specialist training required for Roads Policing. The Chief Inspector explained that resources were deployed according to operational requirements and that drones and social media were among the tools used by Police Scotland.

Members expressed concern about the removal of speed cameras and the loss of a visible deterrent, particularly given the effects of speeding on pedestrians, cyclists and residents' quality of life. The Chief Inspector clarified that decisions to decommission cameras rested with the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland, rather than Police Scotland, and that greater emphasis was being placed on mobile enforcement.

Peebles Police Station remained operational, although staffing varied because of leave and sickness. The Chief Inspector outlined the financial pressures facing Police Scotland and explained that a revised operating model was intended to maintain community visibility while allowing officers to complete planned work. Members discussed response times, mental health incidents and concerns about the visibility of local policing. M Bruce commented that the announcement about community policing had been overshadowed by reports of 50 officers being suspended.

Concerns were raised about suspected criminal activity associated with vape shops. The Chief Inspector explained that community intelligence was important and that Trading Standards and HMRC could be involved where appropriate. Cllr Tatler agreed to email the Chair setting out the differences between the relevant legislation in Scotland and England.

The September crime figures showed low levels of assault, average levels of antisocial behaviour and theft below average. The Chief Inspector acknowledged that individual incidents could nevertheless have a significant effect on public perceptions of safety.

In the separate policing update, the Chief Inspector highlighted mental health, rural acquisitive crime, violence against women and girls, and the effects of domestic abuse on young people. PC Sheills reported a successful plain-clothes operation using an unmarked vehicle, which had resulted in a drugs stop, with further operations planned. Police were also carrying out daily vehicle checks for MOT, insurance and roadworthiness. Advice was given on internet safety and scams, particularly for older residents, home security during the darker evenings, and planned illegal-fishing operations with Tweed water bailiffs in mid-November.

Cllr Begg thanked the officers for attending. K Guiney requested a visible police presence on the High Street on Saturdays because of shoplifting. Chief Inspector Rourke said retail crime had increased nationally and referred to funding available for a two-month period.

Kingsmeadows Public Toilets

A local resident who had wished to raise the matter was unable to attend. Members were advised that officers were working on restoration plans and costs, after which alternative funding would need to be considered.

S Watson expressed concern about the delay. Cllr Tatler advised that John Currie of Scottish Borders Council (SBC) had agreed to seek an update. G Ramsay noted that the other two damaged facilities were operational. M Bruce raised concerns about the reputational damage to Peebles and the implications for the Common Good.

Cllr Tatler agreed to obtain a specific statement on the insurance position and to seek an update on the restoration plans, costs and anticipated timescales through John Currie.

Open Forum – Edinburgh Road Open-Air Market Signage

J Falla questioned the Edinburgh Road market sign, particularly when only two stalls were present. S Watson considered that the sign was looking tired, while Cllr Douglas explained that the market was privately operated. The Secretary agreed to investigate ownership of the signage and responsibility for its maintenance, and report back to the Community Council.

Approval of Previous Minutes

The September minutes were considered. G Ramsay requested an amendment to record that he had not received the Common Good Report. Cllr Tatler explained that a funding strategy had been prepared and

circulated to the Common Good group but confirmed that G Ramsay had not received it. Cllr Tatler agreed to establish why it had not been received and provide him with a copy.

The minutes were approved subject to this amendment, proposed by M Bruce and seconded by J Wilson.

Matters Arising

Football grounds: Members supported the draft letter prepared by Cllr Begg. The Chair agreed to issue a letter on behalf of the Community Council, while Cllr Begg would write separately to other relevant parties. Members noted that the requirement for £150,000 expenditure could deter new clubs from taking on facilities.

SBC car parks: Most concerns had been resolved, but the non-refundable parking charge at Peebles Swimming Pool remained an issue. The charges had previously supported the pool and was refundable, but the parking fund no longer reimbursed the cost. Councillors were continuing to explore whether the previous arrangement could be reinstated.

Innerleithen Road: The Secretary was still awaiting a response from SBC to the invitation for a senior Roads Officer to inspect the road between the Eastgate Theatre and the BP roundabout. The Secretary would follow up with SBC.

Chair's Report

The Chair's report had been circulated. Members noted that a revised community council funding proposal had been accepted, providing a base payment of £160 for each community council and increasing the per-capita rate from 16p to 22p. The Chair noted that the original letter to the Chief Executive of SBC had initiated the review. The proposal has to be ratified by the full Council.

M Marshall was encouraging a review of Peebles' Local Place Plan ahead of the September 2027 deadline. Members also heard concerns about patients being turned away from the Haylodge minor injuries service and referred to Borders General Hospital, with inconsistent advice reportedly being given.

The Chair reported that £148,723 had been awarded to 19 projects through the Bowbeat Community Benefit Fund. Further information was considered under the Foundation Scotland report.

A £570 microgrant application from Floral Peebles had been approved for Remembrance and autumn garden work. Members discussed the remaining funds available for microgrants and the importance of making the scheme known to community groups. The Chair also noted progress on the Old Schoolhouse issue.

Planning Report

M Marshall presented the circulated planning report.

Leithenwater Wind Farm: SBC's Planning Committee had objected to the proposal, citing landscape concerns, insufficient information about effects on golden eagles and the proposed 22-kilometre overhead grid connection. Members were concerned that the developer's correspondence might misrepresent the Community Council's conditional support and previous discussions with the eagle conservation group, including turbine relocation.

Members agreed that the Community Council's position should be clarified with the Energy Consents Unit (ECU). M Marshall agreed to draft a letter setting out the position. The application might proceed to a public local inquiry or appeal, with the ECU responsible for deciding the next stage; the Community Council could submit its own views.

Kingsmeadows woodland: NatureScot had confirmed that the proposal was likely to have a significant effect on the River Tweed Special Area of Conservation. An appropriate assessment would therefore be required to demonstrate that there would be no adverse effect before approval could be considered.

Members expressed concern that ecological evidence remained outstanding despite objections having been raised approximately a year earlier. They stressed the importance of protecting the ancient woodland and questioned whether public views had been adequately reflected. The Chair congratulated those who had campaigned on the issue. Members also noted the possibility that the developer could pursue legal action if SBC refused the application.

SBC had requested the Community Council's views by 22 October. Members discussed responding along the lines of the explanation already circulated, subject to legal review, and agreed that a response should be prepared by the deadline.

George Street MOT service building: Concerns remained about flood risk, the absence of a Flood Risk Assessment and outstanding environmental information. The Community Council had lodged a holding objection pending submission of the required assessment and information.

Foundation Scotland – Bowbeat Community Benefit Fund

C Moore outlined the Bowbeat Community Benefit Fund. Approximately £200,000 was available over two years, with £148,723 awarded to 19 projects in the first round and around £55,000 remaining. The next application deadline was 16 December, with the panel due to meet in April 2027.

D Ashmole asked whether previous recipients could apply again. C Moore explained that this would depend on the applications received and the funds available. The Chair thanked C Moore and the panel for their work. C Moore agreed to circulate details of the successful applications and the purposes for which funding had been awarded.

Members also discussed the Community Council's own microgrant scheme and the importance of publicising the funding available to local groups.

Peebles Community Trust

The Trust's report had been circulated. ReUse Hub sales were approximately 25% above the previous best figures recorded at School Brae, while high levels of donations were creating storage pressures. New shelving had been installed, although staff and volunteers continued to face the burden of moving donations upstairs.

Members noted tree planting at Eshiels Woods and the planned move of Cycling Without Age to Caledonian Court. Two Bowbeat grants had supported refurbishment of the East Station Office and materials for Eshiels Wood.

M Bruce highlighted the need for younger, physically fit volunteers. Members discussed work experience, voluntary-hours schemes, the possibility of a central volunteer pool and Community Payback, noting that suitable, planned projects would be needed.

The successful mock debate involving young people was also discussed. Participants had criticised the Council website and indicated that they preferred platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat to Facebook.

Councillors' Reports

Cllr Tatler advised that the High Street bus build-out was expected shortly. The Local Government Reorganisation working group was meeting weekly, and members were encouraged to read and comment on the material being considered, including proposals relating to health boards. The Chair expressed concern about the complexity of the process and whether changes could be implemented effectively.

The Civic Society had obtained funding for a visual concept scheme for the Spigot Mortar emplacement, placing it within the wider Second World War context. Further funding of approximately £20,000 was being sought. Members also discussed lighting in Victoria Park, including a dark spot and the path behind the 3G pitch.

Cllr Tatler reported on a SEPA river-gauge recalibration event and reminded residents to register for SBC alerts. The Secretary noted that SEPA alerts required a mobile number rather than a landline. Challenge Poverty Week and support available through the SBC website were also mentioned.

Cllr Douglas reported that the all-party Local Government Reorganisation working group was considering several options, including arrangements involving councils below regional level. A three-month consultation was anticipated, although it could take longer. The Chair raised concerns about the workload for SBC officers and consultants and whether three months would be sufficient. M Marshall stressed the importance of listening to communities.

Cllr Douglas reiterated the planning concerns relating to Leithenwater Wind Farm and encouraged members to take part in the planning survey and national planning consultations. Members were also reminded that SBC meetings could be viewed on YouTube.

Early learning and childcare registrations had opened on 1 October for children born between 1 September and 31 December 2024 seeking a January 2027 place.

Cllr Begg said that Local Government Reorganisation should focus on measurable outcomes, including drug deaths, educational attainment, hip replacement outcomes and access to GP appointments, rather than process measures or structural change for its own sake.

He reported on a walkabout with Cllrs Thomson and Small, with a joint report being prepared. SBHA was investigating concerns about recycling arrangements at Cuddyside, including whether the kerb was directing water away. Feedback was being sought before decisions were made.

Members were reminded that Pop-up Bob was available for use on local streets to encourage drivers to slow down. Cllr Begg also thanked S Coe for the work undertaken at School Brae.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that a bank statement had been received and the SBC grant application was in progress. Work was also under way to transfer online banking from Bank of Scotland to NatWest.

Income to costs for the Peebles In Bloom presentation event were at £550 (awaiting one small remittance to the Trophy Guy) and £457 from the raffle, representing a significant improvement. Thanks were recorded to Cllr Thomson for assistance with the car park fund and to Cllr Tatler for the Gypsy Hill Run. All debts were up to date. McFarlane Hall had been provisionally booked for Peebles in Bloom in 2027 at a lower cost.

Members discussed the venue for future meetings and whether to use McFarlane Hall rather than Burgh Hall. S Watson noted that hiring Burgh Hall helped support its continued operation, while G MacDonald required suitable facilities for photographs and video presentations and the current arrangements at

Burgh Hall did not meet those needs. Cllr Tatler expressed concern about losing the use of Burgh Hall and suggested considering how the venue could be used more effectively.

The venue question would be brought back to the next meeting by the Chair, and Cllr Tatler agreed to consider the issues raised. Members noted that the venue had already been booked for the following year.

Chambers Institution Trust

The circulated report indicated that Phase 1 was expected to be completed by the end of 2027, with reoccupation anticipated by March 2028, subject to tender costs. Enabling works would follow the discharge of planning conditions, and savings had been identified within the contingency.

Consultants were developing a transition business plan and feasibility work for Phase 2, including future use of the building and Burgh Hall. A survey had found that the original 1922 memorial stone had deteriorated. Specialist repair work had been put out to tender, and charity grants were being explored.

The Friends group had been established, with a membership meeting planned before the end of the year. Volunteers and representation from Tweeddale were welcomed.

Members discussed future use of Burgh Hall, including the possibility of a community kitchen and a proposed investment of £100,000. The Chair suggested awaiting the Phase 2 work before drawing conclusions. Regarding the War Memorial Ian Dempster questioned why repairs undertaken in 2014 had been considered adequate without subsequent inspections. Members discussed the limitations of the original stone and the need for comprehensive repairs and ongoing monitoring. The Chair agreed to revisit the matter at a future meeting.

Common Good

There was no report circulated. Members were informed of the approved memorial garden in front of the orchard.

Short-Term Let Licensing

Antony Newton, who lived in Peebles, raised concerns about the concentration of short-term lets, their effect on affordable housing and neighbouring residents, and the difficulty of objecting to applications. He acknowledged the importance of tourism to the area but felt that the balance needed consideration.

The Chair agreed that a balance was required and proposed gathering further information about the number and concentration of short-term lets in Peebles before considering the issue again. Cllr Douglas explained that changes to planning regulations would be needed to provide additional controls, as the licensing committee had limited grounds on which to refuse applications where planning controls did not apply.

Members agreed to gather information and return to the matter at the next meeting.

Any Other Business

A Snoddy reported positively on a two-hour experience with Dementia Scotland and highlighted the need for funding and volunteers.

Members congratulated the organisers of the Tour of the Borders, which had been well organised and received positive feedback.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Date of next meeting: 12 November 2026, Burgh Hall.

Signed: _____ Chair

Date: _____

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