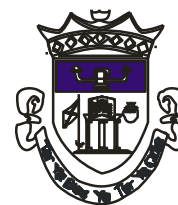

Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 9th May 2022 following the AGM

within the Lesser Town Hall, Hawick

Present:	Marion Short (Chair)	Cameron Knox (Vice-Chair)
	Jim Adams (Treasurer)	Margaret Hogg (Secretary)
	John Campbell	Braden George
	Wilson George	Keith Irving
	Duncan Taylor	Euan Welsh
	French Wight	John Wilkinson
Attending:	Councillor McAteer	Councillor Smart

There were 16 members of the public in attendance, along with Jason Marshall, reporting for the Hawick Paper.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed returning Councillors and Annette Smart, newly elected Councillor and stated it was important to have Councillors' attendance at HCC meetings, to ensure any queries raised by members of the public could be answered or otherwise progressed by them.

It was noted that the Hawick Paper and the Secretary would be recording the meeting for reporting and minuting purposes. If anyone had any issues of being recorded, they should make that known.

Duncan Taylor raised the issue that Councillors Marshall and Ramage had had to leave the meeting following the AGM to allow them to attend Burnfoot Community Council Meeting. He asked if it were possible to contact the other CCs in the two wards to share meeting dates, to try to minimise duplication of meetings and ensure that Councillors could attend as many CC meetings as were possible. He considered it would be good if everyone could publish their meeting dates in advance.

The Chair advised that HCC meetings were held the second Monday of each month, and agreed it would be a good idea to contact the other CCs as there were likely to be some duplication of dates, which would then be known upfront.

Councillor Smart agreed it would be good for her diary purposes and for other Councillors too, to have all CC meeting dates noted at the beginning of each year.

- 2. Declarations of Interest** – The Chair advised that if any members had a conflict of interest in any agenda items, they should please make it known at the start of the discussion.

3. **Apologies for Absence** – Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Cox and Richards.
4. **Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 11^h April 2022** – The previously circulated Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting – Proposed by Duncan Taylor and Seconded by Wilson George.
5. **Matters arising** –
 - New greenhouse for Walled Gardens** - The Chair asked Councillor McAteer on progress with the new greenhouse to be installed at the Walled Gardens. Councillor McAteer advised that whilst all materials for this were in place, he understood the build had been delayed and a date was awaited.
 - Broken slabs at Museum** – The Chair advised that Councillor Ramage had undertaken to investigate progress, and an update could be provided by her at next month's meeting.
 - Erection of Deer signs** – it was noted that whilst these had been erected, they had not prevented a deer being hit recently at the Nipknowes.
6. **Police Scotland Report** – The Chair advised that, as had been the case for some time, there was again no Police attendance at the meeting. Reports had been circulated to members.

Braden George enquired as to why this continued to be the case. It was noted that this could be due to lack of manpower, or it may be that they remained restricted due to Covid still being prevalent, albeit they were known to have attended a recent Newcastleton CC meeting.

Braden George suggested that a letter be issued to the Police regarding this continuing non-attendance. Councillor McAteer advised that the Police had made it clear to Councillors that they could not routinely attend all CC meetings however if there were any more serious and continuing issues requiring addressing, they may be able to provide manpower to attend in person.

It was recognised that with the local Common Ridings and summer events, Police Scotland would be busier than ever. Nevertheless, it was agreed to write to Divisional Commander Vinnie Fisher to enquire as to any schedule for attending a HCC meeting.

The Chair stated a theme across both reports was an increase in common assaults. Duncan Taylor advised that total crimes and offences were however down 34% and that figure was one to celebrate.

On the matter of Parking Tickets, the Vice-Chair expressed his concerns at no data being available in the month due to annual leave. It seemed unbelievable that only one person could provide data for the whole of Police Scotland.

The Secretary stated it was good to note that Newcastleton CC had now launched their CCTV. They had intimated previously their willingness to provide guidance to HCC members on their experiences in securing CCTV. Councillor McAteer suggested that HCC members take time to visit Newcastleton's CCTV. This was a first-class system, and well worth a visit. He went on to state now he had been successfully returned as a Councillor he would be pursuing CCTV in Hawick as a priority. French Wight agreed CCTV should be one of HCC's main priorities for the forthcoming year.

The Chair agreed to contact Greg Cuthbert to arrange a visit for interested HCC members.

The Treasurer stated he had noted from the reports a lot of youths running about the town causing havoc and damage and considered CCTV would be beneficial to curb this type of behaviour. Euan Welsh had similarly noted these incidents but stated in a lot of cases when Police had attended there was no trace of the youths concerned which he considered perhaps encouraged further bad behaviour in their not being caught. Antisocial behaviour cases would require further monitoring. Braden George enquired if more could be done on educating and engaging with youths in schools specifically regarding antisocial behaviour and the consequences of their actions. He was aware of education on drugs and alcohol but was not aware of this being the case for antisocial behaviour. Duncan Taylor advised he could take this up with the High School to encourage more police visits on this matter.

Councillor Smart expressed caution in criminalising youngsters for minor indiscretions which would impact on their lives and asked if there were any outreach youth workers out and about on the streets. It was noted that Street Pastors previously operated pre-covid on weekend nights. Councillor Smart also asked as to the possibility of speaking with Youth Workers within the town to highlight antisocial issues with a view to raising awareness. Duncan Taylor stated that CCTV had proved to be beneficial in tackling issues of antisocial behaviour, however, this then often moved on to other areas. It would not be possible for any CCTV to cover every area, and therefore the alternative method of educating youths was worth a try, complemented by any CCTV. Marjorie McCreadie reported that campervanners had advised her the Common Haugh was now quiet, with boy-racers having appeared to have moved on elsewhere and she was not aware of any issues for some time now. French Wight reported that youths had been seen recently on the roof of the Common Haugh toilets.

Conor Price, Flood Protection Group, advised that they had been aware of issues with boy racers on motor bikes making use of the new footpath on the ground above Mansfield Rugby Club which had required Police involvement. A member of the public asked as to the possibility of having speed bumps or such like installed as a deterrent.

The Chair advised of the possibility of a small sub-group of HCC members being formed to take forward the points being raised, with a view to doing something pro-active to help deal with this important issue.

Yvonne Gilfillan, McLaughlin & Harvey advised that Sergeant Alison Grainger had made her aware of youths having been noted on the roof of the High School, being within the footprint of the Flood Protection Scheme, and had deployed her crime officers to deal with this. Yvonne suggested it may be an idea to link in with Sergeant Grainger to learn of methods they use for handling youths involved in antisocial behaviour. Incidents of antisocial behaviour were also reported by members of the public around the old Almstrongs building and youths accessing areas which had been barricaded off as well as accessing the new footbridge across to Sainsbury's, which was not yet open.

Councillor McAteer agreed there was a need for an integrated approach to tackling antisocial behaviour, always subject to any actions being proportionate. Mobile CCTV was available for use and where any hotspots of antisocial behaviour were identified, this could be applied for. Its use was not appropriate however for individual and one-off personal cases of antisocial behaviour being experienced.

7. **High School Senior Team Report** – No report presented due to forthcoming exams and studying requirements.

8. **Guest Speaker – Conor Price, Project Manager, CPE Consultancy, for Flood Protection Scheme** – Conor advised he would provide an update on the Scheme since his last update to the HCC meeting last December and he was happy to respond to any questions.

He stated he was aware of a “building fatigue” in the town towards construction of the Flood Protection Scheme which came as no surprise to him. They were now 24 months into a 40-month construction programme, and he recognised a degree of frustration, particularly regarding the Victoria Footbridge which was not yet opened. He would also address the perception of incomplete works.

He reiterated that it was a 40-month programme, which at the present time was still on target for completion in September 2023. Rumours to the contrary were untrue. The primary reason for 40 months was to allow completion of river works which could only be carried out between 1st May and 30th September each year. They had learned a lot from works which had already been carried out and what should be being seen now was a rapid deployment of works into the river since 2nd May 2022. It had been disappointing not to have been able to complete Commercial Road works last year and so they were back to another road closure there but confident that these works would be completed by the end of this year.

It had been highlighted that as much flood protection in terms of the walls would be put into the town so to ensure that maximum protection was reached in the shortest time. Whilst October saw the town put to the test and an evacuation stage reached, there had not been any domestic properties affected, albeit flooding had occurred at Mansfield Rugby Club and lower Mansfield Road. By the time this winter September/October came around, it was their key aspiration between the red and white barriers and the constructed defences, everywhere in the town would be protected for the first time.

He had reported in his December update that he hoped the Victoria Footbridge would be opened by Summer 2022, and Conor confirmed that this date remained on programme. He suggested that the opening could be late July and that this was a key priority. A Specialist Finishing Team had been set up bringing key resources together from their Project Management Team, the Council, McLaughlin & Harvey and Jacobs designers, meeting on a weekly basis to review progress on advancing that target date and things were progressing well.

On the concept of finishing works across the town, he recognised in December that not enough works had been finished and the reasons were partly to all intents and purposes because they had been completed apart from “finishing” works required on landscaping and dressing of the ground. That work could not be started until entering Spring as there would be no point in laying grass seed during winter however these works should now be seen as started and finished off with topsoil, with the planting and seeding to be started in the next 2 to 3 weeks. Across the town, missing coping stones could be seen, and this was due to a defect being identified with these. If the defects were not attended to, the coping would have cracked in time. The contractor would return to sort these defects, and whilst these

created an image of non-completion, they were a natural part of the quality control process. There were also defects found in the concrete work on the entrance ramp to Volunteer Park and this was being taken out and reformed ready to put back, again as part of quality control checks. He concluded stating that multiple squads from McLaughlin & Harvey were now attending to various issues highlighted, including defective masonry, concrete, fitting of the flood gates, fitting of windows and landscaping, with a view to getting these works completely cleared as soon as possible.

The Chair thanked Conor for his update and was glad to hear that the programme remained on schedule for completion in September 2023. She then asked for questions.

Jim Adams referred to the opening of the Victoria Bridge in late July and queried if information he had been advised of was accurate in that the Thomson Bridge would be closed by the beginning of July. Conor stated that contractors had confirmed there was no scenario whereby both these bridges would be closed at the same time, and this would not be permitted to happen. He was not aware of the Thomson Bridge being scheduled to be closed anytime in July however would check on this.

Duncan Taylor advised of works carried out at Mill Port and some rubber pieces relating to heras fencing which had been installed, along with tyres and some green and white cones now deposited in the river. He queried when these would be taken out so as not to become an eyesore. Conor confirmed Yvonne and her team would have this matter attended to. Conor went on to advise of significant works programmed for the Sandbed area which would be accessed from the Mill Port side by way of a bridge and platforms across the river as was the case last year. It was important therefore to have the river cleared of these items.

Keith Irving asked that with Hawick Common Riding now taking place, as to the chance of any access to the water for horses, as was the case in previous years. This was an animal welfare issue. Conor advised that in the short term, Yvonne could investigate any possibility for this, however, in the longer term that entire zone would be constructed on, and he was unsure whether any permanent access had been accommodated within design. Conor undertook to investigate that matter further.

Yvonne advised that it had been agreed with Frank Scott and the Showmen's Guild that the large horse boxes would park at the top end of the Haugh and that there was a mains water tap available for use there.

French Wight raised his concerns regarding access to the river with kids likely to be able to climb over walls, and their ability to then be able to get back out. Conor advised that at various locations along the river there were planned exit points for anyone trapped as well as for vehicular access. Right now, it was hard to see the finished picture due to continuing construction, but this should become clearer as works progressed.

Cameron Knox advised that it was gratifying to hear the programme remained on schedule for completion, negating any contingencies and additional costs. Conor referred to the additional £3.6m of funding from the Active Travel Network layered onto the Flood Protection Scheme and they were working towards these two coming together within one deliverable timescale. In December the new footbridge linking Weensland and Burnfoot

had been discussed and he confirmed that technically this was now possible. A planning application would be submitted to Scottish Borders Council in August, which would take to September/October for approval, before these works could be given to McLaughlin & Harvey. So, it may be that some of the extra £3.6m works could take a bit longer to complete but he hoped no-one would hold him to account on these additional works. In the meantime, they would nevertheless continue to aim for the same completion date for all works.

A member of the public raised the matter with Yvonne of having witnessed a JCB digger operative using this equipment without safety hearing protection. Yvonne confirmed that these were supplied, and part of induction training and she would address the matter with operatives. Conor advised that on site this was termed as a Safety Observation Report and operatives were challenged when found to not be observing safety instructions. If any member of the public observed poor safety behaviour, they should note the date, time and location and advise the Project Team, to allow any incident to be tracked back to the operative and addressed.

A member of the public raised concerns with plans to pedestrianise Laidlaw Terrace and the issues that would cause for residents there being unable then to park their cars. Conor responded stating that they were trying to find a way of linking the Active Travel Network through Laidlaw Terrace, which was proving extremely difficult. The Active Travel Network started at Weensland, up Duke Street and continued through Laidlaw Terrace and in the opposite direction, past B&M Store to the Wee Haugh and onwards to Wilton Lodge Park. Sustrans had provided £12.6m not just for a footpath but to reshape the whole route and environment with trees, planting, bicycle racks, and enhanced landscaping of the Wee Haugh, Common Haugh, Duke Street etc. Laidlaw Terrace was a pinch-point. It had originally been considered that the path would be taken under the Mart Street road bridge, under North Bridge and back up at B&M, thus avoiding Laidlaw Terrace, but that had proved not to be possible. That area was part of the key design discussions brought to the Town Hall in March. There was a building consensus to restructure the road and they were currently looking at designs, but these were not yet finalised as consultation was currently ongoing with residents in Laidlaw Terrace.

Marjorie McCreddie stated she had attended the consultation in March and asked about the banking behind Oliver Park. Conor advised that Weensland was the last part of the project which would be developed, and this would not be until 2023. In relation to that pathway and banking, they were in discussions with Scottish Borders Housing Association and the opening into Oliver Park.

At discussions in the Town Hall, Marjorie advised that staff had said it would be a long time before works at the Common Haugh would be finished. Conor advised there had been two design changes – one regarding the sluice, and he understood the sewage connection was currently being constructed, and secondly, they had agreed to enhance campervan facilities at the top end, and he understood a planning application had been submitted the previous week. As soon as that application had been responded to, works would be given to McLaughlin & Harvey, and he stated it was his hope for works at the Common Haugh to be completed at some point in 2022.

Conor went on to say that calls had been made for additional bitumen to be put down at the Common Haugh as they had only planned for new bitumen in areas affected by flood protection works, and additional funding would be required to be investigated to allow this whole area to be renewed.

A resident of Teviot Crescent raised an issue with the garage immediately across from his house, with noise, late night working etc. The entrance to that garage had been changed to accommodate flood protection works and he sought assurance given the flood wall was now built, that the entrance to the garage remained temporary and would revert to its original location pre-works. Conor stated their immediate priority was to have works completed to allow the opening of Victoria Bridge and to reinstate the parking spaces at Teviot Crescent to allow better traffic flow again. He advised whilst no date for completion of works around the garage could be given, he confirmed that the entrance was indeed temporary and would return to its original entrance site.

The Chair thanked Conor for his update and looked forward to further updates in due course.

9. Treasurer's Report – The Treasurer reported an opening balance of £19,942.58 and Closing Balance of £27,030.67.

HCC1 account (Opening Balance: £5,579.50) – a grant of £1915.45 had been received from T&L Partnership fund for gazebos and tables, and expenses incurred totalled £2,206.25, resulting in a closing balance for that account of £5,288.70.

Christmas Lights/Events Account (Opening Balance: £1,051.09) – the unmetered festive lighting cost of £192.05 had been paid, resulting in a closing balance of £859.04.

Hawick in Bloom – no movement in the month – closing balance £4,486.54

Foundation Scotland (Opening Balance: £8,631.07) – income received from Foundation Scotland grants of £1,915 and £7,683.19 for gazebos and Christmas lights respectively, and expenses for gazebos and tables purchased and totalling £2,027.25 paid, resulting in a closing balance of £16,202.01.

Resilience Account – no movement in the month – closing balance £194.38.

As reported in the annual accounts, £11,731.07 of the closing balance of £27,030.67 remained ring-fenced for improvement works at Williestruther and Bandstand events at Wilton Lodge Park.

Members approved the Treasurer's Report.

10. Public Forum & Town Issues

- (a) Control of Dogs - The Treasurer reported that uncontrolled dogs were causing havoc with planting at the War Memorial particularly at the front part adjoining the pathway. He asked if there was anything which could be done. Keith Irving advised that badgers could also be the culprits. The Secretary confirmed uncontrolled dogs were a hazard to the plants and that Hawick in Bloom planned to add plants to tidy this front area, however having to take these measures only added to costs. It was suggested to

investigate inserting a plaque appealing to dog owners to control their dogs in that area. The Secretary would progress this.

- (b) Weed Spraying – The Secretary raised that weed spraying was badly required at the Civic Space, to the side of Borders Textiles, along the High Street and at the Horse and Trinity Gardens, and asked Councillors if they knew of any plans when this work was scheduled or if not, if they could find out. The town would be shortly having a lot more visitors and it would be good to have this work carried out to help it look tidier.
- (c) Community Pay-back Schemes - Councillor Smart asked whether there were any Community Pay-back schemes in place and was advised that teams from Criminal Justice carried out community service works in the town but due to demand for their input, they were often not available for any works needing immediate attention, so any works needed to be scheduled and were for longer-term completions.
- (d) Sustainable Planting - Councillor Smart also raised the question regarding costs for bedding plants throughout the town and whether there could be more sustainable plants used or the possibility of using the walled gardens for growing of plants. Perhaps a combination of bedding and perennial planting could be achieved which would help with costs. This would be discussed with Hawick in Bloom volunteers.
- (e) Welcome Hosts - Marjorie McCreadie stated she had advertised for 6 hosts and to date had only one in place and one for interview, leaving 4 to fill. It was the 25th year of having Welcome Hosts and she did not wish this initiative to fail being vital to the town's tourism.

It was agreed that this would be highlighted on HCC's Facebook page. It was hoped that following school exams, some High School pupils would come forward as it was acknowledged this was good for their CVs, confirmed by past Hosts having secured full-time employment. It may be possible to put up a Notice at the High School in due course but now was not the best time.

- (f) Electric Car Charger at Common Haugh – Councillor Smart asked if there were any plans for additional electric car chargers for Hawick, as the one in the Common Haugh she understood to have been decommissioned following flooding some time ago. Having seen the big bank of chargers in Langholm, and with the extra visitors anticipated to Hawick, it would be good to have more accessible chargers available within the town.

The Chair advised that it would be for her to discuss this further with her other Councillor colleagues, as this was an issue for the Council to address.

Marjorie McCreadie advised that the locations of electric car chargers were included in the new Welcome Hosts brochure, and she was unaware that the one in the Common Haugh was not working. So, it was vital that that charger be fixed.

- (g) Set-up of River Clean-up Group in Hawick – Yvonne Gilfillan referred to the previous meeting discussion on setting up a group to regularly clean and tidy the Rivers Slitrig and Teviot to prevent debris build up. She introduced Andrew Mitchell who would be willing to head up such a group. She was looking for support and volunteers from HCC to compliment the annual Big River Clean-up with perhaps a more regular monthly clean-up.

Volunteers were requested and anyone interested should contact Yvonne. Mr Mitchell advised that he walked the river frequently and following on from flooding last winter, the amount of debris had become very noticeable. It was suggested that this could be linked in with the Hornshole Greenway Group and Gordon Muir of that group agreed,

saying to attract visitors to the Hornshole Greenway path, it was vital that the river be clear of debris and look its best.

11. Reports from sub-committees

- (a) A7 Action Group – Marjorie McCreadie reported this would be resurrected now that local elections had been done. It was also noted she had secured a secretary for that Group following her mention of this at the last HCC meeting.
- (b) Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event – The Chair advised enquiries were being made from the public about tickets for this event and clarified that tickets were not necessary. The event was free and open to everyone.
- (c) Hawick Common Good – it was noted that the portrait (of a previous Lord Minto) had now been returned to the present Lord Minto. The sluice tank was now in situ and covered, albeit minor finishing works were required for emptying purposes.
- (d) Hawick in Bloom – The Secretary reported that the 6 planters outside the Town Hall and the one outside Victoria Wine shop had been affected by white fly and vine weevil grubs and would be replanted before the end of the week. She also thanked Ferguson & Aitkin and particularly Lindsay Nichol for their kind gesture to repaint all the planters for Hawick in Bloom. Finally, it was noted that two fund raising events were proposed to boost Hawick in Bloom funds, and an application would be completed for the Common Good Fund in due course for bedding plants at the War Memorial for 2023 onwards.
- (e) Wind Farms – nothing to report this month.
- (f) Christmas Event – The Chair advised it would be necessary to start planning for the Christmas Market and to determine a date etc. It would also be necessary to form a plan regarding Christmas lights and requirements for new lights and so forth. She would send out a date for a sub-group meeting to progress.

12. Updates from Community Partners

- (a) Foundation Scotland – The Chair reported that the Grant from Foundation Scotland for 2022 had paid for 2 gazebos and was also earmarked to pay for new Christmas lights and replacement Christmas trees and snowmen. The full Grant monies had been received and the Annual Report to Foundation Scotland would require showing all expenditure against this award.
- (b) Williestruther – French Wight reported Criminal Justice had completed and installed 3 new benches and a recent Junior Angling event had seen around 60 people walking around the loch and making good use of all the picnic benches, which was a good sight to witness. Additional gravel, for which funding had been applied for, would see the improvement works concluded, subject to success in securing necessary funding.
- (c) Scottish Borders Community Council Network – It was noted there was a need for a new Network Chair, as the previous one had been successful in becoming a Councillor.

13. Planning Issues – There were no major planning issues for consideration.

14. Correspondence – There was no correspondence for consideration.

15. A.O.C.B –

- (a) Exiles Overseas Night – The Chair advised this would be held on Wednesday, 8th June within the Town Hall. HCC would be allocated 4 tickets and was responsible for the purchase and presentation of gifts to the Cornet and Cornet's Lass. Any HCC member wishing to attend, and/or interested in making either presentation, should notify the Chair by Friday, 13th May 2022.

- (b) Painting of Bollards – Duncan Taylor asked about bollards which had been painted in various colours on a trial basis some time ago and wondered if any decisions had been made on the colours and whether public consultation had been completed. Visitors to the town would be unaware of the reason behind the different coloured bollards and it might come across as looking a bit silly.

Gordon Muir reported on a supplementary question regarding bollards being included within their Hornshole Greenway survey. The options for selection on colours were - All green; all blue and yellow; all green with some blue and yellow; all blue and yellow with some green. He reported results from 92% of High Street retailers responding, the majority being in favour of bollards being all green with some areas associated with the Common Riding, e.g., at the Horse, the Town Hall, the new Monument at the Tower, being blue and yellow. Whilst these results could not be seen as conclusive, as they were a supplementary question to their questionnaire, they were nevertheless a good reflection of what retailers along the High Street wanted.

It was also noted that there were two different colours of green used on bollards, as the original green used did not square with Hornshole Greenway's plans for signage in green throughout the town and agreed by other involved organisations.

John Campbell raised whether any white would be incorporated to reflect Hawick Rugby Club colours, but this had not been the case with trial bollards.

It was agreed that an email would be issued to Councillors seeking clarification as to when public consultation would be progressed.

- 16. Date of Next Meeting** – It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Monday, 13th June 2022 at 6.30pm within the Lesser Town Hall.