
Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 12th December 2022 within the Court Room, Town Hall, Hawick

Present	Marion Short (Chair)	Cameron Knox (Vice-Chair)
	Jim Adams (Treasurer)	Margaret Hogg (Secretary)
	John Campbell	Braden George
	Wilson George	Kevin Marsh
	Duncan Taylor	Euan Welsh
	John Wilkinson	

Attending:	Councillor McAteer	Councillor Marshall
	Councillor Smart	

There were 3 members of the public in attendance. Graham Ford was also in attendance on behalf of the Hawick Paper.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair thanked all those attending and confirmed there was no guest speaker that evening. Consequently, the meeting should be shorter in timescale. A report had been sent to the Hawick Paper regarding the recent successful Christmas Market held by HCC along with photographs and including thank you's, and she then thanked the Hawick Paper for their great coverage. It had been a good team effort by HCC members and the many volunteers, and everything had gone to plan. The dry weather had been welcomed, resulting in higher turnout, and preventing much additional work associated with drying out gazebos and so on at the end of the day.

A vast number of selection boxes had been handed out by Santa to the many children in attendance, with surplus boxes being distributed to the Community Hospital and to Burnfoot Community Council for their Christmas Eve event.

It was noted that the meeting would be recorded by HCC and Graham Ford of the Hawick Paper for minuting and reporting purposes.

- 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 HCC Member French Wight and Councillors Cox, Ramage, and Richards.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 14th November 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** – The Chair advised that updates on various matters were awaited from Councillor Ramage e.g., equipment for meetings, WiFi availability and so on, however in her absence this would be continued to the next meeting.

Marjorie McCreddie confirmed that she and Councillor Ramage had met with SBC's Deborah Berry to advise what was required in terms of bins at the Campervan area of the Common Haugh, however that had been almost 2 weeks, and there had been no change to what was in place. The Campervan Rally was due to start on 28th December, and it was agreed that HCC write to SBC to request that the agreed requirements be put in place in advance of that date. Councillor McAteer suggested that this matter be addressed with John Currie, Director.

Marjorie confirmed that the lagging of pipes at the sluice had now been completed. Unfortunately, she had to raise that the condition of the toilet was unacceptable. The plumber who had attended to the lagging had advised her that he himself had cleaned this, using his own materials, such was the state. There was therefore an outstanding issue on responsibility for ongoing emptying and cleaning of this tank, which allegedly costs £400.

Councillor McAteer advised this service was never envisaged to be a "free" service and to all intents could be seen as being abused by a number of people. The Council have been left with this, but with no planned budget to accommodate. It was agreed that relevant parties required to come together to work out a resolution.

Marjorie advised that campervanners were willing to pay for this service. She had been approached by people wanting to pay. She gave an example how such a scheme for payment operated in the Biggar area.

Councillor Marshall advised that this should be brought to the attention of Councillor Ramage as Chair of Hawick Common Good, to advise her of the discussion and concerns raised, to then allow progress with costings and for the matter to be addressed early in the new year between parties.

Duncan Taylor advised that unfortunately he had not been able to attend the meeting with FoWLP regarding running additional events during the Summer at the park, as he was unable to leave his teaching work. Duncan would accordingly arrange for circulation of the Minutes of that Meeting to HCC members.

Jock Campbell advised he was unhappy with the erection of the Christmas trees and snowmen at the 3 entrances to the town. He felt these were not prominent enough. Braden George undertook to review this, as it was anticipated they would remain until over the Festive Period.

On the matter of HCC's insurance, there had been ongoing correspondence between Clare Malster, SBC, and the Chair, without much real progress. SBC in their latest email apologised for the delay in getting back and stated unfortunately, further inconsistencies had been found in the information provided by Zurich which they wished to get that bottomed out. It was appreciated that this might appear as things were not proceeding very quickly but Ms Malster gave her assurance that the matter was being taken very seriously. The email had gone on to say that SBC would be contacting all Community Councils to determine how their Insurance costs impacted on the running costs of each of them.

The Chair advised correspondence regarding insurance costs had indicated that the greatest cost was associated to our Christmas Market. This had been held for a number of years, so it was a mystery as to why suddenly premiums had escalated to being so high.

It appeared that it was not only Hawick CC who were querying insurance costs, and if these costs were not sustainable for Hawick CC, then that had to be the case for many others.

Councillor McAteer confirmed that this was now on SBC's Agenda, and it had been acknowledged by Jenny Wilkinson that this would now be looked at and responded to. If insurance was impacting on the running costs of Community Councils, this would need to be resolved. Insurance was not part of, nor raised during, review meetings of the Scheme for Community Councils. It would ultimately come to Councillors in due course to make any decisions on the way forward.

The Chair advised that SBC had at least acknowledged HCC should not be required to pay for insurance to cover Resilience equipment.

The Chair enquired when the last increase was made to Community Councils' grant support monies. Councillor McAteer advised to contact Jenny Wilkinson, SBC on this, and with increased inflation, and accordingly increased running costs for Community Councils, now might be the right time to also have this matter addressed and to request such an increase if this is what was required. Under the Community Empowerment Act, the Council had a duty to support its communities, and the role of the Community Councils played an integral part in achieving that duty. There was no reason why a voluntary group should be financially squeezed in terms of its running costs.

- 6. Police Scotland Reports - November 2022** – The Chair advised there were no Police in attendance however reports had been circulated to HCC members.

Kevin Marsh advised he had been approached by a High Street shopkeeper who had attempted daytime contact with a Community Officer, only to be advised that all 3 Community Officers were on back shift. It did not seem appropriate for all 3 Officers to be operating on the same shift and accordingly all unavailable at the same time.

The Vice-Chair referred to an incident within the Hawick & Denholm report where a commercial sign and goods at premises within Burnfoot Industrial Estate had been damaged. CCTV had subsequently shown 10 youths, some of whom had been identified with enquiries continuing for the remaining to be identified. The Vice-Chair concluded this confirmed the usefulness of CCTV and the importance of reinstating this within our town centre.

The Vice-Chair then asked Councillors on the decision taken following their consideration at their last Council Meeting on Digitalisation of Town Centres, including CCTV.

Councillor McAteer advised that Digitalisation had been presented as part of the Council's Administration Policy and was part of a 5-year plan. The challenges now were to determine what actions would be taken in Year 1 and so forth. He hoped that HCC's proposal for CCTV could be in the earlier years.

Councillor Marshall advised that mobile CCTV had also been part of the Council's discussions and stated that SBC was trying to currently procure that equipment. He would be advocating Hawick be prioritised when this equipment was available for use.

The Chair thanked the Councillors for their input and stated any assistance they could provide to HCC's CCTV would be gratefully received.

7. Hawick High School Update – no report.

- 8. Treasurer's Report – November 2022** – The Treasurer reported an opening balance of £28,136.41. The sum of £2,843.37 had been spent in the month for new Harps and Christmas Lights, with additional expenditure to be reflected next month to renew sockets, as well as purchase of other lights. An invoice from the electrician for his services was also awaited. Circa £4,700 remained within the Foundation Scotland account. Any surplus monies may be utilised for additional lights for use in 2023, to take advantage of January discounted costs for these.

Other expenditure in the month amounted to £380.38 including such items as the licence cost for the Christmas Market, Website Maintenance, and other minor costs.

Of the closing balance of £24,912.66, monies remained ring-fenced for Williestruther improvement works, which were still not invoiced. Given the length of time since works were completed, the Treasurer would discuss with French Wight on his return from holiday, to pursue Criminal Justice once again for their invoice, to allow this to be paid and cleared from the accounts.

- 9. Proposed Meeting Dates for 2023** – A list of proposed dates had been circulated to HCC members along with an email requesting opinion on the number of meetings to be held next year. Members had determined that the status quo of 12 meetings continue. Members agreed the meeting dates, noting that January, February & March Meetings would be held within Hawick High School and the remainder within the Lesser Town Hall.

The Chair pointed out that the AGM would be held in May at the slightly earlier time of 6pm followed immediately by the ordinary May meeting. All HCC members would be up for re-election in August.

The Secretary would circulate Meeting dates to Councillors, the Hawick Paper, and the other Community Councils. It was noted that Burnfoot CC's meeting in January, thought to be changed from the normal first Monday in each month as a result of the Festive Period, would coincide with HCC's meeting. Councillors advised that they did liaise with each other to ensure that at least one or two of them attended HCC meetings, when these clashed with other commitments.

10. Public Forum & Town Issues:

Jim Adams reiterated his concerns reported last month about dog poo in Wilton Lodge Park, which he advised had been taken forward by Councillor Marshall. The situation appeared not to be any better and falling leaves did not help with navigating prams around the dirt. This was an ongoing problem.

The Secretary commented on alleged reports of children playing football on the frozen Williestruther Loch recently, which in light of recent national publicity of a similar type of incident within the Solihull area resulting in the deaths of children there, had to be recognised as being very dangerous. She urged publicity via our Facebook page, the Hawick

Paper, and any other avenues, to get the message out to Hawick youngsters to prevent any such tragedy happening in Hawick.

Councillor Smart suggested it would be good to give a message of condolence to the Solihull community from the Community Council. It was agreed that Euan Welsh would prepare wording to be sent from HCC's Facebook page with such condolences and urging our youngsters to play safe and stay away from not only Williestruther Loch but all frozen areas within the town.

Councillor McAteer stated that this matter should be drawn to the attention of Councillor Ramage as Chair of the Common Good who were part owners of the Loch, to support HCC's message. During summer there were always campaigns regarding water safety and children playing, but it was right to highlight the significance of this incident in Solihull, and to urgently get the message out to the children of Hawick.

A member of the public advised of her awareness of children being spoken to on this topic within Trinity School and it was hoped that other schools would have followed suit. Parents needed to be better aware of where their children were playing.

11. Reports from Sub-Committees

- (a) A7 Action Group – Marjorie McCreddie advised that unfortunately no HCC member was in attendance at the last meeting held in Langholm. This had been an excellent meeting and the Committee were pleased with the new set up and membership. Two new Community Councils were also now on board. Dr Jeffrey Martin of Upper Teviotdale & Borthwick Water Community Council had been the speaker and shared his views on the Teviot Wind Farm. The A7 Action Group was solely concerned with the impact of that Wind Farm on travel on the A7 road itself. It was agreed that Marjorie would share the presentation slides with HCC. It was also noted that Dr Martin would be willing to present to HCC or indeed any other Community Councils on the A7 route as well. She felt Hawick would need to start waking up to the possible impacts of transport coming through the town as a result of the Teviot Wind Farm.

Marjorie gave thanks to Councillor McAteer for locating the correct Sergeant Quin, as asked by her at the last HCC meeting. The Police were now back on board with the group.

The next meeting of the A7 Action Group would be held towards the end of March 2023 in Selkirk – venue to be confirmed. Calling papers would be issued via the HawickCC Gmail account.

- (b) Christmas Event – this matter had been covered earlier in the meeting.
- (c) Hawick Common Good Fund – This had been held via Zoom. Councillor McAteer reported on the key public items considered at the meeting - a funding request for the Wilton Cemetery Memorial Garden had been enthusiastically supported by Councillors. In addition, funding had also been granted to the Silverbuthall Community Development Trust in relation to development of an area of land on the former Wilton South & St Margaret's Church site in Laing Terrace. This site had long been an eye-sore and in need of attention. Approval had also been given to an application for use of the Common Haugh Car Park from K. Stuart Family Fun Fair in relation to the Reivers Festival, operating on the same basis as in previous years. And, finally, consideration was given to the Monitoring Report for the six-month period to 30th September, which showed the Hawick Common Good Fund to be in a healthy position.

- (d) Hawick in Bloom – Nothing to report at the present time.
- (e) Wind Farms – The Chair referred to lengthy documentation having been circulated by Philip Kerr, Southdean Community Council. The Vice-Chair advised that related to the Millmoor Rig Wind Farm at Wauchope Forest, south of Bonchester, which HCC was not a consultee for, but nevertheless could make comments if desired. A number of anomalies had been found by Philip Kerr in the information provided by ESB Energy. Any other updates on Wind Farms would be provided by French Wight at the next meeting.
- (f) CCTV – It was noted that Specification and Contract documents had been drafted by HCC members Kevin Marsh and Cameron Knox, project leaders for the CCTV sub-group, ready for the next stage of Procurement. Councillor McAteer advised this could be procured through funding from the Council itself rather than securing funding elsewhere. This would now be part of the debate given SBC's approved Administration Policy including Digitisation and the challenges to provide funding for such things as CCTV in town centres. HCC could await to see progress by SBC with funding however it was entirely a matter for it to determine – they may want to follow Newcastleton CC decision to secure funding through other means. A decision on funding would need to be taken by HCC early in the new year.

Kevin advised that the Council had not provided some information required (O & M Manual) and one key piece needed was knowledge of how the existing CCTV system was powered. Having carried out some visuals, it appeared this could be through the street lighting system but information on this had to be noted somewhere by SBC. Councillors suggested contacting John Currie for his response.

The Chair advised that the Police attending the last HCC meeting were to discuss Police involvement with the sub-group, but nothing had been heard from them. Councillor Marshall agreed to discuss this further with the Police at their next meeting. Kevin Marsh agreed their involvement was essential to identify any new hot spots for cameras to be located.

Councillor McAteer referred to a meeting at SBC some months ago attended by the Police Command Team (incorporating East Lothian and the Borders) and to the Superintendent in Dalkeith, who was very much at the forefront of a fully integrated CCTV system installation in Midlothian. He could get his name to act as support to HCC with their system. He would be a valuable asset of information. The Chair thanked Kevin and Cameron for their great work thus far.

12. Updates from Community Partners

- (a) Future Hawick – Duncan Taylor reported on behalf of Future Hawick – He advised that FH had last month met with Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) responsible for community development in Scotland and concerned with trying to have all the various groups within Hawick working together. This was for the purposes of securing joint funding and avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy of that. The next meeting would be held on 23 February.

Graeme Webb had created a Hawick Town App which was a marketing tool for businesses in Hawick and there would be a soft launch of this App early next year, with the launch of their Hawick Online Website to coincide with that.

St Leonard's Park Survey – Well over 1000 responses had been received on the survey consultation. Results were due out in January 2023. Finally, in regard to the banking at

the Killinghouse Brae, in addition to the new seeding, 5 new trees had been ordered - one of which would be a Hawthorn to represent Hawick as well as other Scottish varieties and fruit trees – all to add colour in spring and help encourage wildlife.

Welcome Hosts – Marjorie McCreadie advised that come January/February time she would start on the new Welcome Hosts Brochure but apart from that, nothing further to report.

- (b) Foundation Scotland – no update required until all invoices received re the Christmas Event and the Annual Report being submitted.
- (c) SBCCN – The next meeting of the Network would be held in January 2023. It was noted that Heather Batsch, Secretary of SBCCN would retire on 23 December 2022.

13. Planning Issues – There were no major planning issues to report.

14. Correspondence – The Chair advised of an email received through HCC’s Gmail account from a very satisfied campervanner parked overnight recently at the Common Haugh. They had been made to feel very welcome by townsfolk and had spent c.£160 which they hoped had repaid the hospitality provided to them on their stay. The Chair welcomed this feedback on behalf of the town.

In the absence of Councillor Cox, the Secretary read on her behalf an update received by Councillors from Steven Renwick on progress with the Hawick Business Centre. Fundamentally, the Contractor had reported being several weeks behind as at December, with a May/June 2023 finish now being programmed.

Councillor Cox had also made comment that she was dealing with a number of complaints regarding gritting of roads during the current freezing weather conditions. Councillors attending confirmed this was an issue being raised with all of them, particularly given the sub-zero temperatures being experienced. SBC had been asked to issue better communication clarifying primary and secondary roads, to make it clear to townsfolk where the Council’s responsibilities lay with regard to gritting and which roads were not their responsibility but that of owners or housing providers. Councillor Marshall advised he had similar issues with gritting of footpaths, and again there required better understanding on responsibilities for these.

15. AOCB – Duncan Taylor thanked EJW for taking over administration of HCC’s Facebook page.

The Chair advised she had been amassing information on Councillors’ attendance at HCC meetings, as it was helpful for them to be in attendance. She stated that attendance fluctuated and emphasised the importance of their attending to answer issues that HCC members were unable to.

Councillor McAteer advised that caution required to be exercised in recording only as a statistic without including an understanding on the reasons behind a Councillor not attending. He agreed however that an apology should be entered if any Councillor were unable to attend rather than just not turn up with no explanation.

It was noted that Burnfoot CC would hold their next meeting on 9th January, which coincided with HCC’s next meeting. This was purely down to the first meeting being on 2nd January which was still classed as part of the Festive Break.

Councillor Marshall advised that in the spirit of Councillors' working together, they did discuss who would attend where, on the occasion of meeting dates clashing. Diaries could sometimes be overloaded, and Councillors certainly did their best to attend HCC meetings.

The Chair advised that more communication was helpful as sometimes, no apologies were provided.

Councillor Smart raised the matter of the Scottish Borders Warm and Well Fund and asked if HCC was aware of this. The Fund was for providing help to communities affected by the cost of living, with £100,000 having been made available to help communities provide warm spaces during the winter months. Applications were now open and application forms were available using the link: communitygrants@scotborders.gov.uk
Councillor Smart agreed to forward information to Jason Marshall at the Hawick Paper.

The Chair advised that she had passed the email onto the Salvation Army.

Councillor McAteer expressed his thanks to Duncan Taylor and the High School following the recent exceptionally good visit to Hawick High School by former pupils, 2 of whom were Laureates and David Wallace. Everything had gone to plan and been a credit to the youngsters as well as for the town. He had been fascinated at the interest shown and conversations held with the youngsters. Such type of event was unusual and would never again be repeated.

He also reminded everyone of the forthcoming event to be held the following Thursday evening in the Town Hall by the Royal Regiment of Scotland. Local man Alan Brydon was part of that Regiment, and it was expected to be a great event.

John Wilkinson asked if there would be a post-Christmas event meeting held, and the Chair confirmed that this would be incorporated with the next CCTV meeting to be held in early January 2023.

- 16. Date of next meeting** - The next HCC meeting would be held on Monday, 9th January 2023 at 6.30pm within the Lecture Hall, Hawick High School.

The Chair thanked everyone again for their attendance and wished them a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year on behalf of herself and HCC members.