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Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 12th June 2023 within the Lesser Town Hall, Hawick

Present	Marion Short (Chair)	Cameron Knox (Vice-Chair)
	Jim Adams (Treasurer)	John Campbell
	Braden George	Wilson George
	Keith Irving	Kevin Marsh
	Duncan Taylor	Euan Welsh
	French Wight	John Wilkinson

Attending:	Councillor Cox	Councillor McAteer
	Councillor Ramage	Councillor Richards
	Councillor Smart	

There were 5 members of the public in attendance, along with Graham Ford, Hawick Paper.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair progressed to HCC's June meeting and welcomed everyone again to the meeting, especially following a hectic but enjoyable Common Riding. She also welcomed Sarah Culverwell from Scottish Borders Council.

Thanks were expressed to the Cornet & his Lass and the remainder of the Big 8, the Common Riding Committee and Honorary Provost's Council for their input and participation and once again, Hawick had put on a wonderful event, leading the way for other Borders festivals. The weather had also helped in making the weekend so enjoyable. Euan Welsh had worked his socks off along with Lesley Fraser, in recording a lasting memory of the whole event.

She reminded everyone in attendance that the meeting was being recorded by HCC and on behalf 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 Margaret Hogg, Secretary and Councillor Marshall.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 8th May 2023** – The previously circulated Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed for adoption by Kevin Marsh and Seconded by John Campbell.

5. Matters arising –

Public Liability Insurance Premium – The Chair advised that HCC was now in receipt of notification of the Premium for 2023/24 at a cost of £725.20, which amount remained of concern. The Premium for 2022/23 had yet to be confirmed and was being chased up with SBC, as whilst an amount had been ring-fenced, it was not known whether that amount would be sufficient. We awaited SBC reverting to us to confirm that Premium amount.

Councillor McAteer advised that the CEO had picked up on the matter of review of all CCs' expenses including insurance and a Report was awaited to Council. The CEO had not provided a timescale for such a report but Councillor McAteer confirmed that the CEO was aware of its urgency.

Equipment for use in Lesser Town Hall – The Chair advised that a screen and projector was now in place as well as a mic facility.

There were no other matters arising.

6. Police Scotland Reports – April & May 2023 – The Chair welcomed Community Police - PCs Fraser Mortimer and Douglas Lindsay in attendance.

The Chair had written to Sergeant Alison Granger, referring to the recent notification on Structure Changes within local policing and confirmed that for Hawick & Hermitage, the Community Beat Officer would be PC Alan Patterson and for Hawick & Denholm, PC Fraser Mortimer. The CAT Officers would be PCs Cara Pearson and Douglas Lindsay. She gathered then that the Community Beat Officers were not funded by SBC, with the CAT Officers remaining to be so funded. That was confirmed by PC Lindsay.

PC Fraser Mortimer wished to express at the outset huge thanks to all the volunteer Marshalls during Hawick Common Riding. He had worked at many Borders festivals and considered the Marshalling at Hawick Common Riding far exceeded that in place at those other towns. Cameron Knox as a member of HCRC was tasked to pass that compliment on to that Committee.

Kevin Marsh stated that from the notification on Structure Changes, the decrease in officer numbers appeared to be as a result of reductions in funding resources. Kevin had noted however from the Police Scotland website quite a high number of permanent posts being advertised. He queried why those posts at a cost of c.£1.3 to £1.4m primarily for background staff were appropriate, especially at a time when local officer numbers were being cut.

PC Lindsay advised his understanding was that a number of civilian staff cuts had taken place in the past, with such things as citations previously served by a Citation Officer now being passed to Police to do, however he was not really in a position to fully answer on the reasons behind why the posts referred to were being advertised at the same time as cuts in local policing.

It was noted that some of those posts were within the Criminal Justice system, and PC Mortimer confirmed that Police attendance in Courts would always be necessary and would need filling on any Court Officers leaving jobs for whatever reasons.

Councillor Ramage advised there would be an Area Partnership online meeting held the following Wednesday, which would be attended by Sergeant Granger. Anyone wishing to raise that query, could do so with Sergeant Granger at that Area Partnership Meeting.

Marjorie McCreadie advised that the Welcome Hosts were now operating – they could be seen on the High Street, Wilton Lodge Park, Commercial Road and at the Common Haugh. She had not as yet been able to advise the Police of this, however confirmed that the Hosts worked Mondays to Saturdays 10am to 4pm – 4 girls and 1 male. Normally Officers when meeting the Hosts would stop and speak with them to provide assurance. The Hosts would be operating until November, and she requested the Police in attendance to pass that message on to their colleagues.

Councillor McAteer advised that the Common Riding Chief Guest had taken the opportunity at the Moor to speak with a Community Officer and had been hugely impressed by the Community Officer team working.

Cameron Knox stated that he would again bang the drum on illegal parking and the need for high visibility patrols. Once again the small number (27) parking tickets issued across the Borders was not acceptable. Parking issues on Hawick High Street, North Bridge Street and the Sandbed, particularly outside the takeaway, remained of major concern. He had spoken with other Community Councils within other towns, who also had similar concerns regarding illegal parking in their towns. Cameron Knox conceded that the police were however doing a great job in tackling other issues, but he would wish to see improvements in dealing with illegal parking issues and asked if that could be possible.

PC Lindsay advised that in reality they dealt with every type of crime – paedophilia, domestic abuse, assaults, drug issues etc and whilst he would like to see more being done on parking, priorities on the types of issues he had listed meant that dealing with lower-level parking was not always possible. Traffic Wardens was the way forward by SBC.

Kevin Marsh referred to a recent incident he had witnessed where a girl had walked out behind an illegally parked car and had nearly been run over, which was a public safety issue. A police car had driven past and ignored the illegally parked car. PC Lindsay advised a similar incident had been reported at the previous meeting, and he could only assume that the Police would be heading to respond to another priority issue.

John Campbell reported that Weensland Road was a problem in terms of speeding, and wondered if the 20mph zone was really working. PC Mortimer confirmed that there were few officers trained in use of the speed gun to capture offenders and the remit for speeding offences remained with the Traffic Department. Again, in terms of resources, that Department were equally constrained and had to prioritise incidents brought to their attention.

John Campbell wondered as to the possibility of having a mobile speed camera and PC Lindsay advised that again was not within their remit to respond however figures did get monitored but cameras were largely deployed in areas where fatalities had occurred. Any mobile camera was under the remit of SBC. It was noted that the Council had deployed a mobile camera previously in Wilton Hill outside the Police Station. PC Mortimer explained that the A7 was deemed to be a high-risk road from MossPaul through to Pathhead where it must have been deemed appropriate to deploy a camera there due to the number of incidents.

Councillor McAteer supported the officers attending and advised that another Community within the Borders were soon to pilot a mobile speed camera, and he advised that the results of that pilot should be awaited.

The Chair requested that the parking issues be noted as of real concern to HCC and thanked the PCs for taking time to attend.

7. **Hawick High School - Senior Pupils Update** – With exams and study leave, there was no update report able to be provided by senior pupils.
8. **Guest Speaker – Roslyn Mundell from Borders Buddies** – The Chair welcomed Roslyn a Community Worker with Border Buddies who were a service reaching out to Teries who felt they could benefit from the services they provided. She recalled a telephone befriending service carried out in previous years under the banner of Resilience, where 100s of people benefited from a phone call to help with their feelings of isolation. She understood Borders Buddies did more than phone calls and handed over to Roslyn to provide further details.

Roslyn in turn thanked HCC for inviting her to attend. She explained that Borders Buddies was a community project set up for Hawick and the surrounding areas offering peer support and training for volunteers. Their goals were to tackle social isolation and the group hoped to connect with individuals within the community with a named buddy, who was a volunteer.

Initially the project had been set up in the Peebles area during the pandemic and at that time was a telephone contact. 'Outside the Box' which was a charity based in Scotland, and with projects all over Scotland, had identified a need for such a project in Hawick. Lottery Funding had been secured to set up a Borders Buddies Group here.

The Buddies were there for people who had become socially isolated, lacked support networks and were unable to make, but wanted to make, social connections again within their community.

Roslyn advised on one success story recently, where a young lady with a child at primary school had become a volunteer buddy with someone who lived in Teviot Court (sheltered housing complex for the elderly). That person now provided of her time during school hours when her child was at school. This highlighted that buddies could be of any age, and in that particular case the young buddy and elderly lady now went shopping together, runs in the car and that connection was going really well.

Buddy activities were varied, subject to what the client liked, e.g., reading to them, cinema visits, gym, walking, shopping, having a cuppa, knitting, cycling or any other activity that the person had perhaps lost their confidence in doing alone. Roslyn advised she had been communicating regarding one gentleman recently, through his Occupational Therapist. The gentleman had just come out of hospital and had a desire to attend ArtBeat, and so establishing that buddy contact would allow that to happen.

Anyone who had a few hours per week to spare could become a buddy with the only requirement being they required to be registered for a PVG Disclosure Scotland to ensure that both the buddy and the client were kept safe.

Roslyn had already been in contact with the High School, Salvation Army and some other local Groups to advise on this initiative, and whilst it was early days it was essential to get the word out there to allow anyone in need of the service to make contact, and also to recruit further volunteers to provide the services required.

Roslyn and Natalie were based in Hawick and their contact details were available.

The Chair referred to Resilience and how they matched buddy to clientele, e.g. if a client was interested in rugby, it would be a buddy who had knowledge of rugby who would make that contact. She asked if that matching would be similarly done at Borders Buddies. Roslyn confirmed that was the hope.

Marjorie McCreddie offered to display any poster available within the Information Office at the Horse used by the Welcome Hosts.

Roslyn confirmed she had also communicated with Social Workers and Occupational Therapists, who could make referrals however advised that anyone could make a referral - it could even be a neighbour.

The Chair commended Roslyn on the initiative and wished her every success. Braden also commended the initiative and asked about numbers of volunteers given it had only been going since March. He also wondered if there was interest in the services. Roslyn responded and said the initiative was in its early stages and focused on getting communication out there, but securing volunteers would she considered be challenging. She advised however there was much enjoyment to be had, as she had experienced herself in other similar voluntary work.

Roslyn was requested and agreed to forward the poster and a copy of her presentation slides to the Secretary.

Councillor Ramage agreed this was a much-needed service indeed in the Borders and she was personally aware of good work by 'Out the Box'.

- 9. Treasurer's Report** – The Treasurer reported an Opening Balance of £9,155.17. During the month, this had increased to show a Closing Balance of £19,716.22. The Community Benefit Foundation Scotland grant had been received in the month for £10,888.22, which would be spent in due course for activities relating to Hawick In Bloom, Bandstand Events, Audio Equipment for meetings and litter pickers.

The expenditure within HCC1 account in the month amounted to £558.25 resulting in a Closing Balance of £5,290.61, of which c.£4k remained ringfenced, including £1k for our Insurance Premium. SBC were aware of this, and our Annual Support Grant application had been approved, and that Grant was awaited.

Expenditure on Foundation Scotland account related to purchase of Hawick in Bloom summer plants and purchase of new hanging baskets. New litter pickers had also been purchased. The winter plant costs had been estimated at c.£2,700. The remaining monies would be utilised for the Bandstand events and the other items as mentioned above.

Councillor McAteer confirmed that a paper would be presented the following day to SBC's Executive Committee, which he was not a member of, to recommend to that Committee that a review of financial support to Community Councils be undertaken, and agreed changes fed

into the budget setting process for 2024/25. Differences in costs of annual insurances for 2021/22 and 2022/23 were recommended to be covered by SBC on a one-off basis, with further support also to be provided to SBCCN as part of that review. Hopefully those recommendations would be approved, which would start to help deal with some of the issues being raised on high insurance premiums.

Members approved the Treasurer's Report.

10. Public Forum & Town Issues:

- (a) HCC Elections: The Chair, as highlighted at last month's meeting, confirmed HCC members would be up for re-election this year. There would be a 3-week nomination period for membership of HCC commencing on Monday, 31st July. A press release would shortly be issued along with display notices regarding the Election Process. The end of the 3-week nomination period would be Monday, 21st August followed by a 7-day withdrawal period for nominees, taking that to an end date for withdrawal of 28th August.

HCC were permitted a maximum of 15 members and if no more than that number were nominated for election, letters would be issued by SBC advising of the first meeting date of the new HCC membership. That meeting would hopefully continue on HCC's normal meeting cycle and be held on Monday, 11th September 2023.

If, however there were more than 15 nominees, a ballot would be required. Letters would be issued with notification of the ballot date and venue. A count would be held by SBC the following day to the ballot itself. Letters would then be issued by SBC with the results of the ballot and details of the first meeting of the new members.

The Chair advised that she had not encountered a ballot situation before, and the timeline for that would not allow a September meeting, on top of no meeting in August. That may cause issues in regard to planning of our Christmas Event but nevertheless she welcomed new members joining HCC.

- (b) Bandstand Events – It was noted that these events would start on Sunday, 23rd July on every Sunday up to and including the 27th August - six weeks of entertainment. The events would be marketed in due course. The 4 events held in 2022 had proved very popular resulting in the extension to 6 events.

Duncan Taylor recalled that good weather had prevailed in 2022 adding to the events atmosphere, however a Plan B for inclement weather would need to be prepared to hold events indoors if necessary. He thanked HCC for provision of financial assistance.

- (c) Town Clean-up – The Treasurer questioned why HCC had chosen to carry out a town clean-up along the High Street. By the following weekend, the mess again prevailed. The Chair advised of a complaint to her on the night of the Colour Bussing regarding the condition of the High Street. The complainant did not consider that necessary works required to tidy should be down to volunteers but should be the responsibility of the Council. She agreed that around the benches outside the Town Hall was again in an appalling condition, along with the amount of cigarette ends the length of the High Street.

Councillor Ramage stated she was happy to report to SBC on that matter, however as had been the case previously, the answer provided would most likely be that it was down to staff shortages and long-term sick.

Braden confirmed, alike to dog fouling, that matter was again an educational issue to be pushed.

Duncan Taylor considered that outside cafes and licensed premises, the owners should be educated to in turn appeal to their clients to refrain from those behaviours. The Chair agreed that if shops and businesses each cleaned and tidied their own areas, that would make such a difference.

John Campbell also agreed such practice had been in place years back, and the Council played their role by picking up the cleared debris.

A member of the public who had been a shop owner confirmed that she, right up to recent retirement, had swept and cleaned her shop area.

The Vice-Chair, in answering the Treasurer's question, concluded that if HCC members did not clean up the town, of which he was proud, including on the last occasion the High Street then it would only have been in a worse condition. HCC members were only a small group who could only do what they could to make things better, even if that were for only a short time.

Another incident was reported regarding the Waverley Walk, where recently works costing thousands of pounds had been carried out. New seats had been installed at the side of the cemetery, leading onto that Walk and the debris accumulated there was disgusting. Councillor Ramage confirmed that debris issue had been reported on a number of occasions and cleared by the Council, however she would re-report for further attention.

The Chair reiterated that education may be the way forward, as in agreeing with the Treasurer, it was demoralising when HCC carried out works which very soon afterwards became unnoticeable. Getting educational messages across however would nevertheless be challenging.

- (d) Condition of Langlands Bridge – French Wight raised again the condition of Langlands Bridge which he considered to be a disgrace. The bridge was in need of repair and a repaint. French wondered if monies could be made available through the Small Schemes Budget for necessary works.

Councillor Smart had raised that issue previously and had been advised that SBC did not know who had direct responsibility for that bridge.

- (e) Flood Protection Scheme – French Wight raised a further issue with the amount of debris entering the river from Flood Protection Works being carried out. That issue had been raised previously with that Group and he wondered if a letter could be issued by HCC regarding that matter. Debris had been witnessed all the way down to Denholm. Good housekeeping should be key beyond the wall on the river side, so that no debris could enter the water.

The Chair suggested the matter could also be raised directly with Conor Price CPE Consultancy at the Flood Protection Update Meeting to be held on 26th June.

Councillor McAteer suggested that HCC write to John Curry, SBC's Board Director for delivery of that project at SBC Board level.

- (f) Actions by HCC & Councillors - Braden George expressed frustration that it appeared to him whilst HCC did a good job and Councillors referred issues raised with SBC for action, in some cases more needed to be done. Solutions needed to be found to prevent re-occurring issues.

Duncan Taylor considered that the Place-Making/Town Team Organisation could have a role to play. That Group were clarifying priorities identified by the Hawick people - whether that be dog fouling, litter, parking or whatever.

A member of the public advocated use of other initiatives and one she had encountered using art installations, for example at beaches where litter bins were in the shape of a fish to encourage litter deposits, alongside literature encouraging deposits. Another where metal tins had been provided for collection of cigarette ends. There could be further discussion around these types of behavioural change projects on different issues, to look at the innovative ways to encourage improvements. Getting the local shopkeepers involved would also be good.

- (g) Trees & Fence at the Dunk - Kevin Marsh referred to the issues of trees previously reported at the Dunk. Through Councillor Ramage, he was happy to report that the trees had now been sorted, however the fence required attention by another section of SBC and that remained outstanding.
- (h) Fly tipping at end of Rosevale Street – Kevin Marsh reported an issue with fly tipping at that location, perhaps as a result of Mansfield road closure and being unable to get to the tip. Councillor Ramage undertook to refer that to appropriate officers at SBC to be rectified.
- (i) Overhanging Vegetation/trees on Weensland Road – Marjorie McCreadie reported issues along the Weensland Road where, in some places, vegetation encroached across half of the pavement. The primary area of concern was overhanging vegetation from the gardens at Trinity Street backing onto Weensland Road and at night that was blocking street lighting. The Chair confirmed that was a reoccurring issue however was the responsibility of owners in Trinity Street properties. SBC had previously cut back vegetation, albeit that was not all their responsibility, however it was now at the stage that two people could not walk alongside each other nor pass. Councillor McAteer advised that the Council still had a role to take that matter up with private owners to have tidying works carried out.

The Chair agreed to take pictures and write to SBC on these matters.

John Campbell referred to sloping pavements also at that location which would benefit from levelling.

- (j) Stairs leading to Waverley Walk – A member of the public raised her concerns regarding the condition of stairs at that location. Weedkiller had been applied on occasion however brambles encroached regularly over the stairs. She was of the opinion that monies for landscaping improvements, as part of the bridge improvements, should have remained for proper landscaping works. The stairs had been repaired of sorts, but required further works and a proper weed kill of the area to improve the general conditions there. Councillors to refer these issues to SBC to be rectified.

11. Reports from Sub-Committees

- (a) A7 Action Group – Marjorie McCreadie confirmed calling papers for the next meeting had been issued. Discussions presently included the Dunk, the wind farms, station roundabout amongst others. The next meeting would be held the following week in Selkirk.

- (b) CCTV – Kevin Marsh advised that consultation had been available earlier that evening and a couple of comments had been received. The next stage would be to finalise and issue tender documents by the end of June which would in turn clarify costs and then allow funding opportunities to be explored.
- (c) Hawick Common Good Fund – John Campbell reported on an eventful meeting. The Ex-Servicemen’s Association had received a Grant for their Bailleul trip, as well as all other grant applications having been approved. It had also been agreed to investigate further charging points at the Common Haugh. Councillor Ramage advised it was hoped the next meeting would be held on 14th August however that date remained to be confirmed.
- (d) Hawick in Bloom – The Chair advised that compliments should go to the Secretary in relation to the new hanging baskets, the planters now matching the bollards, and new plants were scheduled for that week. The High Street was certainly looking much brighter. Thanks were also extended to Hawick Common Riding Committee for their assistance in hanging the baskets up at the same time as they put up the town bunting, and the Vice-Chair extended thanks also to Keith Johnstone for his role in weekly watering of the baskets.
- (e) Wind Farms – French Wight queried whether towers scheduled to be delivered at night had actually happened. Blades were scheduled for delivery during July and August but communication appeared to have quietened. The Vice-Chair confirmed these turbines would be delivered during the night, which was sensible, but subject to police availability. The Bonchester road at Kirkton would be closed to facilitate movement. Humps at Kirkton would be flattened to facilitate the big lorries required. No matter at what time deliveries took place, there would be upheaval within the town.

There remained no contact with the Developer on Community Benefits and so it was still unknown as to monies which would be received for the Community. If Teviot Wind Farm received future approval, hopefully lessons would be learned from the poor manner in which Pines Burns had proceeded.

Councillor McAteer reported that EnergieKontor had met with SBC’s CEO and the Hawick Councillors, which had been helpful. The latest information was that a draft Plan would be produced with morning and afternoon timings. They alleged that deliveries were however set by the Police and they had no clear dates for blades deliveries. They expected that would be in late July/early August.

12. Updates from Community Partners

- (a) Foundation Scotland – The Chair reiterated comments made earlier by the Treasurer that Langhope Rig grant of £10,880.22 for 2023/24 had now been received in full. The grant would be used again this year for HCC’s own projects as outlined earlier.
- (b) Future Hawick (FH) – Duncan Taylor advised that 4 new Trustees had now joined the Board of FH. FH remained in talks with the Town Team in terms of how it could assist with projects identified (from the Have your Say Days). FH were also in talks with John Hogg the Chair of the Mair project and it was expected now that the Common Riding had concluded, meetings on that initiative would recommence in the next couple of weeks.

The Chair referred to the rewilding by FH at the top of Wilton Path which she considered to be beautiful however those at the Killinghouse Brae and on Weensland Road could not be classed as so. She wondered what was going to be done regarding these two latter areas. Duncan Taylor advised that he had been at the Killinghouse Brae area that day to remove the vandalised Ukraine banner and advised there were many wild flowers already

through. It would never be a wild flower meadow, partly because it was on a banking and could not retain water, and had thin and poor soil, not conducive to being a wild flower meadow. That position needed to be accepted. Yellow rattle had been planted to weaken the grass and where that plant had come through, the impact on reducing the grass could be witnessed. People complaining on social media should recall that the area was never cut previously, causing complaints. Therefore it should be remembered that really long grass has been replaced by wild flowers. It was not safe to cut grass there as he had experienced when trying to remove the damaged banner.

In relation to Weensland Road, that area was a couple of years behind the Killinghouse Brae banking. Duncan's understanding was that wild flowers were starting to come through, even dandelions were wild and apparently were good for bees. He was passionate that not all areas had to appear like bowling greens. It was important to have a balance of ornamental areas with some wild areas particularly where these were previously challenging to be cut and kept tidy. There was a difference between wild flower meadows and wild flower bankings. He went on to express his disappointment at another comment on social media complaining about the rewilding at Hornshole which he considered looked really good. Again, that person would be assuming the area should be trimmed to its roots in time for the Common Riding - not understanding that it replicated a wild area at the time being honoured by the memorial there.

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

14. Correspondence – There was no correspondence to report.

15. AOCB – Williestruther Loch - French Wight reported that there was now gravel and walkway in place all around Williestruther Loch. He commended the work carried out by the Criminal Justice Team. Unfortunately he had to report that vandals had uprooted one of the picnic tables and thrown that towards the Loch. Criminal Justice workers had fortunately been able to retrieve the table and put that back in place.

Trip to Bailleul - On behalf of the Hawick Ex-Servicemen's Association, the Treasurer thanked the Common Good for their grant of £6k towards the cost of a trip to Bailleul. He sought interest from any persons wishing to attend. The trip would leave Hawick on Friday, 6th October, with an overnight stay that night in Dover before travelling on the Saturday to Bailleul, returning straight home the following Friday. There would be activities during the week including visits to cemeteries and a visit to Arras. Further details would be forthcoming.

Flood Protection Update Meeting - The Chair reminded everyone of a HCC meeting to be held on Monday, 26th June 2023 at 6.30pm within the Lesser Town Hall, when an update regarding progress on the Flood Protection Scheme would be presented by Conor Price, CPE Consultancy. That meeting was an avenue for the public to raise any questions they had regarding that Scheme.

16. Date of next meeting – The next meeting of HCC would be held on Monday, 10th July 2023 at 6.30pm within the Lesser Town Hall, Hawick.