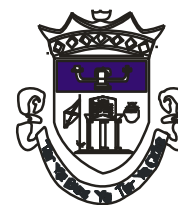

Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held via Zoom on Monday 8th March 2021 at 6.30pm

Present: Cameron Knox (Chairperson) Marion Short (Vice-Chairperson)
Jim Adams (Treasurer) Margaret Hogg (Secretary)
Brian Bouglas John Campbell
Braden George Wilson George
Keith Irving Duncan Taylor
Alan Wear Euan Welsh
French Wight John Wilkinson

Attending: Councillor McAteer Councillor Paterson
Councillor Ramage Councillor Richards
Councillor Turnbull William Fletcher, Burnfoot CC
Helen Clyne, School Captain, HHS Harry Scott, School Captain, HHS
Colin Telfer, FH

There were 3 members of the public also in attendance, as well as Jason Marshall and Graham Ford on behalf of the Hawick Paper, Kirsty Smyth, Southern Reporter, David Henderson, Station Manager, TD9 Radio and Ally McGillivray, Radio Borders. Conor Price, CPE Consultancy, Project Manager for Hawick Flood Protection Scheme was guest speaker in attendance (Item 7), accompanied by Gillian Douglas, responsible for Communications. Also in attendance was Frank Booth speaking to Item 11(a).

- 1. Chairman's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the monthly March meeting of HCC again being held via Zoom, which was becoming more familiar. He advised that the meeting would be being recorded by the media present for reporting purposes.
- 2. Declarations of Interest** – The Chair advised that if anyone required to declare any interest in agenda items, they should do so prior to discussion of that item.
- 3. Apologies for Absence** – An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor Stuart Marshall.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 8th February 2021** – The Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting – Proposed by Duncan Taylor and Seconded by Keith Irving
- 5. Matters arising** – The Chair reported on the following matters arising:
Hawick Sporting Greats – It was noted that quotes had now been sought and were awaited. The Chair considered to progress this matter further, a sub-group of HCC Members could be set up. HCC members agreed to attend a Zoom meeting to be arranged in the next week or so, to discuss. The Chair will email joining details for such meeting.

Unpaid Work Team – It was noted that further contact with the Team regarding HCC’s proposal for a litter pick had again resulted in no response. The Chair would continue to attempt contact on this matter.

Borders Railway Extension – Proposal to T & L Partnership – It was noted that this Proposal would be discussed at the T&L Partnership meeting to be held the following night, where an application for funding would be discussed.

Parking at Cheviot Road/Crumhaugh Road – It was noted that a letter had been issued by the Secretary to the owner of Crumhaugh House. The response received was that parking could not be permitted again in this area, as works had now commenced at the location, resulting in Health & Safety concerns in allowing this.

- 6. High School Pupil Update** – Harry Scott reported that teachers were providing great support to pupils in terms of both home learning and with practical in-school subjects. It was noted that pupils had expressed they felt safe in the school environment and with lateral flow testing being carried out.

A Developing Young Workforce initiative had seen a lot of live learning in such fields as the Engineering & Construction industry, to allow better insight into what is involved practically in this type of career.

Scottish Apprenticeship Week had also allowed pupils the opportunity to speak with some experts across a range of trades to highlight different pathways open to them through different apprenticeship models.

Helen Clyne updated the meeting on the Captain Sir Tom Moore Walking Challenge, stating that their 33 million steps target had been achieved. Over 300 people had been involved in achieving the target, which helped bring pupils together to the benefit of their mental health and physical fitness.

In terms of their chosen Charity, Friends of Hawick Community Hospital, it was noted that a meeting would be arranged once restrictions on COVID were able to be lifted, to progress.

It was finally noted that the University applications process was still ongoing, with teachers providing advice to those pupils already in receipt of university places but also to those with conditional offers of placements.

The Chair thanked Harry and Helen for their attendance and updates.

- 7. Guest Speaker – Conor Price, CPE Consultancy, Project Manager for Hawick Flood Protection Group** – The Chair welcomed Conor Price to the meeting, stating that the Hawick Flood Protection Scheme was the biggest project the town had ever seen, and which would hopefully go on to protect the houses and businesses previously affected by flooding.

Mr Price advised of his delight at completion of the Advanced Works Contract. McLaughlin Harvey were the appointed Contractor to take forward the main Flood Protection Contract works, and they were already 9 months into their 14-month Programme. Works were ramping up and come the Summer things would be extremely busy.

It was noted that a deal had been brokered with the owners of the Bridge House which would allow the systematic demolition of the damaged part of this building in a controlled

manner, to save as much of it as was safe to do so. A wall was required to be built in the river, but this could not proceed with the risk to his operatives of the building collapsing but also to any collapse causing blockage in the river itself. After a year of waiting, he now looked forward to progressing this objective.

The Chair commented that townsfolk were impressed with works carried out so far, and particularly with the finish of the walls.

French Wight asked as to the feasibility of having a bridge built from Weensland Road over to Mansfield Road from the additional £3.7m Scottish Government funding provided. Mr Price advised that he was aware of this option which had been closely looked at during the design process on the active travel network. Whilst it remained an option it might be a piece of work too far as there was no current structure at the location and to build this would be expensive. Targeting of investment needed to be into the heart of communities and neighbourhoods linking in with the active travel network.

The Vice-Chair expressed thanks to McLaughlin & Harvey for their assistance in the recent flooding in the town. Mr Price confessed to it being a scary time and to being worried as the town was probably at its most exposed to flooding at that time.

Councillor Paterson raised a concern regarding social distancing of contractors and asked if COVID had caused any issues. Mr Price advised that behind the scenes, site compounds had been designed around social distancing requirements and temperature checks, as well as standard cleanliness and hand-sanitising measures in place. They could not always create social distancing between operatives due to the nature of the work being carried out. Only 1 or 2 cases of COVID had occurred within the workforce, with no cases of transmission between operatives, which meant they were maintaining the wellbeing of their staff. Any public concerns on work practices could be reported to him. Councillor Paterson stated he did not wish to appear negative and confirmed he was 100% behind the project, and that a fantastic job was being done and he could not wait to see it finished.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked Conor and Gillian for the presentation, and it was agreed that they would return to provide a further update late Summer.

- 8. Police Scotland Report** – It was agreed that the report made for disappointing reading with 7 assaults, 13 anti-social behaviour complaints, 14 vandalism and 12 housebreakings, thefts and attempted robberies in the period. With such high figures, this could be part of the reason why matters such as dog fouling appeared not to have been given any priority.

Councillor Ramage advised that Councillors were again meeting with Police the following Wednesday and would be happy to raise any other HCC members' concerns.

- 9. Treasurer's Report** – The Treasurer advised on expenditure during the month of £211.68 for insurance of assets, such as Xmas Lights, Defibrillator, Notice Board etc, and advised that this figure was likely to increase for 2021/22 due to additional assets included in the recent insurance renewal.

The opening balance was £13,032.64 and closing balance £12,820.96.

The Chair agreed to contact Ron Smith, Hawick Rotary Club, regarding the £250 received from them and to re-affirm on agreed expenditure of this.

10. Meeting held with Mr George Burt, Jedburgh Legacy Group on their Proposal to SBC to operate Jedburgh Town Hall and Library – The Chair advised of a recent Zoom meeting having been held with George Burt, Jedburgh Legacy Group, which all those attending agreed had been highly informative.

Brian Bouglas advised that the Proposal was for an asset transfer to the Jedburgh Legacy Group of their Town Hall and Library buildings which SBC now considered surplus to their requirements along with other items e.g. public toilets, car parks and ground maintenance which would also form part of the asset transfer.

That Proposal had come about as the new school campus in Jedburgh now incorporated the library, and HCC had to be mindful that this could also happen in Hawick when our school is upgraded. Hawick Town Hall and Library were iconic buildings but were perhaps not pulling their weight financially.

The question was raised as to whether this type of community ownership Proposal was something that Hawick might want to consider further. A similar project in Pittenweem where their Library was now under Community ownership was also advised.

Councillor McAteer stated that there were challenges to be faced in the future (in relation to SBC buildings) and so exploring this matter further would in his view be worthwhile. He advised to exercise caution however in figures being presented in the JLG Proposal, and the level of allocated funding for any Hawick Proposal should be clarified at the outset to ensure its security. SBC already had plans to separate off parts of the Town Hall building to be sold for flats, which was indication of matters moving now in disposing of some assets.

Duncan Taylor raised concerns at the high rental charges levied for the use of the Town Hall and advised that many groups were not now using this facility, which has in effect resulted in reducing income. He would favour going forwards getting to some sort of town level, as with the former Hawick Town Council set-up, more competition for HCC elected membership with more responsibility and accountability for our own community assets.

French Wight raised concerns regarding the level of volunteers required, and the need for professionals to also be involved in any such Proposal and who would ultimately be the responsible body. Councillor Ramage agreed with these concerns and with Councillor McAteer's view on allocated funding needing to be clarified. She suggested that this matter might therefore be best progressed via a sub-group. Future Hawick was looking to engage an Enterprise Officer for the town and perhaps that person could be engaged to lead on this Proposal.

It was agreed that supplementary papers provided by George Burt would be circulated to HCC members to review and a sub-group progressed.

11. Public Forum & Town Issues

- (a) Proposal from Frank Booth re future use of Dorothy Perkins/Burtons following closure announcement – Frank Booth spoke to his proposal that these town centre shops would be ideal for an indoor market - weekly farmers/vintage markets showcasing local crafts etc. Frank advised he had contacted Jim Hay, Estate Agents who were marketing the property, and had determined that this building was privately owned and did not belong to any local businesses. Plans were to have the middle floor refurbished into flats, subject to consents, and the ground floor divided into two separate units.

HCC members and Councillors agreed to support Frank's proposal and suggested there was a need for Scottish Enterprise to become involved regarding funding opportunities available. Frank to keep HCC informed of progress.

- (b) In relation to 20mph trial currently ongoing, it was noted that the electronic speed signage was proposed to be installed in the next 2 to 3 weeks.
- (c) Town Clean-up – Members agreed to have the first of their twice-yearly town clean-ups on Sunday, 28th March 2021, subject to COVID restrictions at that time. It was agreed that this would involve the Hawick Volunteers Group, who had secured the services of Hawick Youth Rugby boys who were looking to be involved in community projects. The Chair would discuss the matter with SBC and finalise arrangements with HCC members and Hawick Volunteer Group co-ordinator, John Hogg. Confirmation of arrangements would be advertised on HCC Facebook page, if applicable.

12. Reports from sub-committees

- a) A7 Action Group – There was nothing to report on this Group.
- b) Christmas Event – Marion Short, Vice-Chair advised that HCC members had been emailed regarding their views on holding a similar Summer Market in July/August, subject to COVID restrictions. Members were asked to respond with their views as soon as possible.
- c) Hawick Common Good – Jock Campbell advised he would be seeking further information in relation to what was happening with the sluice proposed at the Common Haugh and the outcome regarding the Portrait of a previous Earl of Minto which was requiring cleaning and restoration.
- d) Hawick in Bloom – It was reported that all volunteers had been contacted and all were happy to volunteer again for 2021; quotes for Summer planting had been received and the successful supplier would be appointed in due course; circa 60 sponsorship letters had been issued the previous week by the Secretary, and some sponsorship had already been received.

It was also noted from the Vice-Chair that, whilst it had been SBC's previous proposal to grass over 2 of the 4 beds in Drumlanrig Square gardens, all beds had now been planted, and SBC had confirmed its commitment to maintain this area going forward.

Jim Adams asked if SBC had intimated any plans for the tidy-up of Trinity Gardens, which was in a poor condition at present. Marion Short advised that she had received similar assurance from SBC that they would be carrying out a tidy at that location in the following 2-3 weeks.

- e) Windy Edge Wind Farm - French Wight advised that EnergieKontor had been granted the go-ahead by SBC Planning. This was despite previously 300 objections against 100 letters of support from within the communities, and he expressed his dismay that some of our local Councillors had voted in favour.

Councillor Ramage stated she had supported approval of the two main changes to Conditions 1 and 14 which were to allow another time extension of 3 years and commencement of the development in relation to the Air Traffic Control (ATC) Radar Scheme. Her decision to support was also based on the Ministry of Defence (MOD) having no concerns with the two variations and that EnergieKontor had been in talks with the MOD, so felt that the change to Condition 14 could go ahead. The new Thales radars were now in place at RAF Spadeadam.

Councillor Richards advised that he had not voted in favour. 8 out of 9 Councillors had supported the variations.

Duncan Taylor whilst recognising the knowledge of HCC's representative French Wight on the wind farms sub-group, sought assurance that HCC had an "open-mind" policy on wind farms. The Chair confirmed that this was indeed the case, and that HCC's collective response should be represented in all discussions held at wind farm sub-group meetings.

13. Updates from Community Partners

(a) Foundation Scotland - The Vice-Chair reminded everyone that applications for grants were ongoing, with a closing date for applications of 31st March 2021. The media attending was requested to help publicise this through their media channels and HCC's Facebook also carried information on the availability of these grants.

(b) Future Hawick – Colin Telfer, Vice-Chair of FH, gave the following report.

FH members had been given a presentation from Jan Pringle, South of Scotland Enterprise, on assistance available from that organisation on funding bids.

FH had, similarly to HCC, discussed the Jedburgh Legacy Group Proposal and Asset transfer and supported further exploration of this idea via a sub or steering group set up.

Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) – Sarah Altrock had now been appointed as Officer for this project. A Steering Group was in course of being formed.

A Community Enterprise Manager had not yet been appointed due to lockdown, but it had been confirmed that SBC would be in contact with FH on this matter within the next 4-6 weeks.

Wild-seeding of grass verges – consideration was being given to identifying areas where this could take place. One area identified at Galalaw roundabout had been subsequently ruled out due to daffodil planting there. The banking to the side of the Killinghouse Brae, identified by Councillor McAteer as an eyesore, was currently subject to a feasibility on costings and discussions were ongoing with SBC.

Dorothy Perkins/Burtons – this matter had already been discussed earlier on the Agenda and FH also supported Frank Booth's idea, and further information was awaited.

St Leonards Park Project – FH had met again with Bright Light Marketing and Aitken & Turnbull regarding costings required for the Business Plan. When this information was to hand, a second Steering Group Meeting would be held.

Shop Local – FH was looking to extend this campaign after lockdown, and costings for this were being sought. FH was continuing also with displays of cardboard figures to brighten up closed shops and to promote their Photo Competition.

Cold calling – Welcome Packs had been issued to Wellington Court residents and Fisher Avenue had been identified as the location next to be surveyed.

Survey Monkey – Duncan Taylor and Brian Bouglas had organised a Survey Monkey of HHS pupils to determine their knowledge of FH.

Duncan advised feedback had shown the main reason for our young people planning to leave the town was for further or higher educational opportunities, which they stated was more important than jobs. He asked if there had been any work done in the Borders to compare with the likes of the University of Highlands and Islands multi-campus where students there did not require to move away, and to give our students what they might get in the city. Councillor McAteer advised that concept was already there with a campus in Galashiels. Councillor Ramage also advised that the return of the railway could certainly improve access to and from these educational opportunities.

The survey overall resulted in a positive outcome for FH.

Engaging with Membership base – FH had agreed to a proposal that their membership base be contacted by newsletter on a quarterly basis to update them on FH projects, and this Newsletter had been completed in the period.

- (c) Resilience – The Vice-Chair advised that the small group of volunteers were coping well with demands and she was happy to report that issues reported last month were now resolved. She thanked Councillor McAteer for his assistance.
- (d) SBC Working Group – It was noted from Councillor McAteer that there was a Statutory requirement to review Community Council Constitutions, and that the next meeting of the Group would be held on 18th March 2021. The review was looking at areas causing CCs any problems and at best practice across CCs to ensure a good outcome for all. At the present time, CC members have a 4-year term of office and it had been suggested that this be reduced to 3 years.
- (e) The Chair advised that CARS, discussed previously, was to re-launch in late March and that he had been invited to Chair the new Steering Group.

14. Planning Issues – None.

15. Correspondence – None.

16. A.O.C.B – Wilson George asked if there was any way HCC could hold some type of “hustings” question and answer session, for all parties regarding elections in May. Councillor McAteer advised to exercise caution on doing this, and suggested HCC contacts SBC if taking forward. Duncan Taylor advised for the Council By-election, SBC was holding a Q&A via zoom on Thursday.

Game Fair – John Campbell suggested the possibility of holding a Game Fair at Wulliestruther or Hawick Moor. It was agreed such a Fair would take a lot of organisation and insurance and health & safety issues may prove a step too far. Costs involved may be prohibitive.

Brian Bouglas stated this idea should not however be discarded outright. There had been previous discussion on having a music festival at the Moor, which was he considered in need of better usage, and a game fair, vintage car rally, agricultural show types of events would be ideally suited to this location.

The Chair advised that due to COVID it would not be an option at least for this year, but this was perhaps an item for a future agenda to allow further discussion on.

Finally, it was noted that following discussions with Keith Johnston, it was looking promising that the proposed Bandstand events for this Summer would proceed.

17. Date of Next Meeting – It was agreed that the next meeting would be held via Zoom on Monday, 12th April 2021 at 6.30pm.