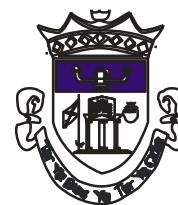

Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 14th March 2022 at 6.30pm

within the Lesser Town Hall, Hawick

Present:	Cameron Knox (Chair)	Margaret Hogg (Secretary)
	John Campbell	Braden George
	Keith Irving	Duncan Taylor
	Euan Welsh	French Wight
	John Wilkinson	
Attending:	Councillor McAteer	Councillor Marshall
	Councillor Ramage	Councillor Turnbull

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

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the March HCC Meeting and remarked that whilst our town had its problems, these paled into insignificance with what was happening in Ukraine, an independent nation currently being invaded. Hawick stood firmly behind the people of Ukraine at this time.

The Chair referred to the recent great efforts by our townspeople who had offered their help and donations following an appeal by Jake of A1 Removals. Donations had successfully reached the Ukrainian border. Townsfolk should be rightly proud of their achievements to this cause at this time.

It was noted that the Hawick Paper and HCC would be recording the meeting for reporting and minuting 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 the Vice-Chair Marion Short, Treasurer Jim Adams and HCC members Alan Wear and Wilson George.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 14th February 2022** – The previously circulated Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting – Proposed by French Wight and Seconded by John Campbell.
- 5. Matters arising – Place-Making Training** - The Chair reported that a Place-making training workshop for 40 attendees would be held via Zoom on Tuesday, 26th April 2022 at 6pm. Members wishing to attend the workshop should register as per the details supplied on the email circulated to them previously.

Hawick Contact Centre - The Chair advised that it was good to see the Hawick Contact Centre had now re-opened, which would be of great relief for many within the town.

SBC Officers attending Meetings - In terms of guest speakers earmarked to attend HCC meetings, the Secretary advised that John Curry, who was due to attend that night to discuss SBC's new Tree Management Policy, was unable to do so, and an invite had also then been extended to Ross Sharp-Dent who had replied indicating he would require permission for his attendance in person and would notify accordingly. Unfortunately, no response had been received, and the Secretary wished Councillors to clarify what the protocol was at SBC regarding their officers' attending meetings in person.

Councillor McAteer advised that the Council's position around meetings had not changed as such, with no formal meetings taking place in the Chamber and continued to be held via Teams. It was hoped, however, that their meeting at the end of March would be in person, having not been together for the last two years. His understanding was that individual officers were having some face-to-face meetings, but this was with approval of Line Managers. John Curry was however a director and could make that decision himself. So, it was the case that officers could attend meetings, but this was not a matter of routine at the present time.

Councillor Ramage commented that at her meeting with Ross Sharp-Dent, along with HCC's Vice-Chair, he seemed very keen to attend, and was not sure why then there had been no response from him.

Local RSLs – Garden Competitions - The Secretary confirmed she had contacted both SBHA and Waverley, the local housing providers, in relation to tenant garden competitions. SBHA had responded stating they held a very successful garden competition annually, whilst Waverley had responded advising they had withdrawn their competition, due to lack of appetite from tenants. The latter were however happy to work in partnership with HCC should they wish to take this forward.

From experience in the social rented sector, the Secretary advised that the proposed outcome to having garden competitions with reward, was to encourage more people to tidy their gardens, whereas experience had shown this not to be the case. Those already caring for their garden were the ones who would continue to do so, with little uptake and change from those who did not. There would be a lot of work involved for what she considered little real impact.

Councillor Marshall advised that he was aware of some townsfolk taking it upon themselves to tend and improve some common areas of land, with no reward for their efforts. He would like to see reward for those people. It was agreed that this could be less onerous for HCC to progress on, and members were requested by the Chair to consider this matter further with a view to piloting an area initially and progressing from there.

Gable Ends following works at the old Almstrongs – Councillor McAteer advised that since the last meeting, the Scottish Government's Place-Making Fund had agreed to grant £80k towards completion of works to the gable ends of the two houses affected. The good news was that this funding would allow use of the original stonework as opposed to a roughcast finish.

- 6. Police Scotland Report** – It was noted once again, there was no Police attendance at the meeting.

French Wight commented on the continuing downward trend of solvency rates which was disappointing and did not make good reading. The Chair raised his concerns at £16,500 value of diamorphine tablets being found in a Hawick property, which had these not been seized would have been on our streets. It was good to note that the perpetrator had been reported to the Procurator Fiscal for court action. The Chair also made comment of an unusual theft of a digger from Wellogate Cemetery, which had since been recovered.

Duncan Taylor enquired if, within SBC's approved budgets, the Community Action Team (CAT) budget had been renewed in full. This was confirmed by Councillors. Duncan expressed his concern that drug seizures should be being carried out as routine police work, and that the CAT's remit should be lower-level incidents, such as dog fouling, anti-social behaviour etc but this did not appear to be the case and therefore they were not doing what they were set up to do.

Councillor McAteer advised that he had written an article regarding the CAT work. The budget for CAT had been agreed to, but with conditions. He agreed with Duncan's sentiments that the CAT were deployed to carry out work that normal policing was not doing, e.g., parking issues, litter, dog fouling etc and their response in these areas had been pretty poor.

SBC argued to get rid of CCTV which they viewed as a police responsibility, yet on the other hand they were prepared to spend £570k for a CAT to do police work, which Councillor McAteer viewed as a complete contradiction. He concluded stating there were alternatives, which he would address in his article.

Councillor Turnbull stated caution be exercised in criticism of the CATs, as the Police or SBC could withdraw from that Contract at any point. The Council could not be expected to provide all of what they had done in the past, and expressed his disappointment that the Scottish Government, along with Police Scotland and COSLA had not moved on CCTV at pace. If the public were keen to have up-to-date CCTV, then this would require to be sought through other avenues, providing examples of Newcastleton, Selkirk and Kelso Community Councils taking CCTV installations forward in their areas. He stated whilst he heard concerns being raised, if the CATs were to be lost, these issues would only continue to get worse.

John Wilkinson raised two incidents he had witnessed lately – one being a caller at night to his home seeking money from him after his wallet had been stolen, and he needed to get home to Galashiels. It was later learned that this person had been circulating in and around Hawick targeting many others with the same story; the other being children climbing on scaffolding erected at the Queens Head Pub. His view was that these incidents needed "bobbies on the beat", referring to Police being more visible in and around the town.

- 7. High School Senior Team Report** – No report presented.
- 8. Treasurer's Report** – In the absence of the Treasurer, the Secretary reported on his behalf. Members had previously been circulated with the report, and it was noted the only movement during the month was the receipt of £1,476.37 grant funding for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee event. This meant a closing balance of £22,650.66.

Much of this grant had now been spent on tablecloths, napkins, balloons, flags and for provision of 250 commemorative coins to be presented by HCC on a first-come-first-served bases to primary school-aged children. This expenditure would reflect in next month's report, along with Hawick in Bloom summer plant costs of just over £2.5k, insurance premium of £527.80 where a breakdown of costs per risk were still awaited, and costs for replacement pads for HCC's defibrillator outside the Town Hall.

9. Public Forum & Town Issues

- (a) Reivers Festival – The Chair thanked those HCC members who had responded regarding their willingness to provide assistance with parking and other tasks at this Festival. It was encouraging to see so many willing to help.
- (b) Toilets at the Haugh – The Chair enquired with Councillors as to their knowledge of alleged vandalism at this location, where mirrors had been ripped off the walls and sanitary wares and doors damaged. Councillors stated they were not aware, however Councillor Marshall advised that there was good CCTV coverage in that area, and he hoped that this had been reported to the Police to enable them to apprehend the culprits.
- (c) Storm-damaged trees at Wilton Lodge Park (WLP) – Braden George enquired when it was likely tree debris would be removed. There would shortly be many visitors to the town for the Reivers Festival, and who would be visiting our park, and these trees were a mess, with no work on removal or tidying appearing to be done.

Councillors confirmed that they and SBC were aware of all the areas with trees impacted by storm damage, which stretched to areas wider than WLP. They advised that inspections had been carried out and records were in place however Councillors had been advised that the area around the Boar War Memorial, as one example, would be into the summer before tree surgeons would be able to attend as their workload had to be prioritised, with many affected areas throughout the Borders.

French Wight commented on Parks Department staff carrying out clearing works behind the pump track which they could manage.

- (d) Flood Protection - Traffic & other signage – French Wight raised his concerns at signage, particularly around the Bath Street area, being placed face-down as not in use, along with broken sandbags lying around causing hazards for pedestrians. He enquired as to whose responsibility these signs were, and whether they could be removed if not in use. The Distillery also had signs lying on the pavement.

Councillor Marshall undertook to relay this matter to the Flood Protection Contractors regarding signs they had responsibility for, as having been raised at the HCC meeting, and to update HCC members thereafter. Other signage he would also take forward.

- (e) Benches at Car Parking area at Volunteer Park – Duncan Taylor raised a concern on behalf of a carer in the community, who outlined that when supporting a gentleman in his care with mobility problems, he had parked his car to go (over the bridge) to the café within Wilton Lodge Park. His concern was that there were no seats or rest places there but that over the water, seating facilities were readily available. He enquired as to the possibility of having some benches placed on the car park side of the water.

Councillor McAteer confirmed he would take this request forward.

- (f) Deer Warning Signs at the Nipknowes – Braden George advised that SBC had agreed to their erecting these signs back in October but to date these were not in situ. The

Secretary advised that she had an email trail on this matter and would contact Councillor Paterson again for progress.

10. Reports from sub-committees

- (a) A7 Action Group - Marjorie McCreadie advised that a meeting of office-bearers had been held around 10 days earlier. Members were currently preparing a new Constitution. It was hoped to hold a Special AGM on 22nd April which date would be confirmed the following day, as 4 weeks' notice would be required. Marjorie was seeking a Minute-secretary, and if anyone was interested or knew of any names, she would be grateful. This was a remunerated post, required for 4 meetings per annum.
- (b) Queen's Platinum Jubilee Event – In the absence of the Vice-Chair, the Secretary confirmed that funding was now in place and purchases of tablecloths, napkins, flags etc, and a commemorative coin had now been made. A sample of the commemorative coin was available to view. The Vice-Chair had applied for the necessary licences and had in hand all food requirements and plan for the day. In all, good progress had been made towards holding this event.
- (c) Hawick Common Good - John Campbell advised that he had nothing further to report as the next meeting would be held the following day.
- (d) Hawick in Bloom – The Secretary reported that summer bedding plants had been ordered and paid for, with a delivery date of 13th June 2022. A commemorative tree to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee had been planted by volunteers the previous week, and she expressed thanks to Grant Turnbull, SBC Parks Department for his assistance with the planting, and to the Hawick Paper for their excellent coverage. The next meeting of Hawick in Bloom volunteers was scheduled for 22nd March, when progress with chilli seed planting was eagerly anticipated.
- (e) Wind Farms – French Wight advised of scoping requests for Alemoor Rig and Law Forest. He was concerned at the ever-increasing numbers of such requests and advised that Philip Kerr (Southdean Community Council) had been very active in getting associated meetings organised. French stated that the whole of the Borders was now being affected, and in his opinion considered it was now time for everyone in the Borders to have their say.

11. Updates from Community Partners

- (a) Foundation Scotland – In the absence of the Vice-Chair, there was no report.
- (b) Future Hawick - The Chair read out a report from Brian Bouglas, Chair, Future Hawick. The report advised as follows: -
 - They had met with John Lamont recently to request help in promoting the extension of the cycle path between Selkirk and Hawick. John Lamont had received feedback from the Chief Executive's Office of Transport Scotland stating that the area would be considered for investigation in 2022/23 year.
 - They were in the early stages of organising a Festival of Wellbeing to be held on Sunday, 21st August.
 - They had appointed Fiona Drane of Bright Light Marketing as their Project Manager for the St Leonard's Park Project. This was primarily to have their Business Plan completed and to hold public presentations. Fiona Drane would be contacting various organisations in the TD9 area to organise presentations which would provide a more comprehensive insight into the Project's proposals.
 - They were in communication with the Town of 1000 Trails, Hornshole Greenway and SoSE regarding a social and economic study for Hawick, which would tie in the SCDC Community Groups cohesion. A meeting of these groups would be held soon.

- Welcome Hosts – Marjorie McCreddie advised she was pleased to announce that a new Tourist Information Office would be opened in Hawick courtesy of McLaughlin & Harvey who were providing the use of their office at Bourtree Place from the end of May to mid-September. As well as employing the Welcome Hosts, they would be advertising for 2 x part-time staff to work in the tourist information office, with a view to keeping visitors in Hawick for longer periods. There would be a big screen to advise visitors of “what’s on” and where, as well as statistical information gathered on visitor numbers etc. This was a step she considered to be in the right direction, and whilst on a small scale for this year, who knew what might follow on from there.

Marjorie then advised that the Welcome Host initiative would celebrate their 25th anniversary this year. Hamish Smith had very good, archived information on the Welcome Hosts, which would soon come within their proud ownership. The Heritage Hub had agreed to holding this and would have an exhibition.

- (c) Teviot & Liddesdale Partnership – The Chair reported that Pot A assessment of two applications received – one from a Town of 1000 trails and one from HCC for 2 gazebos – had been completed. Both the Chair and Vice-Chair of HCC, who were part of the Assessment Panel for Pot A applications, had declared an interest and took no part in discussions. The Chair reported that both applications were recommended for approval to the T&L Area Partnership, whose next meeting would be held on 22nd March.

Pot A and Pot B funds were now closed to applications, with the small residual funds remaining to be transferred into 2022/23 funds.

- (d) Williestruther Loch – French Wight reported that the boardwalk improvements were now complete and that laying of gravel had started in remaining areas. He stated that the improved areas were looking very good, and he had received a lot of positive feedback. With continued kind weather conditions, it was hoped for full completion of works within the next 2 to 3 weeks.

Braden George enquired on future maintenance responsibilities, however French considered that some low maintenance may be required in future but nothing major.

12. Planning Issues – There were no planning issues for consideration.

13. Correspondence –

- (a) HCC members were reminded of SBC’s consultation on Kerbside Waste & Recycling Services, which they had been notified of via email, and to ensure their input by the deadline date of 5th April 2022.
- (b) Notice had been received, and circulated to HCC members via email, of the Scottish Borders Community Councils Network (SBCCN) AGM which would be held on 14th April at 7pm in Galashiels. A venue would be advised in due course for any HCC member wishing to attend.
- (c) An appeal for financial assistance had been received from a Hawick athlete wishing to compete in the World Masters Athletic Championships in Finland at the end of June. This was a huge event with over 7000 athletes attending, and at which he would hope to gain at least one gold medal and put Hawick on the map in this field.

The Chair explained that in normal circumstances, the former micro-grants provided by HCC would have been an avenue to apply for such funding, however these were no longer in place. HCC2 account had a balance of £167.63, which had been accumulated through HCC's own past fundraising events, and which balance had remained dormant for some time. HCC members agreed to provide the whole of this sum to the applicant concerned, with a request that feedback from the applicant on how his competition went being forthcoming.

- (d) It was noted that a request from Fiona Drane, Project Manager for the St Leonard's Park Project had been received, asking to attend the April HCC meeting to provide a presentation on this project. The Secretary advised that it had already been agreed that Conor Price, Project Manager attend the April meeting to update on progress with Flood Protection in the town. Members agreed that the St Leonard's Park Project presentation be to May meeting.
- (e) The Secretary advised that correspondence had been received for HCC's renewal of its Lotteries Licence (£20 fee), which was now renewed, as well as for renewal of licensing of radios for Resilience Group usage, which was now in hand.

14. A.O.C.B –

- (a) The Secretary advised she had received a phone call from a Hawick resident, stating initially his exacerbation at getting no answer from calling SBC on their 0300 number on several occasions.

His enquiry was to ask whether SBC was co-ordinating any exercise for private residents to offer support to Ukrainian families seeking somewhere to live. He and his wife were looking to offer a family to reside with them. Councillors were asked if they knew of any such SBC initiative.

Councillor McAteer advised that SBC state they have never been asked specifically to do this by the Scottish Government nor the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). Nevertheless, SBC say they are ready and willing to act, along with local registered social landlords, as soon as any directive is given by the Scottish Government/COSLA.

On the matter of no response from SBC's 0300 number, Councillors Marshall and Ramage advised that they had received similar complaints of callers getting no answer on this number. It appeared that SBC were not accepting that there were faults with this line, giving Councillors the standard message, that SBC's telephone service had been under significant pressures, and they would continue to take steps to improve. Councillors agreed more had to be done as not everyone had internet access to allow online contact with SBC, and they would continue to pursue SBC on this issue.

- (b) Railway – French Wight enquired as to where things were with the railway. He had read what he considered to be disturbing news about this recently.

Councillor McAteer explained Transport Scotland had requested that mention of the extension of the railway line from Tweedbank to Carlisle be removed from SBC's Local Development Plan. To remove this however would cause untold issues in future should for example any person build property on the proposed route of the line. A strategic piece of work by SBC was carried out to ensure that the extension of the railway remained part of its Development Plan. There was a strong message being relayed to Councillors from many people keen to see the railway back.

- (c) Euan Welsh advised he had received an email from a member of the public stating that 3 of the pitches at the top end of Wilton Lodge Park were largely unused, and he wondered would there be longevity to turn these into an athletics track. He expressed willingness to attend a future HCC meeting to explain his proposal further. It was agreed that he be invited to a future HCC meeting for this purpose.
- (d) Waste Management – John Campbell asked if SBC could provide information on costs to them for disposing of fridges, washing machines and where such general waste goes to. He quoted that anyone taking a small van of household waste to the dump required to pay a cost of £13, so in effect SBC made money from this.

Members and Councillors agreed this was the type of question, along with many others, that needed answering by Ross Sharp-Dent and suggested he be invited again to attend a future meeting in person.

15. Date of Next Meeting – It was agreed that the next meeting of HCC would be held on Monday, 11th April 2022 at 6.30pm within the Lesser Town Hall.