

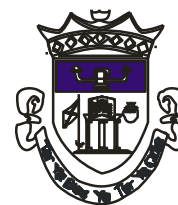
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# Hawick Community Council

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## MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023 within the Assembly Hall, Hawick High School

Present	Marion Short (Chair)	Cameron Knox (Vice-Chair)
	Margaret Hogg (Secretary)	John Campbell
	Braden George	Wilson George
	Kevin Marsh	Duncan Taylor
	Euan Welsh	French Wight
	John Wilkinson	
Attending:	Councillor Cox	Councillor Ramage
	Councillor Richards	Councillor Smart
	Craig Oliver, HHS	

There were 5 members of the public in attendance.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished them a Happy New Year. She hoped that 2023 would be as successful and proactive a year as the previous and thanked HCC members and other volunteers for their contributions in 2022.

Meetings would be held in the High School for January to March inclusive, to allow Hawick Opera to have use of the Town Hall for their show rehearsals. As another voluntary group they deserved recognition for their input to the Community, and so it was not any hardship for HCC to relocate for 3 meetings.

The Christmas Window Competition had now been judged, with 1<sup>st</sup> place awarded to Adam's Kitchen, who would receive a silver salver and certificate; 2<sup>nd</sup> place had been awarded to The Opticians in Howegate; and 3<sup>rd</sup> place to Charlie's Florists – the latter two would receive certificates. 5 other businesses, namely Dobbie & Michie, Desport & Gray, The Night Safe, Teviot Eye Care and Hendersons Travel were Highly Commended and would also receive certificates. The Chair congratulated all of them, for their great efforts. The numbers of businesses participating had shown an increase and the standards of windows overall had been very good, making selection of the best ones very difficult. All participants had certainly helped brighten the town and she thanked everyone for their efforts. Certificates were currently being prepared and would be distributed as soon as possible, and an article had been prepared for the Hawick Paper the following Friday.

The Vice-Chair advised that Archie Howieson, Wilton Primary School had won the Hunt the Duck competition and would receive £25, with 5 runners-up being Bobby Howieson, Wilton Primary School; Finlay Robson, Burnfoot Community School; Carter & Callie Purves both of Wilton Primary School and Alisha Lyall of Trinity Primary School, who would receive £5 each. He thanked everyone who had taken part, albeit unfortunately the uptake for the competition had been very low and much lower than in previous years. Consideration would be given as to

whether the competition should continue or be replaced with an alternative to encourage better uptake.

It was noted that the meeting would be recorded by HCC for 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 HCC Member Jim Adams and Councillors McAteer and Marshall.
4. **Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022** – The previously circulated Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting – Proposed by Wilson George and Seconded by Duncan Taylor.
5. **Matters arising** – The Chair asked of any progress regarding sound system within the Town Hall. Councillor Ramage referred to an email received by her from Euan Jackson, Live Borders, back in October 2022 who had advised that regarding WiFi in the Town Hall, ICT and Digital Services were supplied by CGI through their contract with SBC. This was an arrangement which did not work and SBC were looking at options to see if they could achieve connectivity using their own suppliers. That would be an unbudgeted cost, however they were very conscious that their Hall Customers saw Live Borders as the operator and these ongoing problems with CGI were of no interest to them. A report was scheduled to go to Live Borders' Management Team on 15<sup>th</sup> November with options and recommendations to resolve this issue. Councillor Ramage had sought an update following that meeting, which was still awaited. She had also raised the issue of lack of equipment required for Guest Speakers, e.g., projector and roving mic, and would continue to chase up until these matters were concluded.

The Chair enquired about the situation with the bins at the Campervan site and whether this had now been resolved, following a meeting between Councillor Ramage, Marjory McCreadie and SBC's Deborah Berry on 23 November last.

Marjorie confirmed that no progress whatsoever had been made. On the first day of the Campervan Rally on 28<sup>th</sup> December, the bins were overflowing and she thanked HCC's Vice-Chair for his attempts to have these bins all emptied. One lorry came but only emptied 2 of the bins but not others which were overflowing. In addition, another lorry arrived (the same one that cleans the toilets) but never looked at the bins. The 2 bins that were emptied were one of normal size (the same as an average household had) and a smaller bin. A third bin could not be emptied (the large one with the metal Litter sign) as it remained padlocked.

The Chair confirmed that the Secretary had emailed John Curry, Director at SBC but had not received any response. That email was copied to Councillor Ramage to pursue. Councillor Ramage advised she had been notified that all bins had been emptied and had thought the matter to have accordingly been resolved. She referred to the large communal bins to the rear of new flats at the former Peter Scott Mill, where people were abusing these and filling with mattresses etc so there were obviously issues around provision of these types of bins. The one referred to at the Campervan site remained padlocked and so only opened about 5 inches which was not of any use.

Marjorie then referred to a small white van she had witnessed, emptying the contents of the van, mainly bottles into the bins for use by the campervanners.

The meeting on 23 November had not accordingly proved thus far to be of any value. Marjorie considered that she regularly attended HCC meetings but was having second thoughts about continuing to do so, as all she seemed to report on were the continuing saga of these bins and toilets and nothing was getting done.

The Chair raised her concerns about communications being issued to staff at SBC, and the apparent lack of any response, which did not look good on them. In addition, writing to Directors appeared to be passed on to under-studies and not responded to directly. Wilson George advised that staff were too rigid in what work they would do, and not responsive to working out with their individual remits, which did not help situations such as this.

Councillor Cox advised that she along with other Councillors were scheduled to meet with John Curry soon and agreed to raise these issues at that meeting face-to-face, and report back.

On the matter of the cleaning of the sluice, Councillor Ramage confirmed that would be on the Agenda for the next Common Good meeting. She had contacted Norrie Curtis who had stated SBC were looking at contactless payment methods for the toilets, so whether payment for use of the sluice could be incorporated could also be investigated and that had been requested. It cost £400 each time for cleaning of the sluice but if that cost could be covered by users, that would resolve the financial side.

The Chair stated that resolution to unsustainable insurance costs remained unresolved and that following December's meeting, the Secretary had emailed Jenny Wilkinson asking when CC Grants were last raised and whether it would be possible, given high insurance costs as well as other running costs for HCC, to ask SBC to give consideration to increasing CC grants. No response had been received, albeit a reminder had then resulted in an automatic reply stating that SBC's offices were closed until 4<sup>th</sup> January however she would be on annual leave and not returning until 10<sup>th</sup> January. Accordingly, it was appreciated that the festive holidays had perhaps impacted on responses, but nevertheless the Chair raised her concerns that a pattern appeared to be emerging of non-responses or long delays in receiving responses.

- 6. Police Scotland Reports - December 2022** – The Chair advised that reports had been received and circulated to members. Reports were somewhat abbreviated for the month, however, it had been noted that the last week of December would be reported on in January 2023 reports.

It was noted that most incidents reported had occurred in the Burnfoot area but there were no major incidents of concern. Duncan Taylor raised that even with the build-up to Christmas, there did not appear to be many incidents reported. More information might be forthcoming in January reports. Outcomes of drink-driving campaigns during the festive period might also be reported then too.

- 7. Hawick High School Update** – Craig Oliver reported that the Christmas Dance had gone ahead after an absence of two years, which had been enjoyable. They had sold Candy Canes, with proceeds going to their named Charity. A Young Chef's competition had also been held and the winner was Jessica Scott. Craig joked that he had offered to be a judge for the competition but had been refused. Pupils were now planning for a Burns Supper.

The Chair thanked Craig for his update and for his attendance.

Councillor Ramage advised that a couple of the senior girls were involved with Place Planning meetings being held involving her and Gillian Jardine of SBC and the girls were currently gathering information from secondary schools to help this project, which was great.

- 8. Treasurer's Report – December 2022** – The Secretary in the absence of the Treasurer advised of expenditure of circa.£385, and income of circa.£373, resulting in a closing balance of £24,901.88. Invoices were awaited in relation to expenses for the Christmas Event and monies remained ringfenced for Williestruther improvement works, as well as an electrician's invoice for works on Christmas Lights both of which would be paid from the Foundation Scotland account. Whilst the closing balance appeared satisfactory, there was little room for complacency, with ever increasing costs of running community events and other liabilities.

**9. Public Forum & Town Issues:**

**Top-up Tap:** The Chair reported on a response received from Scottish Water after some months, following Councillor McAteer's suggestion to contact them regarding the possibility of securing a Top-up Tap for Hawick. HCC's suggested location was the Common Haugh, albeit it was understood water was now available at that location.

The response stated that Scottish Water had now determined a suitable location, albeit they did not state where that was, and they would be requesting planning permission for installation. The Chair asked Councillors for their support in securing planning permission and to provide any information on location proposed.

Euan Welsh commented that he had viewed Top-Up Taps elsewhere, and these were aesthetically pleasing and easily identifiable, and should be welcomed for Hawick.

**Shrubbery works at Dovemount:** The Chair, following works to clear and tidy shrubbery near the Dovemount Roundabout carried out by Bear Scotland, advised she had also contacted SBC to similarly clear and tidy shrubbery bounding Teviotdale Leisure Centre and at the top of Mansfield Road, under their responsibility. A response had now been received from SBC stating they would endeavour to get winter pruning completed by the end of the year. However, it was not clear whether that meant the end of the Financial Year or otherwise. They were staff down, not including short-term sickness, and they were having to prioritise essential pruning first. This matter would be monitored and hopefully those works would not take too long to complete.

**Millers Knowes Car Park:** Braden George raised an issue with the potholes at the Millers Knowes Car Park. This had been previously raised by him some 3 years ago but only temporary works had been carried out which were ineffective. He considered a more long-term solution was required. It was not clear whether this ground belonged to Common Good or SBC and Councillors would take this matter forward for clarification.

Councillor Smart wondered if the land concerned was part of Land Registry and would be worthwhile looking into further. It was noted that SBC emptied bins in the area. It appeared there would be no records held in Hawick as these were allegedly all relocated to SBC HQ in Newtown St Boswells some years ago.

The Vice-Chair whilst recognising the need for potholes at Millers Knowes to be attended to, stated given the high number of potholes across the town, those potholes in streets should take priority for sorting. Public Highways such as the Loan, top of Beaconsfield Terrace, the Terraces etc were not part of the current SBC plan for remedial works this year and needed to

take priority over the likes of Millers Knowes Car Park. Should it be found that the Millers Car Park was Common Good land, it could be the case that these works could be funded through the Small Schemes Budget available and therefore not be an unbudgeted cost for SBC.

**New Sustrans Path at the Park:** The Vice-Chair referred to the new Sustrans path above the 3G and asked on behalf of an enquirer as to whether a barrier would be fitted alike to that situated at the bridge at the Pump Track to prevent kids coming from the path right onto the main road. It had originally been planned to have traffic lights at this location, but essentially he considered it would be beneficial to have a barrier located on the pavement there. Some sort of bollards might also be beneficial on the new path, which was wide enough now to allow cars, for the purpose of preventing boy racers. Councillors were requested to progress on these two suggestions with the Flood Protection Group.

**Trees at the Dunk:** Kevin Marsh referred to a member of the public raising an issue with trees at the dunk, and following flooding on 30<sup>th</sup> December, two further trees had fallen into the river there and a third was leaning ready to fall. Councillors to progress, albeit there may require to be involvement of SEPA.

**Parking Tickets:** Wilson George advised that parking tickets were (at long last) being issued that day in the town.

**Empty High Street Shops:** Jock Campbell commented on yet another shop shortly becoming empty (M & Co) and suggested that the likes of the Liberal Club could be utilised for a kids play area to allow parents to drop off their kids, shop on the High Street and then pick them up thereafter. The Chair agreed the High Street and empty shops were of concern for everyone. Savers Shop would also be closing, not as a result of rates but due to the landlord raising their rent. She asked Councillors if Hawick's High Street was under any considerations for improvement. Kevin Marsh advised that business rates were under consideration presently. Councillor Ramage thought that business rates on the High Street had been reduced for occupied premises. The state of some of the empty shops was however of real concern to her and the inability to determine ownership, many of which owners were not local. It was the poor condition of those shops which were degrading the High Street.

The High Street was considered too long, with too many shops, and consideration may need to be given to making changes, such as happened in the Howegate area where a mixture of homes and shops were introduced. Commercial Road was somewhat becoming our High Street and change was needed. The Chair considered that the High Street appeared to be more for social activities now, such as coffee shops, and the demise of High Streets, not only in Hawick but in many other towns and cities, was not helped with online shopping appearing to be of first choice.

**Barrier at Morrisons Roundabout:** John Campbell raised the matter of the barrier at Morrisons roundabout having been damaged again and wondered if having traffic lights in that vicinity might help for lorries to navigate that bend better. This damage was a regular occurrence. It was raised that discussion on roundabouts would need to be had, given the potential of large vehicles entering the town carrying huge wind turbines for proposed wind farms and their inability to properly navigate roundabouts. The Chair advised traffic lights were suggested previously at that roundabout when Commercial Road was closed, however, had received no response.

Kevin Marsh referred to SBC's consultation and HCC's response on Flood Protection works for Duke Street and for that street to become one-way. This would mean more lorries would require navigating that same roundabout, and down Trinity Street for deliveries to Morrisons.

**Signage:** Marjorie McCreadie stated that the large sign coming into the town at Galalaw stated Commercial Road Open, however, many drivers would not know where Commercial Road was, and that was resulting in big lorries continuing on along the High Street. She suggested it might be better to have an actual sign directing heavy vehicles along Commercial Road. Councillor Smart stated she understood that the sign would not be taken away until all resurfacing work had been completed along the full length of Commercial Road. Kevin Marsh declared an interest as his business was involved in Flood Protection works, and confirmed it was indeed the case that signage would remain in situ until Commercial Road works were fully completed.

**Litter at all entrances to Hawick:** The Chair advised that she had written to Hawick Councillors regarding the large amount of litter in particular from the Galalaw Roundabout up to the entrance to Appletreehall road end. This litter appeared to be being thrown out of vehicles exiting Hawick north on the A7. There was not so much litter on the other side of the verges coming into the town. Another area for litter was the back road from Appletreehall and over the railway bridge and the back road into Burnfoot, as well as along Bath Street, Teviot Road and Tannage Close.

Councillor Ramage confirmed that she had contacted Bear Scotland regarding litter on the A7 but to date had not received any response.

The Chair considered that the issue appeared to be the need for more education to be out there with regard to educating people to take their litter home. Councillor Cox suggested that the Chair may wish to prepare an article for the Hawick Paper on this issue. It was noted that HCC had in the past carried out town clean-ups however often areas cleaned were as bad as ever in a very short timescale from having been cleaned. Consideration would be given to arranging another town clean up in due course.

**Narrow roads between Burnfoot to Appletreehall and onwards:** Braden George raised that drivers using excessive speed along these country roads meant oncoming vehicles having to drive into verges and his concern of continuing accidents. Could some widening of roads be possible. A member of the public agreed and stated he had been subject to such accidents, both as a driver and as a pedestrian. He had also raised with SBC the issue with large vehicles coming over Hornshole and the need to stop that happening, however that issue also remained unresolved.

**Wilton Lodge Park Summer Activities:** A member of the public enquired if there were any plans yet in place to enhance on activities, such as the Band Stand events, at the Park this coming summer. He suggested more local entertainers would be appropriate and over a six-week period. Duncan Taylor declared an interest as a member of Friends of Wilton Lodge Park (FoWLP), HCC and Live Music Hawick. Duncan confirmed there had been no activities as yet booked. FoWLP had arranged another meeting for 8 February when events would be discussed as part of that Agenda. Anyone with suggestions on activities could forward these and volunteer to help with these events or to provide some much-needed funding. Last summer, HCC funded 4 Sunday bandstand music events, which were very well attended, partly due to excellent artists and good weather, and clarified there was no restriction on anyone performing at any other time up the park if they wished to do so. Some local groups had

stated that they would like to have been asked to perform however they had not contacted either FoWLP or HCC until after the bandstand events had taken place. It was suggested that more publicity was perhaps required, albeit argued that the artists and turnouts had been very good.

The Chair advised that the Saxhorn Band had intimated their wish to perform at future events and this request would be borne in mind. Duncan however advised that anyone wishing to perform at the Park required only to complete a booking form for SBC.

With regards to funding for this Summer's events once finalised, the Chair stated she would be happy to apply for this through the Area Partnership Funding on behalf of FoWLP and HCC. This was a joint partnership between FoWLP and HCC working together.

Following the 6 February meeting of FoWLP an update would be given at the next HCC meeting.

**Welcome Hosts Brochure:** Marjorie McCreadie advised she was in course of preparing that brochure and asked if HCC would again be taking an advert for the Christmas and Bandstand events. There would be no increase in the cost of such an advert. Printing would be in March and Marjorie would advise HCC accordingly.

#### **10. Reports from Sub-Committees**

(a) **A7 Action Group** – Marjorie McCreadie advised following on from the last meeting in Langholm in November, the guest speaker Dr Jeffrey Martin had expressed an interest in addressing HCC on the impact of Teviot Wind Farm to Hawick. This was reported to previous HCC meeting in December, and she wondered when that address might be possible.

The Chair advised that a plan would be made for speakers in 2023 soon, and this request would be noted.

- (b) **CCTV** – Nothing further to report since last HCC meeting. Another CCTV meeting would shortly be arranged to consider next steps.
- (c) **Hawick Common Good Fund** – Nothing further to report.
- (d) **Hawick in Bloom** – Nothing to report at the present time. The next meeting of the group would be held on 7<sup>th</sup> February.
- (e) **Wind Farms** – Nothing further to report. Monitoring continued on Millmoor Rig Wind Farm near Chesters, albeit that Wind Farm was not within the remit of HCC.

#### **11. Updates from Community Partners**

- (a) **Future Hawick (FH)** – Duncan Taylor advised there was nothing further to report. The next meeting of FH would be held towards the end of January.
- (b) **Foundation Scotland (FS)** – The Chair advised that a request had been received from FS for HCC's Annual Report on funding they provided in 2022. An electrician's invoice was outstanding and once that had been received and paid, any surplus monies would be spent on additional lighting for use next Christmas. A number of existing lights had now failed, due to general wear and tear.

The Vice-Chair advised that additional new harp lights had already been purchased and fixings were being made to enable attachment of these to holders, ready for use next Christmas. He went on to advise it had been disappointing that no lights had been erected in Drumlanrig Square for Christmas just passed, with no power available for these lights

following works carried out by SBC to the clock there. SBC's Property Officer had confirmed power would be reinstated for next Christmas. He concluded by stating that the Christmas Lights would be taken down that coming Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> January starting at 9am at the Horse. A plea would be made for volunteers to help with this via our Facebook page and hopefully also the Hawick Paper.

The Chair advised that the Distribution Plan for HCC's funding requirements in 2023 was also being sought. She stated she would be emailing HCC members shortly for their project ideas for 2023.

It was noted that the Christmas tree lights at the Dovemount roundabout had been vandalised and required to be sorted by the Chair on Christmas morning, which was not ideal.

There was also concern raised that other Councils permitted Christmas lights across their main High Streets, but due to stress-testing required by SBC at an annual cost of £3,000, it was not possible for Hawick to have these lights across its High Street, as these costs were not sustainable.

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

**13. Correspondence** – There was no correspondence to report.

**14. AOCB** –

**Frederick Douglass Project** – The Vice-Chair reported that this was now moving along at a pace. There would be another meeting of that group the following Wednesday evening to finalise arrangements for 14<sup>th</sup> February (purported to be Frederick Douglass' birthday) and the unveiling of a plaque at Myreslawgreen. Invitations were being issued for refreshments at Teviot Church following that event.

Gordon Muir, a member of the Frederick Douglass project group also advised that the event would be run alongside another like-minded event – Show Racism the Red Card - being held in the evening that same date at Mansfield Rugby Club and organised by Rory Bannerman.

**UK Government Financial Support Payments** – Councillor Cox had emailed details to the Secretary regarding financial support payments of up to £400 available for heating and off-grid fuel users. The Secretary would circulate that email to HCC members for onward sharing and for placing on HCC's website and Facebook page.

**15. Date of next meeting** - The next HCC meeting would be held on Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 6.30pm within the Assembly Hall, Hawick High School.