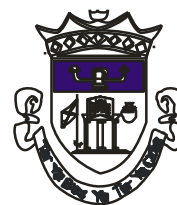

Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
held on Monday 12th February 2024 within the Assembly Hall,
Hawick High School

Present	Cameron Knox (Chair) Jim Adams (Treasurer) Stuart Beck Braden George Stuart Mactaggart Duncan Taylor	Kevin Marsh (Vice-Chair) Margaret Hogg (Secretary) Jock Campbell Wilson George Michael Robertson John Wilkinson
Attending:	Councillor Cox Councillor Ramage Councillor Smart	Councillor McAteer Councillor Richards

There were 6 members of the public in attendance along with Graeme Ford, Hawick Paper.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the February meeting of HCC and thanked everyone for their support in attending. Once again, there was a busy agenda to progress through.

He reminded everyone in attendance that the meeting would be 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 HCC Members Graeme King and Euan Welsh.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meetings of 11th December 2023** – The previously circulated Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting - Proposed for adoption by Wilson George and Seconded by Braden George.
- 5. Matters arising** –
Teviot Day Care Centre – It was noted that there had been a report in a recent edition of the Hawick Paper. Councillor Ramage confirmed that recruitment was underway. Sign-off by the Care Inspectorate was taking much time due to a long waiting list. Teviot Day Care representatives were pushing for a meeting at the Community Hospital to determine exactly what was being done in terms of progressing matters.
Pelican Crossing at the Haugh & Resurfacing/Painterwork at Langlands Bridge – Councillor Ramage had sent further reminders to SBC officers on these matters for response. Regarding

Langlands Bridge, this was under shared responsibility of SBC's Parks Department and Transport Scotland. A site visit was being proposed and Councillor Ramage sought confirmation of when that site visit would actually happen but as yet no date had been advised.

Puddle at Home Hardware – It was noted that this had at long last been rectified. The pavement had been dug up, necessary works carried out, and the pavement re-laid.

Sonny Murray Statue, Buccleuch Road – Councillor McAteer referred to an update email provided to the Secretary (and subsequently forwarded to HCC members on 14 December last). It was noted that the statue had now been removed to allow the Active Travel Network works being taken forward by BEAR Scotland. That was with the full agreement of Sonny Murray's son Stephen. As yet the best site to relocate the statue to remained undecided but it would be relocated to a suitable location in due course.

Toucan Crossing at top of Duke Street – Jock Campbell asked when this would be installed, as discussed previously on Flood Protection updates. Councillor McAteer confirmed that it would be completed probably within the next couple of months as part of the Active Travel Network.

Lampposts in Duke Street - Jock then went on to ask when lampposts in Duke Street would be put in place, and again Councillor McAteer confirmed that these would be inserted as part of remaining works to be done following completion of works on the Active Travel Network. He would attempt to get a date for these works but assurance was given that Duke Street would not be left without any lampposts.

Mart Street Road Layout – Jock raised concerns regarding the layout at the top of Duke Street adjoining Mart Street and that emergency vehicles coming from the TLC roundabout required as a result of the new road layout, to go along Mart Street to the Morrisons roundabout and down Trinity Street to access Duke Street and surrounding areas, or to go via Union Street to access North Bridge Street and Library area. He considered that the kerb installations prevented the previous quicker accesses to these areas especially for emergency vehicles. It was agreed that concerns with that road layout should have been raised at the last update by Conor Price on Flood Protection works.

Repairs to Play Equipment at Wilton Lodge Park – Stuart Beck advised that the play equipment which had been missing for a number of months for repair works, had still not been replaced. Councillor Ramage undertook to progress on that matter.

6. Hawick High School – Senior Pupil Update

The Chair welcomed the two senior pupils to the meeting - Grace Gibb and Joseph Wear - especially when they were on school holiday.

The pupils advised of a number of projects earmarked in the next six months to share. Since the end of last year, it was stated that Lisa Scott had really stepped up to the appointment as Head Teacher and they considered she had the dedication and love for the school to lead, take it forward and make it better.

At the last meeting, pupils had reported they were preparing for their Christmas Dance, and that had received great feedback from the pupils who had attended and was said to be just the right tonic to get them relaxed and ready for their two-week festive break.

Moving on to 2024, they had held a Burns Supper, and were so pleased to showcase local talent, young and old, and to celebrate the works, life and legacy of Robbie Burns. Burns was such a crucial Scottish talent and pupils were grateful to learn about him at HHS and stated that next year's Burns event would face a lot of competition given the success of the 2024 event.

For the last two weeks before the break, S4s to S6s had been engaged in prelims, which were by no means easy but nevertheless worthwhile. On returning after the break, the focus would be on revision for S4s to S6 pupils for exams. Finally, it was noted that all of the various sports teams and stars along with the Prom Committee would be working over the next few months to ensure that their planned Summer Prom was a success.

The Chair thanked the pupils for providing their update and wished them well with their forthcoming exams.

- 7. Police Scotland Reports** – Reports had been previously circulated to members for December and January. Police Scotland had intimated they were unable to attend the meeting.

It had been noted from the reports that good work within the schools was continuing, which all agreed could only be a good thing. It was also noted that parking ticket numbers had shown an increase, which again was progress, however it may be that had been resourced at the same time as increased patrols in town centres across the Borders, to prevent shop thefts during the Christmas period. 177 parking tickets had been issued in January, with 64 of those in Peebles, following a person being knocked over on coming from between parked cars. Hopefully no such incident would happen in Hawick but the continued illegal parking was getting worse with total disregard to other users and the public in general.

The Chair advised of reintroduction of wardens in Dumfries & Galloway and stated there were only a few Councils now who did not operate a warden service. Our own townfolk in the main were the culprits for bad parking here, but there would be nothing done until SBC were able to progress on a warden service for Hawick. Hopefully, he said, the Police would in the interim continue to provide necessary resources and issue parking tickets to those offending.

Councillor McAteer advised that decriminalisation of parking remained on SBC's agenda and within their Administration Plan, and only on that happening, would that allow the Council to take direct action regarding parking, including parking on pavements, as well as a number of other issues, and to employ their own wardens. Police would still deal with parking on pavements but only when that was deemed to be a very clear obstruction, which was not easily defined, but for the Council to take these matters forward, decriminalisation was required to be implemented. He suggested to write to SBC's Chief Executive to add HCC's support for decriminalisation, given that as stated Dumfries & Galloway had now done so and had employed a warden service.

The Secretary confirmed that a letter of support had previously been issued to SBC's Chief Executive and a response received from him, however, another letter would be issued to again add support and seek an update on progress. It was noted that an email had been received from a resident within Twirlees Terrace to the HCC Gmail account regarding severe problems with parking on pavements and causing obstructions in that location. It had been explained in the response she had provided regarding decriminalisation being required and the names of Councillors had been provided for further enquiry of them. Councillor Smart confirmed she had received contact from that resident.

Braden George referred to initiatives for parking in the likes of Alnwick and surrounding areas that he was aware of, and Councillor McAteer confirmed that there were a number of such options which could be considered and put in place, e.g. parking meters, disks for residential areas, but only when parking was decriminalised. Meantime, illegal parking remained a Police

responsibility. There also remained a scheme in place where people could pay for a permit for parking in SBC owned car parks.

8. Guest Speaker – Stuart Young, Green Space Manager, SBC – Grass Maintenance Pilot

The Chair welcomed Stuart Young and Jenny Rudkin to the meeting to appraise on a proposed pilot scheme for grass management in the Teviot & Liddesdale area, which included Hawick.

Stuart Young introduced himself and Jenny Rudkin and advised that he would run through his presentation slides, which would show the aims and objectives of the Pilot and what they (SBC) were trying to do and how things had progressed so far. Questions could be raised at the end of the presentation and time allowed for any ideas for additional sites to be taken into account, which may need more cutting or indeed could allow for less.

He stated back in 2018 saw the first change in creating biodiversity areas and moving from a 10 to 20 working days cutting cycle for amenity grassed areas. Those included playparks, cemeteries, village greens and other open spaces. Since then, it had been found that there were many challenges around the 'one size fits all' approach. Those main challenges centred around climate conditions affecting grass growth, staff shortages, fleet and machinery breakdown and the removal of long grass cuttings.

Last year, SBC had found the number of customer enquiries relating to grass management had risen quite sharply. In response to that, a report had been presented to the Executive Committee last November and received their agreement to look at grass management pilots which would look to empower both staff and communities to agree a more flexible approach. The pilots would reflect local priorities and what communities needed, whilst also providing a balanced approach to service delivery as well as delivering on biodiversity benefits.

Pilots were not about making financial savings but to improve on outcomes for communities.

The 3 pilot studies being undertaken, which included around 12 towns and villages, were

- Berwickshire (Duns, Chirnside and surrounding villages)
- Eildon (Galashiels and Tweedbank)
- Teviot and Liddesdale (Hawick).

The scope of the studies included amenity grass maintenance in, for example, parks, play areas, schools, cemeteries and village greens, with active cemeteries being seen as priority areas for increased grass cutting if possible rather than less. Out-with the scope of the studies would be the high amenity sites which would remain unchanged, for example, sports pitches, key civic spaces and memorials, as well as existing biodiversity and low amenity grassed areas. The pilots would only relate to ground maintained by SBC. It was noted that many enquiries (around 40-50%) received by SBC regarding grassed areas related to those owned by local housing providers.

In Hawick, the Pilot would be developed using local knowledge, working with staff and the local community, to identify their priority areas for additional cuts sites to be agreed, and identify and build on the biodiversity sites already established. More naturalised sites would then be created as a result of the reduced cutting regimes being trialled.

By reducing the frequency of cuts across some sites would enable squads to deploy additional cuts in agreed priority sites at key times of the year when required. The more naturalised

sites would still receive one or two cuts a year and be monitored to manage weed control. SBC would not want those to become a problem, with growth of dock plants etc.

Stuart went on to explain the proposed timeline for progress, advising that at the end of last year they had completed engagement with relevant staff and whilst slightly behind, they were now coming to the end of engagement within communities. After tonight, they would commence to design new routes and plan sites agreed for change, and in the growing season April to September they would trial new routes, engage with their staff again, and monitor the outputs. In the Autumn, they would review outcomes and feedback to community groups including the Community Councils.

Play areas where there was grass, were considered to be a priority for cutting. Many complaints received were in relation to long grass, which was not conducive for kids playing in. Within the 2 cemeteries for pilot in Hawick, the new extended areas would see concentrated efforts as opposed to the areas containing older graves. It was envisaged less cutting would be required in the latter, to allow more cutting in the newer and extended areas of cemeteries.

They had met with Hawick Town Team, Chairs of the Community Councils and local Elected Members. The pilots would commence at the start of the growing season in April. Feedback thus far related to better communication, with signage provided so that people were aware of what was trying to be achieved. A Communication Plan would be prepared and an opportunity would be available for people to provide feedback throughout the growing season on the different areas. That feedback would provide information on whether changes had worked or not and provide the basis for feedback to Community groups such as HCC.

The Chair requested more detail be shown on Wilton and Wellogate Cemeteries and proposals for grass maintenance there and slides on those were shared, showing areas affected. Those areas containing older graves whilst visited, were not considered would be visited as often as those newer graves within the extended cemeteries areas. Grass would be cut up to the first headstones however in between the headstones would only be cut once or twice a year. That would then allow additional cuts in the newer extended areas.

Stuart then showed an example from another cemetery elsewhere, where that scenario was already in place, with reduced cuts in between older graves. Mick Robertson stated that the picture did not show positively, and he considered areas with longer grass just looked scruffy. He suggested that the changes should not be made immediately at the entrance to Wellogate Cemetery and should only start much further back, as the impact was poor for everyone entering the cemetery on route even to the newly extended area.

Braden George queried if the grassed areas in between the graves as shown, would then not be cut at all. Stuart confirmed they would be cut at the end of the season. Grass would not be allowed to grow however more than a foot and a half.

Where people did however visit graves in the older areas, there was concern raised that grass there would be flattened where people walked across to reach graves, and multiple flattened areas would also not look good.

Jenny advised that the exercise was not about cutting costs and financial savings, as it was about saving time on some areas to allow more time on more needed areas. Staff had come up with the suggested areas. For the older areas, if grass was only being cut once or twice a

year, that would allow grass to become stronger at the base of the gravestones and reduce need for weedkiller which also had a detrimental effect on weakening older gravestones.

It was agreed that it would be better if the start of cutting the paths only were implemented much further back from entrances. Braden George raised his concerns that individuals would start cutting individual areas around their own family graves, and that would result in the grass looking piecemeal and project a whole lot worse. He considered all grass within the cemeteries should continue to be cut, if nothing else, out of respect.

A slide of Wilton Cemetery then showed the areas within there, which were proposed for less cutting and again the same comments were made to start path cutting much further back from any entrances to reflect better and away from the immediate eyeline when entering the cemetery.

The Vice-Chair commented on Jenny's statement that the exercise was not about budgets, but grass maintenance he considered was not a new problem and had been around now for a few years. Budgets had been cut over a number of years, and SBC he thought were trying to work within a fixed budget sum that did not actually deliver on what the public expected, and it was that which should be challenged, as SBC were unable to deliver on what works used to be carried out 5 or 6 years ago. Biodiversity and not cutting grass did not result in his view in wild flowers then growing. He stated he had worked on some ground maintenance contracts in other local authority areas and was aware that wild flowers needed to be seeded and required much looking after to encourage growth. Stuart reconfirmed the Pilot was about rebalancing resources, and not about budgets or cost-cutting. Jenny advised there was no intention of leaving areas to grow wild and that those areas would still be cut once or twice a year and risings uplifted.

The Vice-Chair then referred to the entrance to the town (at Buccleuch Road) which had been wild planted, which once past their best, did not serve as being attractive to those entering the town there. Jenny confirmed that area and any part of the Active Travel Network was not within the scope of the pilot, however Jim Adams agreed with the Vice-Chair that any areas of wildflower, after the summer, did not impact well visually and just looked a mess.

Stuart Mactaggart asked who would be responsible for areas which were part of the Active Travel Network and, as referred to, planting within those areas. Stuart Young was unable to answer but said he would try to find out and report back.

A member of the public asked if SBC had ever considered the prospect of engaging with local volunteer groups to carry out specific works, for instance townfolk cutting the cemeteries and so on. Stuart responded stating that would mean challenges around health & safety and insurances etc. The public member advised that it was naïve to think that wildflower planting was an easy option, as that was not the case. Jenny confirmed there would be no wildflower planting within the cemeteries, only more naturalised parts would arise as a result of less cuts. Stuart advised that it was not unheard of that volunteer groups could be engaged, as that had happened in the Eyemouth area. It was noted that an old grave had been tidied of a rugby stalwart recently and The Gallant Few Club annually tidied graves each Common Riding of Hawick worthies within the Wellogate. Perhaps use of volunteers should be explored further. Challenges of liability insurance, competency to use machinery and so on, however, would need to be overcome.

Most Bloom Groups were a sub-group of Community Councils and perhaps insurance liability etc could be overcome using that route. Stuart would carry out further enquiries where volunteer groups looked after grassed areas and revert back to HCC. Community Engagement Officers should be able to help.

Jenny asked for a formal response from HCC as soon as possible.

Jock Campbell asked whether maintenance of the playpark at Mayfield would include the trees there, more particularly the Wellingtonia tree situated there. The resident of the bungalow there had been very concerned in recent high winds of any resultant damage to her property. It was noted that Councillor Marshall had undertaken to liaise with Council Officers monitoring that situation.

The Chair thanked Stuart and Jenny for the presentation and encouraged members to bring forward their comments for collating back to SBC, as well as from public members who could provide their comments to any HCC member for inclusion. He reminded everyone that it was a pilot scheme and if things did not go well, then further changes would require to be made.

Jenny confirmed that communication was of real importance and gave the example of changes proposed for Wellogate Cemetery. She confirmed signage would be put in place to reflect changes and why these were being made, and what the benefits would be. There would also be a QR Code and a telephone number for those who did not have Smart Phones, so that feedback could be provided on an ongoing basis which would help determine whether the Pilot had worked or suggest other changes for consideration.

9. Treasurer's Report – The Treasurer advised the Opening Balance was £12,903.96 and the Closing Balance £10,203.49.

HCC 1 started with a balance of £4,503.97. Bank Interest was received of £54.15, and two expenses were deducted for Insurance of £639.53 and Hawick Development Trust Membership of £50, leaving a closing balance of £3,868.60. Ring-fenced monies within that balance, were £1,566.64 Fallago Grant for pathways and £250 donations towards First-aid training, the latter being planned to proceed in February. Projects for use of the remaining Fallago Grant were being considered, with storm damage thought to have occurred at Williestruther Loch being one highlighted.

Christmas Lights/Event Account started with a balance of £3,022.65 with income totalling £647.94 and expenditure of £2,713.04, resulting in a closing balance of £957.55. That balance should be sufficient to pay outstanding bills for electricity (£470 last year) and engraving and marketing costs. An anticipated further invoice from the electrician for lights maintenance had been confirmed would not be forthcoming.

Finally, it was noted that the closing balance after payment of remaining bills would be much less than the starting balance for 2023 of £1,400. Overall in 2023, that opening balance along with income from stallholders, two donations and bucket collections on the day of the event - totalled £3,848 but against that there was expenditure of c. £2,890. So, in effect, there was insufficient monies, without further grant funding to hold the Christmas Event 2024. It was hoped however that support from Foundation Scotland Fund would be forthcoming as one means of such support.

Hawick in Bloom Account – The Opening and Closing Balance for that account was £5,228.63 however Summer Planting invoices totalling just under £2,500 had now been received for payment. It was noted that invoiced costs however were much reduced, due to the introduction of perennial plants over the past 2 seasons. Those sustainable plants should last at least another one or two years, subject to vandalism and any replacement costs necessary as a result.

Finally, it was noted that the Community Benefit Fund Foundation Scotland had a balance of £148.71 which would be transferred to the Christmas Event Fund and put towards remaining outstanding bills. The Foundation Scotland Grant amount for 2024 was awaited.

There were no questions raised and Members approved the Treasurer's Report.

10. Public Forum & Town Issues:

- (a) Caravan Park for Hawick – Stuart Beck raised that again the Summer season was approaching and there remained no caravan park for Hawick. Councillor McAteer confirmed there had been no progress with that. He was aware of there being an interested developer and was hopeful of receiving an update on that in due course. It still remained on SBC and SoSE's list of objectives as a top priority and he personally would like to see a caravan site developed in Hawick.
- (b) Street Lights in Howegate – Braden George advised that these lights were not now working at all. He raised concerns of women in particular at weekends using that vicinity and in darkness, that was not ideal.

A member of the public advised that he was aware of that issue having been reported and that the lights had come back on for only a couple of nights before going off again. He had been advised that there was a supply issue which had been referred to SP Energy to rectify. That had however been a couple of weeks ago now.

Councillor McAteer confirmed the process of reporting those issues to Street Lighting had been previously shared with HCC members, and emphasised that process should be followed rather than await to reporting these issues at HCC meetings.

- (c) Additional lighting at the Mote – Mick Robertson asked if there was any update on provision of additional lighting at that location. Councillor McAteer advised that he had shared SBC's response to that request following the last meeting. SBC had confirmed that the Lighting Manager had agreed to investigate that and hopefully further information would be forthcoming in due course.
- (d) Dovemount Place/Princess Street Temporary Traffic Lights – The Vice-Chair reported that the position of the lamppost and the position of the temporary traffic lights meant that the ability to clearly see traffic light changes was hampered. The temporary traffic lights needed to be repositioned. Councillors undertook to progress on that issue.
- (e) Parking at Teviot Health Centre – The Chair reported that on attempting to access a space within that car park first thing in the morning, it had been found to be full. There were 3 campervans and 2 contractor vans parked there, when that car park was meant for use only by surgery users. Councillor McAteer confirmed he had been working closely with the Health Centre around that car parking issue. The problem was that the car park belonging to the Health Centre and under NHS was kerbed in, but immediately on the High Street side there was a ticketed parking area belonging to SBC. That situation did not help, and almost encouraged people to cross that kerb and to park free of charge. Potential options to prevent that were being looked at but any decision for change would be up to the NHS. The new layout of the Active Travel Network in Teviot Road had not

helped, and extra monitoring resources had been requested as pavement parking and parking on yellow lines at that location had also become a real hazard.

- (f) Location of Defibrillators within the town – Following an incident at Stampers Bar recently where a defibrillator had been required, it had been highlighted that there was a lack of information available on where defibrillators could be sourced in the town. A letter had been noted in the Hawick Paper that the British Heart Foundation were campaigning nationally to curate a database of all defibrillators within the UK. Locally, he suggested that HCC could prepare a list or location map for insertion on our website as it was important people knew where to locate such equipment. He criticised the vandalism to the defibrillator which had been located at the end of Commercial Road previously.

Councillor Smart advised she had been contacted regarding that issue and had come up a list, which identified 12 defibrillator locations. There was no definitive website with that information and 3 websites she had looked at contained different information. She suggested she work with Euan Welsh to prepare a map showing the locations of the 12 defibrillators which could then go onto the Community Council website. She had identified that some areas of the town remained without any defibrillator. Wilton Lodge Park she was not aware had any, however, it was noted that there was one at the Pavilion, but it was agreed one at the Café would also be beneficial. Any other suggested areas which would benefit could also be identified. Some defibrillators were inside premises, which would only then be available when those were open and so ones available 24/7 were small in number.

The Vice-Chair advised that in some instances, it was not possible just to open defibrillator cabinets and take any defibrillator out. It was necessary to phone 999 for a code to be provided and entered to unlock. First Responders had that information to hand, however, the need to obtain a Code should also be part of any communication to members of the public.

Braden George suggested that basic information on operating a defibrillator could be included, and perhaps even be posted on our Facebook.

- (g) Overflowing bins at the bottom of Howegate – The Chair reported a complaint he had received from a Howegate businessman regarding 3 overflowing bins at that location at the junction with Silver Street and refuse lorries had been seen passing those by. The Chair had confirmed it was the responsibility of householders to take bins back in which had not been emptied. He hoped those bins would be picked up the following day, however, it was noted an update from SBC had that day been received, and which related to Silver Street, to advise of refuse vehicle breakdowns which would prevent emptying of bins again at that location.
- (h) Railings from the Viewing Point to Park Gates – The Chair raised that the railings at that location were in need of painting. He enquired if it were possible to have that work done. Councillor Ramage advised she had already reported that need and would chase up on that, however, the Small Schemes Budget was exhausted, and any works would require then to be from April.

11. Reports from Sub-Committees

- (a) Christmas Event – A positive debrief on the last event had been carried out, with many positive suggestions for improvement at the 2024 event. The date of that event was proposed as Saturday, 30th November 2024. The Chair expressed grateful thanks to Keith Johnstone, Ryan Patterson, Richard Walker and John Hogg for their help over the Christmas period with various works on erecting and taking down Christmas lights display.

- (b) Hawick in Bloom – The Secretary reported that the Summer plants had been ordered, with delivery scheduled for May, which was earlier than the normal time of June. That change was to ensure that planters and areas such as the War Memorial looked their best at the Common Riding, which was a time the town welcomed many visitors for that occasion. It was hoped the hanging baskets would again be possible this year, with the aid of donations from High Street shopkeepers. Finally, it was noted that Hawick in Bloom volunteers would be having a Coffee Morning on Saturday, 30th March in Trinity Church Hall to help raise funds for future planting. Any cake & candy donations or items for a bottle stall would be welcomed.
- (c) CCTV – The Vice-Chair reported no further progress on HCC's prepared design of a CCTV system. A meeting had been held with elected Members and SBC Officers with information shared on SBC's proposals including Artificial Intelligence (AI). HCC had received sensitive information from Police Scotland on its design, which ultimately could not then be simply handed over to the Council without permission. Approval to share was awaited.

Councillor Ramage advised that different messages particularly regarding use of facial recognition were being received. Sergeant Granger had stated that could be used however SBC Officers disagreed. Police had confirmed to HCC that facial recognition could be used and had been taken into account in the HCC specification accordingly.

Councillor McAteer agreed that clearly the technology was in place to allow facial recognition, albeit at a cost. There was an issue around use of personal information and those issues required to be worked around to resolve. HCC had been clear at the outset and on what they wanted around facial and vehicle recognition and had incorporated that ability with their design. The Council he considered had a view to support that but also wanted to look at futureproofing and opportunities that might present.

The Vice-Chair confirmed that public consultation had found people were interested in safety, security and crime detection (and not crime prevention) and he considered that consultation feedback was now being taken into account by SBC officers.

Councillor Smart stated she had interest in the possibilities of AI and interactive things which could be introduced to help towards prevention and had asked to be kept informed on that. It was clear that SBC were looking at wider possibilities rather than CCTV in isolation and how to integrate the two needed further work. The priority of HCC however was CCTV and safety and security for townsfolk as fed back by them.

- (d) Resilience Group – The Vice-Chair reported a list was now in place following the recent radio interview and article in the Hawick Paper. The Resilience Group was now active in the town again, and there had been one partial mobilisation of volunteers recently. Following a recent Resilience workshop organised by the Emergency Planning Team, networking with other Resilience teams was possible and on the back of that, HCC Resilience volunteers had assisted with flooding in the Upper Teviot & Borthwick Water area. When the Borthwick Water flooded as a result of Storm Isha some HCC's volunteers helped with deployment of 3 SBC vehicles transporting sandbags to Craik and Deanburn Haugh. That assistance had been welcomed by the Community Council Chair there, and it was hoped reciprocation of help from them would be made on any occasion for which HCC's Resilience Group were required to respond.

HCC members including Resilience members would be attending a First Aid course soon, which would complement the First Responders already on the Resilience Team with other first aid requirements.

- (e) Fundraising – The inaugural meeting of that sub-group had taken place. Some very good ideas had been discussed, such as a charity auction, golf day but primarily the one agreed to progress first was to hold 3 or 4 Farmers Markets throughout the year. The first one was proposed for 4th May and progress would be reported at the next meeting. Funds raised would help towards HCC's projects.

Mick Robertson enquired if a 'Party on the Pitch' which happened previously in the town could be considered as a fundraiser. There was much musical talent in the town to showcase. It was noted that event cost c.£8k to run, with insurance costs being a challenge. The Vice-Chair however advised that the sub-group were open to any such type suggestions and those would be discussed as appropriate and for approval of all members before going ahead.

- (f) Planning – There had been no major planning applications in the month.
- (g) Bandstand Events – Duncan Taylor advised a provisional budget for 6 Bandstand Events in 2024 had been provided to the Secretary for inclusion with the Foundation Scotland Distribution Plan. A couple of entertainers had been provisionally booked however he was reluctant to make further bookings until a response had been received from Foundation Scotland.

12. Updates from Community Partners

- (a) Hawick Development Trust – Duncan Taylor entered Colin Hope's apology for the meeting and advised Colin would provide an update report from HDT at HCC's March meeting.
- (b) Foundation Scotland – The Secretary reported that the Annual Report on expenditure of grant funding for 2023, along with the Distribution Plan with proposals for use of funding this year, had both now been forwarded to Foundation Scotland. A response was awaited from Foundation Scotland approving proposed projects, which had been agreed at our December meeting, and clarification on what the level of funding would be for 2024. Projects proposed were funding of the Bandstand Events, Hawick in Bloom plants, and replacement of remaining old Christmas Lights and more new harps to complete on the Christmas Lights Display. Without approval, it would not be possible for HCC to proceed with all of those projects, as the Annual Support Grant was insufficient to accommodate those associated costs. Hopefully a response would be forthcoming sooner rather than later.
- (c) Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership - Next meeting would be held on 20th February online, with the following meeting being held on 26th March before the end of the financial year, to allow consideration of the Neighbourhood Support Fund applications received.
- (d) A7 Action Group – Stuart Mactaggart advised he had attended 2 meetings of the Group, the first on 21st December last, which had been an EGM to determine whether the Group would continue or otherwise. It had been unanimously agreed by members that the Group would continue. The Group had received a glowing report from Bear Scotland for their help and support.

The second meeting attended was held on 12th January and Bear Scotland had requested feedback from the community regarding their proposal to have a Cycle Way from Hawick to Greenhill Farm on the A7. Currently that project was on hold, and they were looking for input and feedback from communities as to whether they considered that proposal would be favoured or not. Greenhill Farm was about 1mile south of Selkirk in the Ettrick Valley.

The Dunk wall repairs and strengthening would be carried out on funding becoming available, most likely in 2024/25. The A7 Action Plan was also to be reviewed and updated – the last Plan being dated 2015.

The next meeting of the Group would be held early March, and any suggestions on the Cycle Way and the proposed Plan review should be provided to Stuart Mactaggart. Stuart went on to advise that Bear Scotland would be removing some Ash trees between Teviothead and Hawick and were wondering if any local organisations would benefit from wood chippings.

Finally, it was noted that the A7 Action Group lacked funding, and that 3 other Community Councils on the A7 route had made small donations to the Group. Stuart proposed that HCC also make a small donation of £50 to that Group. The Chair advised however that the account from which HCC might have been able to make such a donation had no funds presently. HCC was unable to donate from the HCC1 account (Annual Support Grant), in accordance with the Scheme for Community Councils, which did not permit donations to any other groups from that Grant. Any monies raised from our own fundraising, and contained in the HCC2 account, may be able to help with enhancing our donations to other organisations in the future. The Treasurer confirmed that a donation had been made in 2018 of £100 but that had been from HCC2 account. Stuart whilst fully understanding of HCC's position, expressed disappointment that other groups along the route had been able to provide small donations and HCC being one of the largest were unable to do so.

- (e) Hawick Common Good – The next meeting would be held on 20th March 2024.
- (f) Wind farms – The Chair reported a very successful meeting at Southdean Hall held recently, and Chaired by Rachel Hamilton MSP, with representatives from the Community Councils within the Teviot & Liddesdale Partnership areas, SBC Planning and the Developer Energie Kontor. The time of the meeting at 2pm was not suitable for some, like himself, who worked, however the Secretary had attended to observe.

Philip Kerr, Southdean Community Council, gave a resume of the 2-hour meeting, stating that the first hour had concentrated primarily on the transport issues, with questions asked on learnings from those issues, in order to ensure those could be taken into account for all the other oncoming Wind Farms in the area. One highlighted learning from the original planning application was that weather conditions had not been taken into account, and so the first 9 blades which were theoretically planned to take 22 days had taken 118, with a further 12 blades yet to transport. Setting aside all the vandalism, which had been unacceptable, the two major reasons for delays were wind conditions for transporting 60m height blades, and Police escorts which took time for planning, and then co-ordinating those two. Philip had already spoken with Teviot Wind Farm to raise awareness there, and they had already indicated their blades would be transported flat, which would then be interesting in relation to their planned routes to be taken. It had been suggested transporting would be during April/May time but yet to be confirmed. At £25k per day for the transport, better planning was essential.

Other issues were then discussed which included business disruption, however, the main part of the meeting focused on Community Benefits. Those had been a long-drawn-out saga and original benefits proposed had been cut significantly. There had however been movement from benefits being calculated on turbine numbers, which the whole industry were against, to megawatts. No change had been proposed to the £87.5k however the change to megawatt meant that could be measured at 2,650 per megawatt for the first 7 turbines rather than the £5k cut, which was important for comparative purposes. The interesting part was on inflation, where for Borders College that was uncapped and ours capped at 1%. They had effectively

rolled over on that (1% cap) resulting in more monies into the community benefits pot. Effectively that would result in Hawick receiving £8k pa, index-linked and uncapped. In effect, the £87.5 would then increase to c.£105.5k and possibly that could rise further. The extra 4 turbines for Phase 2 could mean that further rising to c.£150k.

Overall, everything that the Community Councils had put forward had been accepted. In due course, there would be further dialogue on Phase 2 as it proceeded through the planning committee.

Teviot Wind Farm would be coming on in April/May and agreement had been reached for those benefits to be administered by way of a Company Limited by Guarantee which was currently being set up. The figure proposed was £7k per megawatt. When that agreement was signed, benefits would be from the time signed and not from the time it came into operation, which would be about 10 years away. From a community benefit point, that arrangement would be beneficial. There was a lot going on, but a benchmark was being at least set to protect the community interests element.

The Chair expressed his grateful thanks to Philip Kerr and Barbara Elborn from Hawick CC, for all their work on Wind Farms and in particular in securing best possible community benefits agreements.

- (g) Hawick Common Riding Committee – Braden George advised that Alchemy Film & Arts would be creating a film about the 2024 Common Riding, covering all aspects of the build-up, visiting farms for permissions etc, right through to the Ceremonial Events. The film was anticipated would be available for viewing in Summer 2025.

Volunteers were requested to assist HCRC with marshalling at rideouts and stewarding at gates at Hawick Mair over the main weekend. Anyone interested in helping should advise any members of the Common Riding Committee.

- (h) Hawick Reivers – The Reivers Festival planning was well underway with good progress made. A request was made to HCC members to assist with erection and dismantling of gazebos, car parking and Mote activities on Saturday, 23rd March. Any member available should provide their names to the Secretary. Given that Reivers Committee Members turned out to help at HCC's Christmas Market Event, it was hoped that help could be reciprocated from HCC members.

Agreement had been given to the Reivers Committee for use of Resilience radios. First-aid cover would also be provided by members of the Resilience Group.

- (i) SBCCN – A Review by SBC on how that Network would operate going forward was still underway and accordingly no meetings had as yet been held.

Hawick Town Team – Gordon Muir made a request that the Town Team be permitted to provide an update on its activities at HCC meetings. The Chair advised he would discuss that request with HCC members and advise on the outcome.

13. Correspondence – Unpaid Work Team - The Secretary reminded HCC members to respond to an email previously issued, with ideas on engaging the Unpaid Work Team on any suitable projects.

Draft Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy – Again the Secretary had issued members with that Strategy and was looking for any comments on that to provide to SBC.

Welcome Hosts Brochure – An enquiry had been made to HCC as to whether it wished to have an advert in the 2024 Welcome Hosts Brochure. The cost of a full-page advert was £195, ½

page £120 and ¼ page £90. HCC had in the past taken out a full-page advert however it should be borne in mind that the cost at £195 would equate to 10% of HCC's Annual Support Grant. Members would be emailed for responses by Wednesday, 14th February to allow a decision to be notified in response.

14. AOCB –

- (a) Mick Robertson enquired as to what was happening with the former Dorothy Perkins/Burtons empty premises on the High Street. He had heard that flats were being proposed. Cameron Knox, Chair, declared an interest in that enquiry. The Treasurer recalled that around a year ago, there had been a planning application for smaller shops and flats above. He was not sure of the number of houses.
- (b) Jock Campbell referred to a consultation exercise around August time last year regarding Live Borders. He had been provided with an appendix to the report which outlined the Consultants proposals for change. That appendix along with a link to the main report, had been circulated to Members.

He was concerned at fees to be levied to visitors to Museums etc, but mainly at the losses already incurred by Live Borders over a 10-year period, and that period being proposed to be extended to 25 years. Whilst another person had been appointed as head of Live Borders, given the losses to date, he was of the opinion that it was scandalous to extend that period at all. He considered the report should be circulated to other Community Councils to give their considerations.

Councillor McAteer advised that the report and appendix had been presented to the full Council, to identify what was working, what was not and what any alternatives might be. Discussion on that was ongoing. Costs were absolutely a factor but Councillors would require to await to hear further on recommendations. It should be noted that the report was however a matter of public record and within the public domain. There was not a leisure company anywhere he considered, that did not require to review its services and the challenges being faced in today's economic climate. Many authorities were already shutting down leisure facilities swimming pools, libraries and so on.

- (c) Gordon Muir advised that Hornshole Greenway would be holding another clean-up on Sunday, 7th April from Hawick RFC down to Hornshole and those surrounding areas. He wondered whether there was appetite from HCC to extend that to town wide. The Chair advised that HCC's clean-up normally took place around March/April time, coming up to the first rideout. That suggestion could be discussed further at the next meeting as part of the Agenda.
- (d) Councillor McAteer raised his personal concerns at the level of vandalism around the town – on the new flood protection wall at the High School, Mansfield Park and the new bridge being installed, Lovat Mill and other areas - stating there was clearly a particular person or group who were carving their initials or whatever at these locations. He did not consider that to be art but unacceptable vandalism. The cost of fixing that would be astronomical as the flood walls were made of specialist materials and it would not be just a wash and scrub to remove. It may in fact not be able to be removed. The longer nothing was said on that, the longer it would continue. He sought HCC's support in highlighting that vandalism as he did not consider it appropriate, albeit he knew there were other views on it.

Councillor Smart advised that in terms of pieces of art, it would not be marked highly and that it was indeed vandalism and should not be encouraged. She had sent an email to the Head of the High School that day asking if there would be interest in having an art project to go along the wall at the High School. The wall was dull and grey and to a graffiti artist was a 'red rag to a bull'. Unfortunately that could itself lead to more graffiti. To have an art project on that wall might deter people doing random pieces everywhere. Engagement with school children and Escape Youth Café or suchlike groups, might mean something more attractive being put in place on that wall. It was early stages of thinking and given specialist materials for the wall, she was not sure what type of artwork might be suitable.

The Chair advised that at Selkirk, there were murals at the Riverside flood defences and also at Galashiels. The Chair agreed that graffiti was vandalism and blighted the town's landscape. It was noted at Selkirk, R J MacLeod had worked with the contractor for the flood defences regarding paints to be used, alluding to the fact that e.g., solvent paint could degrade if the surface of the wall started to come off. It was recommended if an art project were to be considered, that R J MacLeod be consulted for advice.

Councillor Ramage raised her concerns from experience of schools carrying out such art projects, which through time tended to get forgotten about and became degraded. Any projects would need to be kept on top of. She completely agreed with Councillor McAteer, and frustrations around who were responsible. That harked back to having CCTV. She could also support Councillor Smart and having art projects, but the main concerns there were in regard to not allowing artwork to become deteriorated.

Mick Robertson asked if there was any knowledge on what the Police were doing about the vandalism. Councillor McAteer confirmed it had been reported to the Police and he was confident in due course the culprits would come to light. Whilst agreeing that art projects might be a solution, that would need to be carefully managed and monitored so that anyone just fancying adding their piece to it, could be controlled.

Burnfoot Community Futures – the Chair reported Warm Space Days had commenced on 8th February at Burnfoot Hub from 11am to 2pm. Also, a Loving your Community Day on Saturday, 17th at the Hub 11am until 1pm.

- 15. Date of next meeting** – The next monthly meeting of HCC would be held on Monday, 11th March 2024 within the Assembly Hall, Hawick High School starting at 6.30pm.