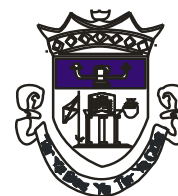

Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
held on Monday 9th December 2024 at 6.30pm within the Lecture Hall, Hawick High School

Present: Cameron Knox (Chair) Kevin Marsh (Vice-Chair)
Jim Adams (Treasurer) Margaret Hogg (Secretary)
Stuart Beck John Campbell
Braden George Stuart Mactaggart
Michael Robertson Duncan Taylor
John Wilkinson

Attending: Councillor Cox Councillor Smart

There were 4 members of the public in attendance as well as Graham Ford from the Hawick Paper.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the December meeting of Hawick Community Council in the different surroundings of Hawick High School.

He went on to express a huge thank you to the townsfolk of Hawick who turned out to support HCC's Christmas Market Event the previous Saturday. That was greatly appreciated. The whole day had again been a great success, down to the volunteers, entertainers, stallholders and so on.

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 and Councillors McAteer, Marshall and Ramage.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 11th November 2024** – The previously circulated Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting - Proposed for adoption by Jim Adams and Seconded by Kevin Marsh.

5. Matters arising –

In his absence at the meeting, Councillor McAteer had emailed updates on the following:-

Pavement Sweeper – It was noted that the new Street Sweeper had been stolen along with the grass cutting equipment from the Council's Depot earlier in the year, and as yet none of the larger machinery had been replaced. SBC was trying to have ride-on grass cutters replaced as a matter of priority and then the trailers. Over the winter, SBC would be looking at Sweeper routes. In Hawick they had a large Road Sweeper (which also covered Jedburgh) along with a smaller Sweeper which could do wider pavements.

It was confirmed by SBC that their sweepers did not follow the same route daily (as was suggested at a previous HCC meeting by a member of the public). The large sweeper was on a 3-week cycle visit and assurance from SBC had been given that the smaller sweeper route was also not the same every day.

Finally, on the A7 kerb and pavements from Buccleuch Road to Branxholme, SBC confirmed that they were responsible for the section of pavement from the Volunteer Park to Parkdaill and the remainder south of Parkdaill was in course of being ascertained as being the responsibility of Bear Scotland.

Stuart Beck queried whether there was any response as yet regarding the sweeper deployment being continued past the 30mph signs on to Haughhead. The Chair advised that had not been part of Councillor McAteer's update.

6. Hawick High School – Senior Pupils Update – There was no update as all Senior Team Members were working that evening. He wished them a great night at their forthcoming Christmas Dance and After Party at Hawick Mair.

7. Police Scotland Reports – (This item was taken at the start of the meeting) - The Chair confirmed that Police Scotland reports for November had been previously circulated to members. He welcomed PC Fraser Mortimer to the meeting, and asked Members for any questions on the reports.

Michael Robertson expressed his concern at the continuing dog mess around the town and wondered what actions the Police were taking in response to that. PC Mortimer advised that the Community Action Team (CAT) dealt with such incidents and the process tended to be that if witnessed, a Police Warning Notice would be issued. Michael expressed particular concern at the level of dog mess on the new Active Travel Network (ATN) pathways, and action was needed before matters escalated. He wondered if the Hawick Paper would consider publicising that members of the public could contact the CAT on witnessing owners allowing their dogs to foul and not picking up after them. PC Mortimer suggested that HCC should consider contacting CAT directly and Michael Robertson proposed that the CAT be asked to monitor the ATN pathways in particular. The Chair also suggested that the High Street be added for monitoring as well. There were a minority of owners who were responsible for not picking up their dog's mess, and they needed to be caught and

punished accordingly. PC Mortimer undertook to email the CAT directly with the request from HCC for further patrols and monitoring.

The Chair advised that CI Fletcher had requested a walkabout with HCC Officers and that would happen early in the New Year. PC Mortimer confirmed he had now returned from his annual leave.

Michael Robertson went on to ask if there was anything further elected Members could do to help. Councillor Cox advised there was one Dog Warden Officer in place who covered the whole of the Scottish Borders, however she did not go out and about and was office-based for the purpose mainly of issuing Notices and other administrative duties. Funding for CAT came from SBC, but they do not have sufficient resources to prioritise dog fouling.

A member of the public asked if the Police actually monitored parking on the High Street, as she seemed never to be able to find any parking spaces in the times she wanted to shop. PC Mortimer advised that he did not have sufficient resources to allow recording of cars parked, and to return 30 minutes later to ticket if they remained parked. PC Patterson who was part of the CAT did cover the High Street when his resources permitted and it was known at one time, that the Central Ticketing Office were alarmed at the number of tickets being issued in the Borders area. A lot of staff however from High Street or nearby businesses were known to park all day long and some were happy to receive parking tickets and take the penalties. There was concern that with no parking spaces on the High Street, passing trade was being missed.

It was noted that SBC were one of only a few authorities in Scotland who had yet to decriminalise parking. That would then allow Traffic Wardens to be put in place and it was known that when a particular Traffic Warden was in place in the past, penalties raised paid for his salary.

The Secretary advised HCC had written on more than one occasion to SBC regarding decriminalisation of parking, and SBC had not agreed with that analogy that Traffic Wardens would be almost self-financing. SBC's view was that in a time of budgets being cut, they had evidence of another rural area incurring big losses in employing wardens and so they may reconsider decriminalisation at some time in the future but not at that point.

PC Mortimer referred to paid car parks run by SBC and questioned why wardens monitoring those car parks could not be also employed in monitoring illegal parking. The Secretary confirmed that question had also been raised with SBC, and it had been advised there were only 2 wardens covering all paid car parks across the whole of the Scottish Borders, and therefore they would not have that capacity.

PC Mortimer referred to the new Pavement Parking legislation introduced by the Scottish Government and he wondered what SBC were doing regarding that, as that legislation was their responsibility. The Secretary advised that again that was part of

correspondence with SBC, who had responded to advise they did not have the capacity to resource that monitoring but if there were any obstructions caused, SBC considered that to be the responsibility of the Police. PC Mortimer confirmed they would respond but ideally, SBC in terms of the legislation should have measures in place to try to stop all pavement parking. PC Mortimer requested that much of what he had said should be noted to be his own personal opinions and not that of Police Scotland.

Duncan Taylor confirmed SBC's response that in urban areas, the warden system worked well financially, however backed up the Secretary regarding SBC's response, that in rural areas that tended not to be the case. With regard to business owners and staff using parking spaces for longer than they should, he advised that other towns like Kelso had those same issues. KCC's minutes reflected that, with Kelso having a lack of available spaces within their Town Square area for those shopping. It was unfortunately a societal matter rather than one isolated to Hawick High Street. If, as PC Mortimer stated, Hawick businesses staff were happy to accept ticketing penalties when caught, it had to make commercial sense to them rather than having a space further away, and that was very hard to resolve. It was noted one particular business had incurred 5 tickets in one week.

In conclusion, it was agreed and entirely sensible that the Police were not diverted from what was considered real and serious policing duties in favour of monitoring issues which were annoying like dog fouling and illegal parking. More care was needed by those responsible to think more about their behaviour and impact on others within the town. PC Mortimer agreed that a balance was needed.

Councillor Smart said she completely agreed that parking should be decriminalised and brought under the auspices of SBC and when she had heard the responses from SBC on decriminalisation, she had not been entirely satisfied with those. In light also of the new pavement parking legislation, she agreed there were particular areas of the town who suffered, e.g. the Terraces area and she had heard from the residents in that area who were not happy. The counter argument was however that emergency vehicles may not be able to pass easily if parking on pavements were stopped altogether as our road widths did not always allow their easy passage.

With regard to the paid car parking in O'Connell Street she advised that currently ran at a £6,000 deficit annually but she queried how that was possible, saying that did not stack up to her. Personally, she considered that parking at O'Connell Street should be free, as it was next door to a Doctors' Surgery and could perhaps free up parking on the High Street. Councillor Smart advised that she would raise the subject of decriminalisation again with SBC, as Wardens could be utilised not only in terms of dog fouling but for illegal parking and other low-level problems.

Braden George considered that these same subjects were being regurgitated at least 3 times in any year, and he considered no headway was being made. He wondered what the options were to ensure these matters were resolved and the need to be raised time and again eradicated. Councillor Smart advised that a question could be

put forward by HCC to the full monthly Council Meeting or Councillors could put forward a Motion for matters to be discussed in the Council Chamber. She would be happy to put forward a Motion on decriminalisation of parking particularly in light of the new legislation on pavement parking.

Jock Campbell enquired who determined not to proceed with decriminalisation – was it the Councillors or the CEO of SBC. Councillor Smart advised that any Motion put forward would be decided upon by the Councillors, however, they were obliged to look after the public purse and had to have the financial arguments in place to make sense of any decisions made. Councillor Cox considered with a finite amount of money, and particularly with no increase to SBC's budget, it was likely that something else would require to be given up, and she did not have the answer as to what that might then be.

The Chair said he would be grateful if Councillors could raise a Motion for this matter to be given further consideration.

Michael Robertson wondered whether more education within the schools might also be a way forward. The Chair advised that had also been trialled previously without success. It was primarily adults parking and allowing dogs to foul (and not children) who needed to take responsibility for letting their town down. HCC could not personally take any actions to eradicate the issues raised, and that responsibility lay with SBC and the Police.

Kevin Marsh expressed concerns at parking in Commercial Road on double yellow lines nearby the second-hand furniture store. That night, two lorries travelling in opposite directions had met on that corner, resulting in one lorry and the cars behind it requiring to reverse back due to those illegally parked vehicles. PC Mortimer confirmed that he was aware of tickets having been issued in that area but would make the CAT aware.

A member of the public raised concerns at electric scooters at speed beeping at people to get out of their way. That was not appropriate and a risk particularly for children. It was noted that there was no legislation yet in place to counteract.

Councillor Cox asked what was happening with North Bridge Street, where she had witnessed drivers driving the wrong way from the junction with Union Street towards the Library, and one woman had reported to her of being hit by a bicycle travelling the wrong way. People in that area were requesting that road be made two-way again. If not, the suggestion was that the whole of North Bridge Street be made one way, as it appeared drivers were confused, despite No Entry Signs being in place. It was agreed that was an SBC matter and not one for the Police. Councillor Cox advised she had photographs and those should be forwarded to the Police.

The Chair thanked PC Mortimer for his attendance.

8. Treasurer's Report – November 2024 – The Treasurer reported an Opening Balance of £15,645.83. Information on the individual accounts were:

HCC 1 Account – opened with a balance of £4,615.59, income for Paths Grant from SBC of £600, with expenses for website maintenance £146.40 and Armistice Day Wreath £35, resulting in a closing balance of £5034.19. That balance included £1,566.76 Fallago Grant ringfenced for use on pathways.

Christmas Lights Event Account – opened with a balance of £2,201.55. Income from stallholder fees £90 and £100 from an anonymous donor for purchase of selection boxes. Expenses were £90 refund to food vendor, £139.76 for Music Licence, £72 for Hawick Paper Advert, expenditure of the £100 donation on selection boxes, and £200 for the Face Painter. The closing balance was therefore £1,789.79.

Hawick in Bloom Account – opened with a balance of £4,377.14, with income from a £20 donation from a member of the public, resulting in a closing balance of £4,397.14.

Community Benefit Fund Foundation Scotland – opened with a balance of £4,451.55, with one expense for new string lights of £328.98, resulting in a closing balance of £4,122.57.

The total balance of all accounts amounted to £15,343.69.

Members approved the Treasurer's Report.

9. Public Forum and Town Issues

Weensland Allotments – Stuart Mactaggart asked if there was any update on when those allotments would be handed back to their owners. It appeared from progress there, that further delays would mean no produce again in 2025.

Councillor Cox confirmed she would ask that question, as she herself could not believe the length of time being taken for SBC to complete works at that location. Stuart said it was his understanding those allotments would be back into play in March/April 2024 and that had not happened. No sheds or any structures were yet in place but it would have been nice for the owners to have access by Spring 2025.

Councillor Cox said she had been advised that if owners of the allotments had previously had sheds and could prove that, then new sheds would be provided but not otherwise. Councillor Cox would progress on that matter with a view to reporting to the next HCC meeting.

Area of ground between Sainsbury & Aldi – Stuart Mactaggart enquired what would happen with that area of ground currently occupied by the Flood Protection Scheme. It was noted that ground belonged to SBC and there had been talk about B&M relocating there. There had also been talk of McDonalds also being located there. No definite plans however were in place.

Pigeon Mess on High Street – Stuart Beck raised concerns about the level of pigeon mess along the length of the High Street. When erecting the Christmas lights, a lot of mess had been encountered within the guttering of buildings. It had been noted earlier that the sweeper had been stolen but he wondered whether anything could be done now to help that situation.

The Chair agreed that previously the street was swept regularly by one person with a sweeping brush and barrow. Stuart Beck suggested that those employees engaged for the street sweeper should still be used to manually brush the streets. An alternative may be to try to engage the Unpaid Work Team to manually brush and clean the High Street.

Walled Garden Polytunnels – Stuart Beck reported there being a number of picnic tables and benches stored within those polytunnels, and he wondered if it were possible for those to be repaired and upgraded by perhaps the Unpaid Work Team with grant funding from the Small Schemes Budget. Once usable again, those could be located around the town, for public use. Councillor Cox advised there would be no grants available from that Budget until April 2025. It was suggested that works could be done now and billed later, but that was not thought possible.

It was noted that if individual members of the public now placed commemorative benches anywhere, they were required to assume responsibility for their repair and maintenance.

Stuart Beck was concerned however that if and when the polytunnels were removed, as was thought was planned for early in the New Year, those benches and tables would simply be removed and tipped.

Michael Robertson said he had noted that there was a lack of picnic benches laid out for use, and that was not appropriate when use could be made of those mentioned. With more planned visitors to the town in the future, the Chair requested Councillors to ask if the Unpaid Work Team could be engaged with such a project. Councillor Cox said she would ask that question. Criminal Justice appeared to delay on billing works carried out by the Unpaid Work Team.

Pigeon Mess on High Street – Councillor Smart said she had contacted SBC's Fiona Cameron following that earlier discussion, and she had responded to advise that SBC were going to action that clean-up of the pigeon mess. A pressure wash would be carried out. The question was asked whether that would be weekly, however, that was considered would be unlikely but it was agreed that should be at least regularly.

High Street road usage – The Chair advised he had been approached by a member of the public asking if it would be possible for the High Street to be returned to two-way traffic. The purpose was to encourage those travelling from the south, where numbers were likely to increase with the forthcoming Center Parcs, to stop and shop on our High Street. That suggestion was worthy of noting and to inform public consultation later.

Center Parcs – Stuart Beck raised that he had been advised by a member of the public that his father had recently required to attend the BGH. On arrival, he had been left an unreasonable time within A&E due to there being no beds available. Concerns had been raised that with some 700 + workers along with 3000 + people a week making use of the Parc, that hospitals and such like services would be unable to cope, if they could not cope currently. The Chair concurred that it was unlikely any other hospital would be forthcoming in the foreseeable future. There was land available for BGH to be extended but perhaps that had not progressed due to lack of funding resources.

There were also a severe lack of parking spaces at BGH. BGH had also been designated one of the worst performers for length of A&E waiting times.

A member of the public raised that there were to be some 700 cabins and wondered if there had been any discussion on lowering that number, due to the impact it would have on the area's services. She agreed that Center Parcs would be good for Hawick however 700 units/2500 + people per week would place an enormous pressure on Hawick's services. It was already difficult to get dentist/doctors' appointments, and that was not to mention the impact on the BGH. She said she had sat there for hours in A&E and suggested that there needed to be more discussion on the impacts on services which Center Parcs would have with that number of units.

The Chair advised there was no public consultation as yet. The application was currently at pre-planning stage and once it went further, the public would have their say. It was noted that Center Parcs would be holding a meeting of invited stakeholders week beginning 10th February. The Chair confirmed representatives from HCC had been invited to attend that meeting.

Michael Robertson advised that there would undoubtedly be knock-on effects on services, however, was it not the case that those services should be geared up to accommodate that impact better, rather than being against Center Parcs.

The Chair agreed that impact on services was right to be raised and should be part of consultation at the appropriate stage.

Duncan Taylor said he was all for Center Parcs and was concerned that some people were already looking at the negatives. Some people from Hawick would know that previous opportunities given to Hawick were knocked back and went to Galashiels causing much jealousy since. If townsfolk continued to focus on the negatives, we would not have Center Parcs however they were in demand and would just go somewhere else. We would then sit back for another 20 years and talk about deprivation, unemployment, lack of well-paid jobs, lack of reasons for our young people to remain in the area, and that would sadly be our own fault.

Councillor Smart said she thought that a facility such as Center Parcs would have onsite facilities for first aid, perhaps an onsite Doctor, and she did not consider they would be able to access local surgeries where registration was required. Yes, they might she said require to use A&E for more serious injuries, however those types of questions she thought would be ably answered by Center Parcs during the consultation process. As yet, the application had not passed through planning, but she agreed that everyone should concentrate more on the positives rather than the negatives. Michael Robertson concurred that the planners would be addressing impacts on services as part of their processes. Councillor Smart said that the impact on road users and traffic would also need to be considered, and all of those would be addressed in the planning process.

Hawick Fire Station – A member of the public raised that at a previous meeting in discussions regarding the proposed Battery Storage Units at Calaburn, the uncertainty

regarding the status of Hawick Fire Station had been highlighted and whether that would remain in place. He wondered if there had been any further news on that. Councillor Smart said confirmation had been provided to Councillors and had been reported in the Hawick Paper that Hawick Fire Station would remain on a full-time resourced basis.

10. Reports from Sub-Groups

- (a) Christmas Event - It was agreed that the Christmas Event had been a tremendous success, with a lot of hard work by HCC members and many other volunteers. Entertainment had been top class. Donations of some 579 selection boxes had been made, with 438 distributed to children by Santa on the day, with the remainder being provided to the Salvation Army. It was noted advertising signage had been removed. The Chair thanked the Hawick Paper for their great coverage of the event. He also thanked the Green Watch of Hawick Fire Station for their help in dismantling gazebos.

Duncan Taylor suggested that HCC should have a Plan B in future years, in the event of the need for any cancellation. Had HCC's market been the Saturday after, he thought that would most probably have been required to be cancelled due to stormy weather. Kelso had a Plan B for use of their Town Hall and he suggested a provisional booking for Hawick Town Hall could be made in future. How otherwise would selection boxes kindly donated be distributed by Santa and so forth? Members agreed that a second venue be organised in advance going forward.

It was noted that the Christmas Event greetin' meeting would be held late January.

- (b) Hawick in Bloom – No update at the present time, other than confirmation on when HiB equipment, e.g. hanging baskets, required to be removed from the Walled Garden polytunnel remained awaited. Enquiries were ongoing in the background to secure alternative accommodation for plant deliveries and distribution going forward, and for the hanging baskets to be stored and filled.
- (c) CCTV – The Vice-Chair advised he along with Councillor Ramage continued to pursue a meeting with SBC's John Curry for early in the New Year.
- (d) Resilience – The Vice-Chair reported that the Hawick Resilience Team had been placed on standby for recent Storm warnings but had not required to be deployed.
- (e) Fundraising – Nothing to update.
- (f) Planning – There were no major planning applications to report in the month.
- (g) Bandstand Events – No update to report at this time.

11. Reports from Community Partners & Representative Groups

- (a) Hawick Development Trust (HDT) – No update report.
- (b) Foundation Scotland – The Secretary reported that the Annual Report for 2024 would shortly require to be completed. As HCC members, consideration would also be required for the Distribution Plan for 2025 and expenditure of Grant Funding for that year. For the past couple of years, expenditure had been utilised on HCC's own projects but she made Members aware that enquiries from other local organisations had been received for a share of that funding, and a wider consultation may be necessary in the New Year.

- (c) Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership – No update.
- (d) A7 Action Group – Stuart Mactaggart and Stuart Beck, HCC’s representatives on that group had attended a meeting in November. The Group was currently updating their A7 Action Plan but to date had not been provided with any comments from HCC, who were the only CC on that route not to have responded. It was noted that the representatives had prepared a list of potential areas, which were read out, for improvements to the A7 route and they would liaise with the Secretary to have those forwarded to Marjorie McCreddie, Secretary of the A7 Action Group. The suggestion to make Princes Street two-way again did not find favour with the other members albeit Stuart Beck explained that was suggested to try to alleviate all traffic flow coming from the north heading towards the TLC roundabout and into town. Commercial Road had been shut off for some weeks, and that had caused delays and having that two-way into Princes Street again, may have helped reduce problems such as that. These were mere suggestions, however the ultimate decisions would be for Bear/Transport Scotland. As discussed previously, there would be additional traffic for Center Parcs but the aim was to have suggestions put forward to the A7 Action Group from HCC.

Councillor Cox advised that Hawick was not mentioned on the signage on the M6 in favour of Galashiels. She wondered if Hawick could be mentioned. The Secretary advised that had been raised with SBC roads previously but not progressed. It was agreed that representatives on the A7 Action Group should raise this matter at their next meeting. Again, with Center Parcs coming, Hawick should be signposted before Galashiels.

- (e) Hawick Common Good – No update report.
- (f) Renewable Developments – It was noted that Foundation Scotland, who had previous experience with Community Benefits from various Wind Farms, had been engaged in preparing a pilot agreement for Teviot Wind Farm Community Benefits. HCC required only to sign off accepting Foundation Scotland prepare the initial agreement on its behalf. There would be no community benefits for at least ten years, however, what was worth noting, was that inflation indexation would be relevant from the date of signing of that agreement, rather than at the start date of works. So indexation from now until that period would enhance annual funds available to CCs and the other 11 affected CCs.

The Chair confirmed he would attend to providing the necessary agreement from HCC to Foundation Scotland to prepare the relevant documentation on our behalf.

In relation to Pines Burns that should start to pay out at the end of January and again Foundation Scotland would attend to the required administration for that. Monies would be received directly by the appropriate Community Councils, for them to then determine use of that. That would also be index linked. Hawick would receive c.£6.5k annually. Expenditure of that funding would follow the same process via Foundation Scotland as that currently received for Langhope Rig.

It was asked what was happening with the Teviot Wind Farm however that as yet had not been approved by the Scottish Government and there may be further

amendments to come to that application before S36 consents were given. That decision was unlikely in the near future.

(g) Hawick Common Riding Committee – No update to report.

(h) Hawick Reivers – The Secretary advised progress was ongoing planning the 2025 Festival and a meeting was being held that night. A new website was planned to be launched soon.

12. Proposed Meeting Dates 2025 – It was noted the dates identified were for meetings to be held on the second Monday of each month. The Chair advised that no January meeting was held in 2024 however the 2025 January meeting was scheduled for 13th January, and members agreed that should proceed. 10 meetings per year were required to be held as per HCC's Constitution. It was noted that no meeting had also been held in August 2024, and a decision could be made nearer that time on whether to have a similar summer break in 2025. Re-elections would take place in either August/September and that would impact on meeting dates too.

Members otherwise agreed to the dates proposed for meetings.

13. Correspondence – There was no other correspondence to discuss.

14. A.O.C.B.

The Chair advised of a pilot to restrict speed to 50mph coming into force in 2025. Roads affected in our area were the A6088, B6357, A708 and A7 north of Galashiels.

John Campbell asked when the results of the Grass Management Pilot Scheme would be presented to HCC. The Chair advised that Councillors would be advised firstly and then HCC would be advised thereafter. It was considered that the results of the Pilot should form the basis of proposed plans for grass management in Hawick for 2025. It was important that results be presented to HCC as soon as able.

15. Date of Next Meeting – It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Monday, 13th January 2025 at 6.30pm. The venue would require to be confirmed, once bookings were made.

The Chair concluded the meeting by wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.