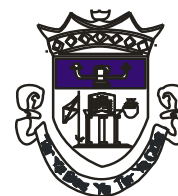

Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
held on Monday 13th January 2025 at 6.30pm within the Committee Room,
Town Hall, Hawick

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
	Euan Welsh	John Wilkinson
Attending:	Councillor McAteer	Councillor Marshall
	Councillor Ramage	

There were 23 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 January meeting of Hawick Community Council. He apologised for the chaos in access being delayed to the venue, which was out with HCC's control. He advised that the Committee Room would be the location for HCC's February and March meetings as well.

On behalf of HCC, he wished everyone a very Happy New Year and he hoped everyone had enjoyed a good festive break. A new year was upon us, and he hoped it would be a positive one for the town, its townsfolk and businesses alike. The incident which had occurred the previous Friday night involving a visiting campervanning family which had suffered wanton vandalism of four slashed tyres, was not the start he was looking for. That behaviour was disgusting and he hoped the culprits were caught and brought to justice.

On the positive side, however, having spoken with the family concerned, he was happy to report they had been overwhelmed by the generosity of our townsfolk following the incident, and said they could not have thanked them enough for their support in their time of need. That showed Hawick at its best. The family had stated they would like to return to Hawick to visit in the future, which was indeed a positive. They were on their way now to travel the North Coast 500 and the rest of Scotland and said they hoped to return to Hawick in the future to witness our Common Riding.

The Chair advised that Conor Price had returned to provide a further update on completion of the Flood Protection Scheme works.

In conclusion, he advised 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 Member Graeme King and Councillors Cox, Richards and Smart.

4. **Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 9th December 2024** – The previously circulated Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting - Proposed for adoption by Michael Robertson and Seconded by Kevin Marsh.

5. **Matters arising** –

Weensland Allotments – In absence of Councillor Cox, the secretary reported on an email received by Councillor Cox from SBC's Ray Cherry. The email advised SBC had reviewed the current ground conditions to finish the ground reinstatement, and that had been frozen and unworkable. The contractor had stated they would return in February to re-assess and provide SBC with a timeline for finishing. The ground works were what had held up the completion, as that groundwork needed to be completed before the construction of structures or replanting.

Walled Garden polytunnels and picnic tables/benches located there – there was no update as yet.

Center Parcs – It was noted that Center Parcs had extended an invitation to HCC for 2 representatives to attend a meeting on Tuesday, 11th February at Hawick RFC to provide an update on the development. Other affected Community Councils had also received that invite to represent at that meeting. The Chair and Vice-Chair would attend and report back to Members.

Dog Fouling – Michael Robertson asked if there was any further development on that matter. The secretary clarified that a Motion was to be taken forward by Councillor Smart to SBC with a view to their re-addressing the need for a Warden Service to include dog fouling and illegal parking. Decriminalisation of parking would be raised again as part of that Motion. Councillors in attendance were not aware whether that Motion had as yet been put in place or otherwise. Councillor Smart could update at a future meeting.

Street Lighting at the Mote – The secretary advised of an email received from Councillor Smart on that matter, to confirm she had contacted SBC officers with regard to additional lighting but to date had not received any response. She would continue to chase up on that response.

Street Sweeping – Stuart Beck advised it had been stated at a previous meeting that sweeping was on a 3-week cycle, however Buccleuch Road he was able to report had not been touched for some 3-4 months. No feedback had been received either on the request for the sweeper to continue on from the 30mph sign to Haughhead. That area remained in a mess. Councillor McAteer advised that had been reported, and it would be for HCC to make a formal complaint if that had not been done.

A query was raised regarding shopkeepers washing their pavement areas outside their shops. In frosty weather, should anyone slip or fall, who would be held responsible. Would SBC come out to salt or grit? Councillor McAteer advised it was SBC's responsibility for gritting and there were priority routes which were expected to be covered within 24 hours. He expected that the High Street would be a priority route. He would raise that query with SBC officers.

It was also noted that the High Street suffered from a lot of dog dirt, and Councillor McAteer advised that if it was reported to SBC, then they would be responsible to clean up.

Michael Robertson asked if there was an email or contact number which the public could be advised of to report incidents of dog dirt. Councillor McAteer confirmed he would circulate that to the Secretary and he requested that Graham Ford from the Hawick Paper also ensure that number was circulated. The more people making complaints, the better, to hopefully see a reduction.

- 6. Police Scotland Reports – December 2024** - The Chair confirmed that Police Scotland reports for December had been previously circulated to members. He welcomed PC Stewart to the meeting and asked Members for any questions on the reports.

Michael Robertson queried some individuals deemed with mental health issues casing our High Street over the Christmas period. PC Stewart advised on one such individual who had been arrested a number of times, taken to Borders General Hospital however deemed fit, and therefore then released back into the community. He confirmed that individual had again been arrested the previous Friday night and a report submitted to the Procurator Fiscal. He went on to advise however there was nothing substantial to link that individual to what happened with the campervanning family mentioned earlier. Enquiries regarding that were at an early stage and he was unsure whether there were any early leads on that. The matter had been well reported by individuals on Facebook and Hawick Chat so hopefully some leads would be forthcoming.

Michael Robertson wondered how that individual, and others, were now in Hawick? PC Stewart advised people with mental health issues were resident all over the Borders and were not as such being sent to Hawick.

A member of the public enquired whether anyone had noticed the strong pungent smell of drugs on our High Street. Whilst standing outside North Port, a female had passed her and she thought her to be responsible as she looked doped out. On speaking with the shop assistant, however, it had been learned that was not the case, and that the smell had been there for months around that shop area. She was concerned that something may be going on in premises around that area, and the smell was extending along the street. There had been others who had witnessed the smell and not just her. PC Stewart said he had made a note and would progress enquiries on that matter. Complaints such as that should be reported to the Police. The more information the Police had, the better for their investigation.

It was also noted that complaints could be made anonymously to Crimestoppers. It was not possible to just take entry to properties, and a warrant would be necessary. That matter was not at that stage, and so it was important for people to report concerns to the Police to confirm the need for investigation.

The Chair thanked PC Stewart for his attendance.

7. Flood Protection Scheme (FPS) – Update from Conor Price, CPE Consultancy

The Chair advised that after years of construction, the Flood Protection works were near to completion, much to the delight of the townsfolk who now had construction fatigue. He welcomed Conor Price to provide an update on completion dates.

Conor Price thanked HCC for the opportunity to attend their meeting once again to provide everyone with an update on progress towards completion. He had some slides to show everyone and then there would be an opportunity for questions thereafter.

He was aware that townsfolk were questioning when works would be completed and when their workforce would be out of the town. He said however that would not be any time soon, as the Hawick FPS was on a huge scale and hugely complex. It would need bedding in and his team would be available in the background in case of problems which may emerge and for matters which were complex to conclude. So for those concerned that FPS were walking away, he could begin with providing his assurance that his team would be around to support the town with any challenges until everything was completely done.

There were many questions being raised – when would all works be concluded?; when would the FPS be completed?; when would the Active Travel Network (ATN) be opened?, when would the mess around the town be cleared up?; what was going to happen on North Bridge Street and many other similar questions.

What was Hawick FPS? That should be an easy answer but was not so he said in Hawick's case, in terms of the sheer scale of what SBC had been doing over the last 5 years of construction and the last 15 years of project development and delivery. The primary reason for the project was to reduce flood risk and that was the reason for it being named Hawick Flood Protection Scheme, albeit it could be argued the last stages were not flood-risk related at all.

Within the FPS, another project was merged to replace a major section of the A7 in Commercial Road in partnership with Transport Scotland. Simultaneously, they merged another project which was to build a major pumping station within Scottish Borders Waste Water Treatment Works at Mansfield. Those were stand-alone projects in their own right. On top of all of that, they developed and designed an Active Travel Network which had broadly speaking been mirrored on the footprint of the FPS but which because of additional monies forthcoming in late 2020 from Sustrans and Transport Scotland, had been able to be stretched further than originally anticipated, reaching to Burnfoot and the new Foot Bridge at Weensland. All of those

were major projects in their own right and had been all wrapped into one FPS project. Some questions being asked were complex because of the blending of those projects and the complexities they brought, none more so regarding the late additional monies and works in extending the ATN, whilst already working on construction of the rest of the projects. All of that had already been well publicised – 4 projects in 1 and if people were not familiar, information could be found on their website.

The initial investment in Hawick would be £92m however recent further investment had brought that figure upwards. It was a huge sum of money, for all of those projects simultaneously but looking at it from a different perspective, had those projects been carried out separately, the general understanding was that the sum of £135m would have been required to build. It had been delivered at £92m due to efficiencies gained by bringing those projects altogether. However with the extra monies, came complexities. Those figures were also 2019/2020 figures, being present value costs at the time. Delivering the same projects today, would cost in the region of £150-160m to build in today's money.

The sheer success of what had been achieved in the town with the 4 projects had effectively caused a delivery bottleneck, with other projects queuing to get into town or other investors in the town waiting to build on the success already achieved. For instance, within the Scheme at Mill Port, they were inserting an enhanced streetscape similar to what had been done in Laidlaw Terrace the previous year, but that was not the design of the FPS but an enhanced landscape coming in as a result of new CARS and Heritage Lottery Funding. That work was in the region of £250k of new money brought in to enhance on what had already been achieved. Similarly with Transport Scotland, they were continuing to develop on enhancing the ATN within the town under their budgets, their programmes and their monies. Costs for their works were not known to Conor and he was unable to advise on their works, which were out with his control. As an example, the path on the A7 up the road from the new toucan crossing as well as works for the new toucan crossing in Commercial Road, that was the responsibility of Transport Scotland to enhance the network. He would not be able to take responsibility for any delays in those areas, however, was delighted that the FPS works carried out had resulted in those further investments in the town.

The work in Dovemount Place which was at one time to be carried out as part of the FPS projects, connecting North Bridge to Waverley Walk, Transport Scotland took back as that was their land, their road and they wanted to carry out that work again themselves.

What has the FPS achieved? He would summarise what had been achieved, what remained outstanding and what would bring the Scheme to completion. First of all he had regularly updated progress with the FPS at HCC meetings over the years. He had committed to delivering flood protection by the end of 2023 and that had been achieved. They had been honest to say that it had not been the full permanent defences with stop gap measures put in place. Those had worked and had got the town through that winter. As they travelled through 2024, each of those temporary

solutions were taken out and permanent structures put in. So today, the town had full flood protection with permanent defences.

Conor then presented a graphic cataloguing the status of defences not constructed, partially constructed, defences in place from zero to 5846 metres fully in place. That tool had been used over the last 5 years, to show exactly at each stage the status of defences. The only responsibility now remaining with SBC was to ensure that in the event of any anticipated flooding, the flood gates for the town were closed. Everything else was now in place and complete.

Commercial Road as the second project was reopened in November 2022 and had been functioning since. There had been some repairs necessary however those had since been completed.

The Scottish Borders Pumping Station at Lower Mansfield Road, which would probably never be seen behind the leylandii trees, had been fully functional since August 2022, ensuring that the town's Waste Water Treatment Works did not flood and deliver backed up sewage to properties in that area. That work was not true flood protection work however the Scottish Government convened a unique approach, probably unique to Hawick and for Hawick, to allow Scottish Water and the Council to come together to take that risk away. It would have been horrific if the river had been kept in the river for the first time in generations and the sewage treatment works then flooded in the background. So the town was now protected against both risks.

On the ATN – that had been the cause he said of holding up completion of the whole project because of the additional monies and because of the foot bridge at Weensland. In December 2023 update to HCC, Conor had committed to all the major component parts of the ATN being completed by the end of 2024. That timeframe had been close and the path network opened just before Christmas 2024. The major engineering works were all done and he would talk later about landscaping outstanding.

Moving to completion, he presented another slide showing remaining works. Those were small pieces of works, nothing like the major works already carried out, to complete. Any pieces of in-river work would not be able to be done out with May to September. He understood the in-river works to be done would start in May and complete by the end of June. Landscaping works were needed to complete on many locations throughout the town but that work would not be done until April time when hopefully weather would be drier. The new public space at Mansfield Rugby Club for instance had all of its groundworks completed by the end of last week, however the landscaping of trees and grass would be completed later.

Conor expected all of the works would be completed by the middle of the Summer/late July 2025. That was their target and the timescale they would commit to.

Having discussed with his SBC Director and local Councillors, they were now looking to fix a date for a formal Scheme Opening to celebrate the investment and what had been achieved in the town. That would be hopefully sometime in August/September.

Conor advised he would run through a list of finishing works, not definitive and in no structured order, to highlight what works had yet to be done and for any other missed works to be highlighted and discussed.

- Finishing the new campervan area and white lines to be inserted at the Common Haugh. As with landscaping, they did not want to be carrying out concrete and bitumen works in January/February in poor weather and so that work would probably be arranged in March/April
- Final modifications to the road network and signage associated with that. North Bridge Street was an example. The road had been reconfigured to one-way and there were signs advising what was happening on that road instead of proper road layouts and proper signage. There were other examples throughout the town where roads had been modified and those needed to be formalised.
- Commercial Road Compound required to be demobilised and the area tidied up ready for future development
- Programme of road repairs across the town as he knew that the construction equipment used had affected roads. Those would all be analysed in conjunction with McLaughlin & Harvey. SBC were making a list of all affected areas but again those would not be targeted in January/February but rather in March/April
- Signage to install across the town (as mentioned in point 2) but also on the ATN.
- Some finishing surfacing on the ATN on the pathway between the bottom of Duke Street and the new Mansfield Footbridge (or whatever that Bridge is going to be called). He would encourage HCC to engage with the townsfolk in determining their views on what the bridge should be named, potentially working with his team. That should really tie in with the Official Opening proposed in August/September time.
- Community Space in front of Mansfield Rugby Club – engineering works were complete however the landscaping works remained outstanding. On the opposite side of the bridge on the Weensland side, engineering works were ongoing to get the pathway finished in the next couple of months, there were some materials to be moved and on the outside path, some levelling out ready for landscaping works to be completed from the Spring.
- Within the Contracts, he was limited in what he could advise as those were somewhat confidential. When the Council however considered works had not been carried out correctly, they would deem those as defects. There were two categories of defects – those which were impacting on the project in a significant way and those which were less of an impact but nevertheless required to be done. An example of a defect was the window at Orrock Halls, which required some in-river works and that would require to be completed next year. That would only mean scaffolding again and some work off Albert

Bridge – it was not major work in the river as previously experienced. That work would be targeted and localised. That window, if there were to be flooding today would not be an issue and Conor advised he was confident that it would function as it should. That infrastructure, however, he could not 100% state would last for the next 100 years, and so the defect had to be sorted.

- They had an entire programme of minor works – for example, the boundary wall between the footpath and B&M came down and required to be reinstated. That would be done in Spring. All major works would require to be completed first.
- Weensland Allotments – he accepted those had caused a lot of heartache and concern for allotment owners. The allotments were on private land and his team continued to liaise with the owner of that land, working to have those allotments completed as soon as possible. That land had been frozen for the last two weeks due to weather conditions and as the ground thawed, they would reassess its condition with a view to having works restarted and owners given back their allotments as quickly as possible.
- Within the Sandbed area, they were, broadly speaking, finished. The flood walls were complete and the pumping station fully functional. By agreement with those locally, they had retracted from that area before Christmas. That had been a really complex area of works. There were a couple of finishing works to complete within that space and tidying up of the Bridge Guest House before passing that on to others. That work would be done in the Spring.
- Across the river, they would be completing the streetscape at Mill Port which was not part of the original streetscape plans but as previously explained was part of the CARS investment. That work was advancing and moving along well.

Transition from works on to other elements – Conor advised that all the Contracts had included for a 24-month wind-down period. That timescale was not unusual, and he considered due to the sheer scale of the Hawick project, that was deserved. From the point of concluding the first week in July, the clock would then start on that 24-month period. In order to facilitate that period, they would enhance the space occupied behind the Mansfield Rugby Club as their base of operations over that period. So as works wound-down, they would move out from the space in Commercial Road to that space at Mansfield for that 2-year period from which to manage and maintain works within the town.

Some examples of work were where trees planted had died, they would replant; premature footpath cracks would be repaired, any roadworks found defective and so on would be sorted. It could be argued that works should have been done correctly in the first instance, however, equally everyone bought things which then go wrong and they take them back to their suppliers. Thinking about the sheer scale of the Hawick Project, and the numbers of different pieces of works carried out, once in an operational environment, it was inevitable some maintenance would be required. It was essential that through the local Councillors and HCC, that maintenance was delivered properly. Once all works were completed after that wind-down period, he would only then hand back the project to Scottish Borders Council and the town of

Hawick to take forward. He confidently predicted there would be some challenges during the period but as always he and his team would remain available. Conor then opened the meeting to questions.

Michael Robertson raised concerns at vehicles coming from the TLC roundabout on to the Bridge at Mart Street and crossing over at the new crossing towards the library (instead of going on to the Morrisons Roundabout and back along Mart Street to that turn-off). Conor advised that breach of traffic rules were a matter for the Police. Those incidents should be reported to the Police and the more incidents reported would result in the Police shining a spotlight on those areas of breach of road networks and target those locations. That should result in perpetrators being caught and sanctioned. Conor's responsibility was to put in place permanent signage. Right now because they were in the transition stage, people may claim not to be fully knowledgeable on what they should be doing. Drivers were getting used to the new networks, and signage needed to be installed and then matters could be taken forward from there.

Insurance for private owners – it had been stated at previous meetings, that owners would be furnished with access to a letter to reduce insurance premiums with flood protection now being in place. Stuart Beck asked if that letter was now available to those owners. Conor advised that it had been thought it may be appropriate to furnish that letter for use by different owners once their areas were protected, however Scottish Borders Council had determined that would not be the case, and the letter would be made available once all areas were protected. That letter had been drafted and they were now at the time when it could be released. He would get the letter signed off by the Council and made available on their website. A press release would be made and an advert placed in the Hawick Paper to ensure the townsfolk were notified. If Councillors and HCC could then help cascade that information out as well, that would be helpful he said.

New Crossings in Commercial Road and Albert Bridge - The Vice-Chair referred to that work being carried out by Bear Scotland and out with Conor's remit. HCC had contacted Bear Scotland and the response was that the reason for carrying out that work was that the installed crossing at Commercial Road did not meet the required standards. Whilst additional investment was welcomed, he asked why that work was then not classed as a defect. Conor advised that whatever works were not to standard were not their design, their delivery and their standards. He had not touched the crossing at all at the Albert Bridge. The crossing at Commercial Road was complex. The distance between the new Victoria Footbridge and the crossing was exactly the distance to the ramp, and they had required to run that ramp to a slightly higher gradient than they would have liked. Any works that may have been required to the crossing he was sure would have been carried out like for like with that crossing previously there, which would have been insisted upon.

Councillor Ramage referred to the proposed toucan crossing at Burnfoot Road as part of the ATN. She asked if that were still to be put in place. Conor advised he did not know the answer to that. He had met with SBC's John Curry just before Christmas

and awaited confirmation of works to be carried out from him and Sustrans which included that toucan crossing. At that stage, all he could confirm was that proposed ATN works in North Bridge Street would not be progressed. There had been no agreement within the community of what should happen at that location and that investment had been pulled. He would hopefully be able to clarify regarding the Burnfoot Road crossing at the next update.

Councillor Marshall referred to Transport Scotland having a look next year at modifications in the Dovemount Place area. He had flagged up his and residents' concerns regarding any modifications there, mainly due to the households and businesses which would involve removal of parking spaces. It had been planned some time ago to take the ATN right through that area which would have involved removal of some 20 parking spaces, and if anything like that were in mind, he needed to be part of those discussions. He was all for ATN but there had to be a balance.

A further point he wished to have clarified was whether all pumping stations were now functioning and there were no concerns regarding those. At Mansfield Road he had been asked to flag works carried out there including ponding works. There were, however, still certain areas suffering from ponding and he requested those be revisited. Sheet piling in Duke Street area near the Trinity Bar – he advised there remained some sheet piling sticking out of the water and he wondered what plans were for that and tidying up of that area.

Conor confirmed that they had consultations at Dovemount Place and the designs were revised. He understood that the revised design would address concerns of loss of parking spaces. That design was not taken back to the community and at the point they were looking to deliver that design, firstly Transport Scotland moved on to other extra works described and secondly, it turned out that all of that landscaped area at Dovemount Place was owned by Transport Scotland. The road previously went straight onto the Station Bridge. Transport Scotland then determined they wanted to do that work and took that back under their control. Conor was therefore not aware entirely what they had planned. When Transport Scotland, however, carried out the works at Buccleuch Road, he was able to confirm that they did take that to consultation. That flagged concerns which in turn resulted in revised design to take account of those concerns, and so as long as they followed that same approach, that should also happen for Dovemount Place. He would take a note of Councillor Marshall's concern for his secretary to forward on to Transport Scotland so that when they were taking forward works at Dovemount, they would ensure that consultation took place.

In relation to the pumping stations, there were 9 within the town. The major pumping station was within the Scottish Borders Council's facility at Mansfield, and which had been doing its job since Summer 2022. That remained functional. There were then 8 further pumping stations across the town – 1 of them built at Sandbed by SBC Contracts and that was 100% functional with no issues. The other 7 were built by McLaughlin Harvey as part of their contract, and all 7 of those were also fully functioning and undertaking their responsibilities. There were however some

landscaping and surfacing minor defects to be rectified. In answer, Conor could confirm that all pumping stations were functioning but there were some minor defects to attend to.

With regard to ponding at Mansfield Road, he would take a note of that issue to be logged and checked.

Having not visited Duke Street since further works were done, he would do so the following day. A last pallet of coping stones fitted to the walls in that location were known to be defective. To ensure however flood protection, they had nevertheless sealed those copes down for over Christmas. When the new copes arrived, they would swap those over. With regard to the sheet piles, there was more work to be done on finishing at that location. Similar to the Sandbed, the walls had a different finish as that in other locations within the town, due to the sheer scale of the engineering challenges there. Planning were aware of proposed plans for finishing.

Councillor McAteer expressed his concerns regarding that area as well, and he looked forward to seeing what would happen with that sheet piling.

Stuart Beck enquired about the fencing at Santa Marina, advising that young children running out of that restaurant could be hurt. There was a big drop for children who could fall through that fencing. Conor confirmed that was already on their list from a Health & Safety aspect. He flagged another minor change which had been attended to, and the lack of a ramp to the stage area. That was a failure of design, and that redesign had been done and that DDA compliant ramp would be inserted.

Michael Robertson asked whether lifebelts along the river could be inserted. He had requested that at a previous meeting but not heard anything back. Conor advised he had taken a note of that request, albeit the river had always been there, with no lifebelts in place and so broadly speaking that risk had always existed. He would nevertheless highlight that concern again.

Gordon Muir referred to the installation of the signage on the ATN, and he wondered whether that included Phase 1 of the wider tourism signage discussed previously. Conor advised he had pushed hard on a decision to be made on that with SBC's John Curry and would do so again. His understanding was about how much that would cost. He would report back to the next update meeting. Gordon went on to say there was every chance that project may receive funding from e.g. Borderlands, and so there could be match-funding from elsewhere.

John Scott, Secretary of the Angling Club last year, said he had walked the river the previous Saturday. He had witnessed vast amounts of rubbish and litter in the river as a result of flood scheme works and not from anywhere else. He had raised that previously along with another Club member, French Wight, and he considered works should have been tidied on completion of individual parts. There were many dumpy bags lying around and action needed to be taken.

Conor advised it would be helpful to have a discussion on where tidying was required. He had met with the Tweed Commissioners before Christmas and had that conversation and both they and SEPA considered tidying to be complete. When that was reported by them to Conor, he said he had not looked at that matter further. He suggested that a walk of the river be made with him or a member of his team to determine where that tidying was required. That had been done previously over the years. Conor would log that concern and for that walk to happen, after the water levels had dropped.

John Scott referred to discussion earlier on the Weensland Allotments, when Conor had said that those would be reinstated. At the present time, however, the portion of ground available was a swamp he said. It was filled with water and it was felt that water could not get away because of the compacted nature of the soil below. He wondered what the solution to that would be. Conor advised, as he had done so at the last HCC update, that the land was privately owned and that owner did not wish for any discussion regarding his land to be carried out in public. Conor confirmed that his team had not walked away from that location and were trying to resolve the situation with the land owner.

The Chair thanked Conor for his positive update and for answering queries raised. A round of applause followed.

8. **Hawick High School – Senior Pupils Update** – There was no update from the Senior Pupils as they were currently studying for Prelim exams.

9. **Treasurer’s Report – December 2024** – The Treasurer reported an Opening Balance of £15,343.69. Information on the individual accounts were:
HCC 1 Account – opened with a balance of £5034.19, with a £50 expense for membership of Hawick Development Trust, resulting in a closing balance of £4,984.19. That balance included £1,566.76 Fallago Grant ringfenced for use on pathways.
Christmas Lights Event Account – opened with a balance of £1789.79. Income from collections at the Christmas Event amounted to £238.57 and there was one small expense of £10 for engraving of the Silver Salver for the Best Dressed Window Competition. The closing balance was therefore £2,018.36. Some expenses were anticipated still to come for electricity supply and maintenance of Christmas Lights, albeit some of those expenses would be set against Foundation Scotland fund.
Hawick in Bloom Account – opened and closed with a balance of £4,397.14.
Community Benefit Fund Foundation Scotland – opened and closed with a balance of £4,122.57. Payment of some Christmas Event expenses remained to be deducted and additional Christmas Display lights including more new Harps would be purchased to utilise outstanding monies from that fund.

The total balance of all accounts amounted to £15,222.26. Members approved the Treasurer’s Report.

10. Public Forum and Town Issues

Former Offices at Hawick Town Hall – Stuart Beck queried that back in 2019 some of the offices at the Town Hall were emptied and were to be made into flats. He thought those were still empty whilst the town appeared to be in a housing crisis. He asked if the current state of play with those offices could be clarified. Councillor McAteer confirmed it was certainly part of SBC's plan for those offices to be sold off as flats but he would ask the question and report back.

New High School – Proposed Games Hall – Michael Robertson queried reports that the new games hall would not be as big as that presently. Councillor McAteer confirmed he had been in touch with SBC's John Curry to provide clarity around the physical and sporting activities planned. There were issues around the existing sports hall and whether that would remain or whether that would be demolished. John Curry needed to be clear on what the plan was and what facilities would be available. If the existing games hall was to be demolished, what would be put in its place, and if not to be demolished, what plans for activities would be in place. The response from John Curry would be shared.

On that same topic of the new High School, with demolition due to start shortly, a member of the public asked Councillors why Lesley Munro of SBC and her colleagues were about to foist a new £64m school on the children of Hawick in a take-it or leave-it way, when none of the teachers supported the open plan design. The ideology behind the flawed concept was already 30 years out of date and schools in Jedburgh and Peebles designed by the same architects had conspicuously failed. Why he asked were SBC being allowed to proceed with their one-size fits all approach.

Councillor Ramage said she completely supported what the member of the public had said. She had attended at Jedburgh when pupils were in the school and had approached some for their views. Pupils had stated it was disruptive and they could not concentrate and just did not like the open plan concept at all. Any open plan schools she had ever been in, the first thing teachers did was to put up barriers. She was completely against open plan for teaching.

Councillor Marshall considered that HCC should write to Lesley Munro raising concerns highlighted tonight, to determine whether any answers could be achieved. Councillors would also keep pressing too.

Councillor McAteer advised that he accepted the points raised and that from day one of the proposal for a new Hawick High School, there had to be learnings from new schools built in Jedburgh and Kelso and so on, which had to be applied to Hawick's new school. The physical look of the High School was one thing and he was not concerned whether it was of modern design or other - people would have their views on that. But of more importance were the facilities within the school and the approach to learning, and those mistakes learned from Jedburgh and Kelso had to be rectified. He had been assured by SBC that would be the case, and if it were not now so, Hawick had to stand up and be counted. His view was that SBC were open to listening and therefore had to listen to ensure our school would be fit for purpose and

for teachers to provide learning. He welcomed a new High School but it had to operate effectively for well into the future.

Councillor Marshall advised he had also expressed his concerns regarding the layout outside the school. The Chair concurred that was a major concern coming from the consultation at the High School and the plan for the community space between the High School and St George's Lane.

Langlands Bridge Resurfacing

The Treasurer stated he was pleased to see just before Christmas the resurfacing of Langlands Bridge. Unfortunately, on approach from Buccleuch Road, he reported a small patch put in, and between that and the remainder, another small patch had broken up.

Councillor Marshall reported that the Contractors had been consulted. They considered that defects arising may have been connected to the mechanism underneath the bridge. He would provide an update to the next meeting.

Heras fencing/Metal Plate – Stuart Mactaggart said he had been approached by a member of the public regarding Heras fencing and a metal plate at the campervan area, which had been lying there for some time. He wondered if anyone knew the purpose of those. Councillor Ramage confirmed she would investigate that and report back.

Weeds in Princes Street – A member of the public raised that since the time of the one-way system in Princes Street, taking into consideration the bottom of Dickson Street to the lane which ran down to Commercial Road, i.e. the length of the whole grave yard, presumably for safety reasons, there had been red and white barriers placed along there. When heading east, there was an outshot on the pavement housing the A7 sign at Dovemount Place, and therefore it could only be assumed that the barriers were put in place to prevent cars hitting the pavement. From a safety perspective, he said that was absolutely fine. The barriers had been there for some 3 years now. Accordingly there was now 3 years of dirt, sand and grit and whilst that was not so noticeable at this time of the year, during summer there were a vast array of weeds growing around pavements there as well. He wondered if those responsible could arrange to have that whole area cleared, as there was some 6 inches of dirt along the length of pavements and that whole area.

Councillor Marshall agreed, and advised Councillors had attended a meeting with Conor Price, Flood Protection Scheme, pre-Christmas about winding up of the Flood Scheme works, and the debris around Scheme furniture including the barriers in that area had been raised. He had received confirmation in an email of 18th December from Flood Protection office that those concerns would be attended to. He would chase up on that with Conor Price and would include the member of the public and HCC in the response.

Pigeons at the Library – A member of the public advised about the pigeon mess at the Library. The person responsible for cleaning hosed around that area and down into Laidlaw Terrace. As a result of that hosing, the drain there was building up and choking. She wondered if there were any plans on what could be done regarding the ongoing pigeon mess.

Councillor McAteer confirmed that the issue was indeed an ongoing one and continued to be a serious problem for the town with pigeons at the library, the High Street, the former Liberal Club and now at the Tower Knowe. To try to get to the bottom of the issue, he had sought to learn what SBC's responsibility regarding these pigeons were. The unfortunate answer from SBC was that they had no responsibility in relation to the pigeons themselves, albeit they did have responsibility for Health & Safety. Therefore if there was a specific issue around that, whether that be someone slipping or falling in an area of pigeon mess, they would have an interest. SBC were responsible for cleaning of pavements. He would continue to report on issues raised with him, however, members of the public should also report directly to SBC.

11. Reports from Sub-Groups

- (a) Christmas Event - The Chair advised that the Christmas Lights would be taken down on Sunday, 19th January. Volunteers to meet at 9am at the Town Hall cellar.

The Christmas Greetin' Meeting was still to be held and plans were to hold that on a night the following week. Details would be advised to HCC Members.

- (b) Hawick in Bloom – The next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 4th February 2025.
- (c) CCTV – Councillor Ramage advised she continued to pursue a meeting with SBC's John Curry. She was constantly pushing and had pursued him again just before Christmas.
- (d) Resilience – Nothing to update.
- (e) Fundraising – A further meeting was planned and an update would be provided to the next HCC meeting.
- (f) Planning – There had been one planning application in the month regarding the erection of a house at the private road off Buccleuch Road. That application would be considered and any comments made to SBC planning.
- (g) Bandstand Events – No update to report at this time.

12. Reports from Community Partners & Representative Groups

- (a) Hawick Development Trust (HDT) – No update report.
- (b) Foundation Scotland – As reported at the last meeting, the Secretary advised that the Annual Report 2024 and Distribution Plan 2025 required completion, albeit no dates for submission had yet been advised. She suggested that discussions on those documents be part of proposed meeting of members the following week to discuss Christmas Event.
- (c) Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership – Councillor Ramage reported that the next meeting would be held on 25th February 2025. The Chair advised that in relation to the Neighbourhood Support Fund 2024/25, that the closing date for the next tranche of grants was the 15th of January 2025. Constituted groups could apply for grants up to £5,000 (Pot B). The Vice-Chair advised that Pot A funding had been amalgamated into Pot B fund to ensure maximisation of spend that year.
- (d) A7 Action Group – Stuart Mactaggart asked if HCC's suggestions had been forwarded to the Secretary of that group on the review of the A7 Action Plan. The secretary confirmed that had been the case.

- (e) Hawick Common Good – Councillor Ramage confirmed the next meeting would be held on 19th March 2025.
- (f) Renewable Developments – The Chair considered matters had quietened over the Festive Period but would no doubt progress from now. Updates would be reported to future HCC meetings
- (g) Hawick Common Riding Committee – No update report.
- (h) Hawick Reivers – The Secretary reported that a meeting had been held the previous week. The plan was to hold the Festival at the Wee Haugh in 2025. A coffee morning would be held to raise funds on 1st February within the Evergreen Hall. The Festival was a great asset to the town, and she encouraged everyone to support that event.

13. Correspondence – The Chair reported that SBC were launching consultation on the proposed School Holiday and In-Service days for 2026/27 and 2028/29. Information could be found on SBC’s website for anyone to provide their views.

14. A.O.C.B.

Michael Robertson enquired if there was any update on the Grass Management Pilot outcomes. Councillor Marshall advised that a report would be provided to Councillors at the end of the month and thereafter that would be placed on SBC’s Public Portal.

The Chair reported that the Hornshole Greenway Eco-Group per Judith Murray were organising a clean-up of the pavements on the High Street on Thursday, 30th January 2025, along with the eco-committees from each of the Primary Schools. Arrangements were to sweep and tidy the pavements on both sides of the High Street and Trinity Garden areas. Whilst that was a positive idea, the Chair considered the necessity to have children sweep the streets of Hawick was a sorry state of affairs in his opinion. It was nevertheless a worthwhile project and the Community Council, the Provost and Hawick Development Trust were fully supportive of their efforts.

Gordon Muir of that Group advised anyone willing to help on the day would be welcomed to ensure the safety of all of the children in particular. It was not an exercise to put children in harm’s way, it was not an exercise to embarrass those responsible who were not doing it, it was an exercise which the children had chosen to do as part of their expression of tidying up Hawick. That suggestion had been one raised at the Have Your Say Days previously held and was their response to that.

Hawick CARS were proposing a gutter clean project of the High Street. Forms could be downloaded from SBC’s website. Volunteers from HCC and HDT were sought to assist with a letter drop of owners on the High Street seeking their views on taking part. A similar project had happened in Jedburgh with great success and it was now a chance for owners of properties on the High Street to have their gutters cleaned free of charge.

15. Date of Next Meeting – It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be Monday, 10th February 2025 at 6.30pm within the Committee Room, Town Hall, Hawick.