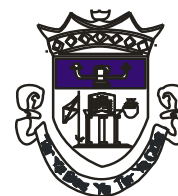

Hawick Community Council



MINUTES OF MEETING OF HAWICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
held on Monday 10th February 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	Michael Robertson
	Duncan Taylor	John Wilkinson
Attending:	Councillor Cox	Councillor McAteer
	Councillor Marshall	Councillor Ramage
	Councillor Richards	Councillor Smart

There were 11 members of the public in attendance as well as Graham Ford from the Hawick Paper and PC Fraser Mortimer, Police Scotland.

- 1. Chair's Opening Remarks** – The Chair welcomed everyone to the February meeting of Hawick Community Council and advised 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 went on to advise 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, Stuart Mactaggart and Euan Welsh.
- 4. Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of 13th January 2025** – The previously circulated Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting - Proposed for adoption by Braden George and Seconded by Jim Adams.
- 5. Matters arising** –
Center Parcs Meeting of affected Community Councils – The Chair advised he along with the Vice-Chair would be attending that meeting at Hawick RFC the following night. There would then follow an update on that meeting to HCC Members.
Former Offices at Hawick Town Hall – The Chair reported on an email from Councillor McAteer in response to the query raised on that matter at the January meeting. That email response had been circulated to Members. The response from SBC was that when they had refurbished the building a couple of years ago, they had segregated the building to create a portion on the upper floors (at the east end) to form

flats. These were subsequently sold to a private buyer following marketing, due diligence, etc. and were therefore no longer in the Council's possession. The Chair thanked Councillor McAteer for that response.

New Proposed Hawick High School – The Chair confirmed that the Secretary had sent a letter to Lesley Munro, Director of Education and Children's Services, and a response was awaited.

Langlands Bridge Resurfacing – Councillor McAteer confirmed he had spoken with Council Officers and they were going to provide a report to him soon.

Heras Fencing & Metal Plate at the Campervan Area at the Common Haugh – Councillor Ramage reported she had contacted SBC's Property Officer. There had been damage caused by the Flood Prevention Contractor some 2 years previously and no further action taken since. At least there was now awareness of who was responsible and an update would be provided to SBC soon.

Grass Cutting Pilot – The Chair advised that outcomes had been reported to Councillors the previous week. Officers of SBC including Carol Cooke, Parks & Environmental Manager, had been asked to attend HCC's March meeting to provide an update on how that Pilot had gone. That would be an interesting topic for next month and he thanked Councillor Marshall for his involvement in brokering that update. He encouraged as many townsfolk as possible attend that meeting to air their views.

Clean-up of Hawick High Street – The Chair advised that a very special clean-up of the High Street had taken place by various school children, and a well done he said to Hawick's Eco-School and Hornshole Greenway for that. The clean-up had made a huge difference to the High Street and all the children involved had seemed to enjoy that work outside of school. Unfortunately, the very next day he had witnessed more litter on the High Street and dog's dirt as well, so all that hard work by the children had already been affected by some irresponsible people and dog owners. Nevertheless, a very well done to those children involved.

Gordon Muir advised there had been much positivity around that endeavour. There had been quite a few adults as a result who had come forward to state they would like to be involved in repeating that exercise. If there was appetite to do that on a more regular basis, then he thought that should be pursued. Whether that were Hornshole Greenway or through another group but he just wanted HCC to know that.

CARS- free gutter-cleaning exercise – The Chair reported that was now up and running from 1-85 High Street with works proposed to be undertaken in March. Forms were available to residents via the Council's Facebook page or the Hawick Paper. That was a free gutter cleaning service provision, so was well worth it for residents in the High Street.

Dog-fouling – Michael Robertson enquired on progress with that. Councillor Smart was going to raise a motion at SBC. Councillor Smart advised she would report on that later in the meeting.

- 6. Police Scotland Reports – January 2025** – (this item, with Members' approval, was taken after Item 3 – Apologies for Absence, given time constraints on PC Mortimer attending). The monthly Police Scotland reports for January had been previously circulated to Members, and the Chair asked for any questions from Members.

Michael Robertson expressed a well done to the Police regarding the person who had been going about Hawick central threatening people, having noted that person had since been remanded for his actions.

PC Mortimer said whilst he could not speak about individual cases, that had been the case.

The Chair also expressed thanks to Police Scotland for discovering the cannabis farm within the Hawick Hotel and hopefully those culprits would be dealt with in due course.

PC Mortimer advised that information had come from the public, and he thanked them for their help. It was essential that the public continued to report any suspicious activities they witnessed to the Police, so that those might be investigated.

The Vice-Chair enquired whether that cannabis find had, by any chance, been linked to the funny smells reported by a member of the public at that end of the High Street at the last HCC meeting.

PC Mortimer said he did not know. The way matters worked, was that one person providing a report was not considered enough, however 2 persons reporting was taking account also of the period of time – and that then activated investigation. PC Mortimer advised he had been involved with that particular incident the previous week and it had been a substantial cannabis farm.

There were no further questions for PC Mortimer, and the Chair thanked him for his attendance.

7. Hawick High School – Senior Pupils Update – The Chair reported that the High School Senior Team were unable to attend the meeting.

8. Treasurer's Report – January 2025 – The Treasurer reported an Opening Balance of £15,222.26 and Closing Balance of £14,973.26. Information on the individual accounts were:

HCC 1 Account – opened with a balance of £4,984.19 with bank interest of £56.46 received, resulting in a closing balance of £5,040.65. That balance included £1,566.76 Fallago Grant ringfenced for use on pathways. It was believed some damage had been done at Williestruther Walkway during the latest Storm, and that area could be looked at to expend that Grant on and repair damages caused.

Christmas Lights Event Account – opened with a balance of £2,018.36 with one expense of £605.46 from the electrician for his maintenance work of Christmas Lights. The closing balance was therefore £1,412.90, with only one bill awaited for use of street lighting electricity.

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. It had not been possible as proposed to purchase at the present time

more Christmas Harps, as suppliers had currently ran out of stock on those. HCC would continue to expend that remaining funding as per the terms of the Distribution Plan submitted to Foundation Scotland.

Members approved the Treasurer's Report.

9. Public Forum and Town Issues

Issues with Street Lighting – The Terraces- The Treasurer had received an enquiry from a member of the public which concerned street lighting in that area over the last few months. Number 1 Lamppost at St Ninian's Road was reported on as being on continuously 24/7 but also flickering. That had not been attended to and had finally gone out altogether. That was then reported again to SBC. No.6 lamppost on Twirlees Terrace (at the top of St Ninian's Road and not a stone's throw away from No.1 Lamppost there), was reported as being on constantly. At the end of Dalkeith Place, the lamppost there was also reported as being on constantly.

The previous week, operatives had then attended No.1 Lamppost at St Ninian's Road, which was now on, but constantly. No.6 lamppost on Twirlees Terrace could quite easily have been dealt with at the same time as attending to No.1 lamppost but was not. Probably not on the worksheet. The member of the public was then asking if it were possible for the staff working on repairs, to have a filter on their system to check on whether any other lamps in the area of any being reported, were also defective, so that those could all be fixed at the same time, saving time and resources.

Councillor Cox advised she was happy to take that back to Street Lighting. Councillor McAteer advised that street lighting issues in that area were ongoing. There had been formal complaints reported and just to be clear he advised that a number of lighting problems in that area were the responsibility of Scottish Power and not SBC. Accordingly, the Council operatives were then responding, recognising the problem and then reporting on to Scottish Power, who were delaying and giving excuses about parking. SBC was pursuing those issues with Scottish Power who were responsible for the majority of street lighting in that area. He advised he would get a proper report on what was causing the time delays, so that the details could be shown. He had been pursuing those issues for some time and recognised that during the winter with 2 or 3 street lights not working in close proximity was making for dark places. Fundamentally, the issue lay with Scottish Power.

Councillor Marshall said he could reinforce what Councillor McAteer was saying, as he had similar issues within his ward. The response he had received about street lights being on 24/7 had stated that the heads on some lamppost columns were defective and these were to be replaced. Rather than switch them off 24/7, it had been considered better to have those lampposts left on. He agreed that a full report regarding street lighting throughout the town was needed.

Gable Ends of the two houses at Teviot Road leading up to new Business Centre – The Secretary advised she had been approached by a resident of one of those properties, asking when the work to the gable ends would be completed. The residents had been promised by Conor Price, Flood Protection, on numerous occasions that work would

be attended to but they were still waiting. The residents had been advised that their best recourse would be to consult a solicitor, however she said it was a poor show that residents would require to do so and incur personal costs, when that work had been promised to be completed some considerable time ago.

Councillor McAteer advised he had been working with the 2 residents there. SBC had run out of money on that work with the £3.6m spent on the Business Centre and delays of some 7 years on that. He thought there was a financial issue and he considered that work would require to wait until at least April. He was not saying that was acceptable in any way, but it was a budget issue and potential and other funding opportunities coming SBC's way could help. He agreed it was an unacceptable situation for the residents and he had at some stage suggested legal action but accepted the point that residents should not have to incur costs but sometimes it took something like legal action to push on action. He had not given up on that issue and had been pursuing it for some considerable time. He thought it being brought to conclusion was imminent but it was budget related. He would look to a formal response being provided to HCC.

Bear Scotland – Commercial Road works – Michael Robertson wondered how long it was going to take for the works on the toucan crossing at Albert Bridge to be concluded. Every time he passed in that area there appeared to be one man working and four standing about doing nothing. Councillor Ramage advised initial information had stated works would conclude at the end of the month. There were 2 different sections of work proposed – one at the toucan crossing at Albert Bridge and then the toucan proposed for Commercial Road at the junction with Bath Street. Councillor Smart had been advised delays were due to the latest storm.

Michael Robertson went on to report that there remained traffic lights in situ the previous weekend, with no works being carried out. Councillor Marshall advised he would take that matter up with Tommy Deans to try to get a formal response on that, and he would circulate to HCC.

Puddle outside Wright's Hardware/Boots – The Chair advised he had received a complaint regarding water accumulating outside these premises. It was noted that appeared to be a recurring issue and had supposedly been rectified months ago.

Ponding on Commercial Road – Michael Robertson enquired if ponding issues at that location had now been seen to. Councillor Marshall stated he did not know but advised he was disappointed with the response from SBC on ponding reported in Mansfield Road. SBC had in turn been in touch with the Contractors, whose response had been that they would not be carrying out any further resurfacing works on Mansfield Road at all. Clearly there remained a ponding issue around the sewage works treatment area and that was very visible when raining. He had taken that up with the Service Director.

Trees at Havelock Bank – John Wilkinson reported that one of the trees at that location had fallen, hit a car and fence and luckily missed a house there. He wondered if there were any plans to cut down the other trees in that area or reduce them in size. Councillor Marshall advised he had been at that location that day and had spoken with the resident affected. He had requested a site visit with the responsible SBC officers as he considered those trees to be far too high and there had been some

trees dislodged which were clearly noticeable. He said it was time to revisit that – he had taken the professional judgement of the officers when that issue had been reported previously, but it was now time to revisit. A meeting including the resident would be arranged soon. She had suffered quite a bit of damage, as had others within the town, but those trees were considered too high and needed to be looked after.

Michael Robertson advised that there was one tree also on Wilton Hill just along from the Katherine Elliot Centre which was leaning into other trees. That tree however was within a private garden and he wondered if anything could be done on that. Councillor Marshall agreed to bring that to the attention of SBC to determine powers.

10. Reports from Sub-Groups

- (a) Christmas Event - The Chair advised that HCC held a debrief on 22nd January of the 2024 Christmas Market and had proposed that the event be held again on Saturday, 29th November 2025 at the same location in Oliver Place/Oliver Crescent. It had also been proposed to look into an alternative indoor facility for the Market in the event of poor weather conditions.

With regard to Christmas Lights Display – those had now been taken down from the High Street, and he thanked those HCC members who had helped with that exercise. He also extended thanks to Ryan Patterson, electrician, Keith Johnson, Colin Wilson for his loan of scaffolding and Brian George for use of his van.

- (b) Hawick in Bloom – The Secretary advised that Hawick in Bloom had held a meeting on 4th February last, when the plants for Summer and Winter had been agreed. Costs were now being sought on supply of those plants.

There had also been discussion on replacing the wooden planters, most of which were actually past their best, with the soil needing replaced to get rid of the bugs accumulated over many years. It would be good if more sustainable new planters could be achieved. Costings on those were also being sought, and funding opportunities discussed. A fundraising Plant Sale event was also being planned for Saturday, 3rd May, with Maureen Toogood taking the lead on that. Finally it was reported that the next meeting of Hawick in Bloom would be held on 4th March.

- (c) CCTV – The Vice-Chair reported after Councillor Ramage hounding the Chief Executive and John Curry, Service Director, a meeting had finally been held with Alex Young, Project Officer. That had been an informative meeting and Alex had agreed to meet again to discuss proposals. The Vice-Chair had determined, after that meeting, there had been a public consultation in December 2024, and from SBC's Facebook page, that consultation had only received 2 shares and 2 likes, so there had not been much response to that. On the back of the meeting that morning, however, it had been determined that the Council had started installing the infrastructure for the planned design scheme last year, which would be completed this financial year. It begged the question of there being a public consultation to discuss the position of the cameras and seeking comments, whilst at the same time the infrastructure was being installed on our High Street. What transpired was that people's thoughts that works carried out on the High Street related to Go Fibre, turned out to be CCTV cables being installed on behalf of SBC.

Alex Young had been asked to obtain an update on the financial commitment and feedback to Councillor Ramage.

Councillor Ramage stated that basically the Council were reinstalling the 16 cameras that had already been in place. The Vice-Chair then advised that from HCC's Consultation, if HCC and the public considered there was sufficient demand for additional cameras around the town, HCC would then require to look at how an extension to SBC's system could be funded. Alex Young had been thanked for his attendance as it had taken some considerable time to achieve any meeting.

Braden George asked if that meant that HCC would need to revisit its plans and where additional cameras would be required. The Vice-Chair advised that would be the case, taking account of what came out of the public consultation held by HCC and recommendations of Police Scotland. That would be done once SBC's design had been received via Alex Young. There would be little HCC could do where cameras had already been installed. Nevertheless, at least dialogue was now being achieved with SBC. Braden George advised it was unfortunate that dialogue had not taken place previously and prior to SBC works being started, with everyone working together.

Councillor Cox asked when it was stated by the end of 'this financial year' what that meant and the Vice-Chair clarified by 31st March 2025. It was well advanced.

- (d) Resilience – A request had been made by the Reivers for use of Resilience radios at their forthcoming Festival and the Vice-Chair asked if anyone had any objections to that. Members agreed.

Michael Robertson asked if the Resilience Team had been called out during the recent Storm. The Vice-Chair said that had not been the case, despite there being trees down and so on. HCC had put out a statement on its Facebook for the public to report any issues, and information received about damage to buildings and fallen trees, had then been fed back to Emergency Planning.

- (e) Fundraising – a sub-group meeting would be arranged soon to progress on the likes of holding a Farmer's Market during this year.
- (f) Planning – There had been no major planning issues during the month. John Campbell asked about planning permission being refused to Lovat Mills as they were considered to be on a flood plain and wondered if that would be the case also for the new High School. The Chair advised he hoped Lovat would appeal that decision and they would subsequently be granted planning permission. The High School was of different construction.

The Vice-Chair clarified that Planning looked at a 1:200 years flooding so the chances were that if that were experienced, the water would be over the walls anyway.

Councillor Smart stated it was to do with the SEPA regulations and she had taken that up with the CEO previously, in relation to Deans Bar, but did not consider she

had received a satisfactory response. She would be happy to take that matter forward again.

Councillor Marshall stated it was the National Planning Framework that needed revisiting. It was not flexible enough and that was the bottom line, and that was what was adopted by the Council. The Council were right in adhering to that Framework, but it was the Framework itself which needed to be revisited.

The Chair and Vice-Chair agreed saying that it was the 1:200 years event which caused issues.

Councillor McAteer wished to reassure John Campbell that issue was being pursued with great vigour by Councillors. There was the ridiculous situation where Hawick had a £93m flood scheme but there was the inability to build or change existing buildings within the safety of the walls, excepting the 1:75 versus the 1:200 years. There was a common-sense approach required and Councillors were pursuing that vigorously with the people who might be able to make that happen. It was stuck with SEPA and Councillor McAteer considered that the Scottish Government would not want to know that the £93m spent on the flood protection was of no use. Councillors were on it.

The Treasurer asked about the letter for residents to use regarding a reduction in their Home Insurance premiums, and Councillor Ramage confirmed that letters would be sent to residents. Councillor Marshall confirmed there would also be reference to that on the Council's website. He had already had residents in Mansfield Road on to him regarding their premiums.

- (g) Bandstand Events - Duncan Taylor confirmed that these events would be held on the last Sunday in July and the 5 Sundays in August. Some acts had been pencilled in but the events would be subject to funding.

11. Reports from Community Partners & Representative Groups

- (a) Hawick Development Trust (HDT) – No update report.
- (b) Foundation Scotland – The Secretary reported that she was working on the Annual Report and Distribution Plan and a decision would need to be made on remaining 2024 funding. Funding for 2025 had not yet been received by Foundation Scotland but they had very recently issued templates to allow preparation of required reports, in readiness for that funding becoming available.

It was also noted that HCC members had agreed to spend Foundation Scotland grant for 2025 for 3 projects – Hawick in Bloom planting, Summer Bandstand Events, the Christmas Market and expansion of the Christmas Lights Display. HCC had recognised however that its 13 members were not representative enough of the community, and it was essential to determine if those 3 projects and use of the FS funding was actually what our community wanted. Accordingly, a survey would be available on HCC's Facebook page and website and within the Hawick Paper for the community to respond to. She encouraged everyone to respond and let HCC have their views. If results were not in favour of those projects, it had to

be known that those projects may not proceed. The survey would allow those responding to identify any other suggested project ideas.

- (c) Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership – Councillor Ramage advised that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 25th February. That would be a blended meeting starting at 6.30pm within the Business Centre.
- (d) A7 Action Group – Councillor Ramage reported that Marjorie McCreddie, Secretary was putting together a brochure following comments from Community Councils on the A7 route. Tommy Deans, Bear Scotland attended those meetings and was very productive. If anyone had any queries they wished raised at the next meeting to be held on 27th March, she would raise those at that meeting.
- (e) Hawick Common Good – Councillor Ramage confirmed the next meeting would be held on 19th March 2025.
- (f) Renewable Developments – The Chair advised that Invenergy (Mid Hill Wind Farm) would hold a public exhibition in Hawick Town Hall from 3pm to 7pm the following night. He encouraged people to attend, to see what the Scheme looked like and its impact on the landscape.

Teviot Wind Farm – that looked like it would go to SBC Planning at the end of March. The visual impact with that would be huge.

Stirches Solar Energy Park – There had been a lot of information lately on that with the proposed Solar panels stretching from the A7 at the Newton Farm across to Stirches Quarry and the Battery Storage Section proposed across the road from Stirches Mains. That was a fair size of countryside.

Maureen Toogood asked if he meant it would cross a road. The Chair clarified that on reaching the Convent, the battery storage would be above that on the right-hand side opposite Stirches Mains (just down from the Quarry). It did not yet have the go ahead but was under consultation.

Michael Robertson commented that he had noticed the one at Duns had not been given the go ahead. He considered that HCC should be shouting about this one at Stirches as well, as it would take out a large chunk of Hawick's countryside.

Maureen Toogood stated there was also the battery storage proposed between Calaburn and Whitehaugh. That was apparently in the hands of the company now, who were pursuing that battery farm at that location.

Councillor Marshall said that he did not consider the people of Hawick knew what was coming their way and the impact of all of those on our environment and everything else would be huge. It was indeed time to make a noise and stand up and be counted. He knew that the result would lie with the Scottish Government in Edinburgh but it was horrendous that Hawick was becoming a dumping ground for battery storage. Michael Robertson asked if it was being forced on us as the lady who presented at an HCC meeting did not provide answers to a lot of the questions raised there. For instance, where was the water coming from for Stirches, in the event of fire.

Maureen Toogood said she thought Ib Vogt were supposed to be returning to an HCC meeting to consult further. Maureen went on to advise that the one proposed at Calaburn was currently with the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) in Edinburgh. They had apparently got it to that stage as it was her understanding that they were permitted a certain number of units by SBC, and anything above that number, allowed them to go straight to ECU for them to then give their approval to go forward. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was still required. The only thing, as Maureen understood it, to stop that progressing would be a detrimental EIA. That was a big battery farm being proposed, and whilst they stated they would only be inserting so many units to begin with, that was a big field and they would be able to then add to numbers. The only issue at the moment was the capacity of the Power Station but she understood they would be increasing that capacity anyway to accommodate the power line (SPEN) across Stirches and beyond.

Michael Robertson considered all of that would be ruining our landscape in Hawick.

The Chair advised that HCC was a consultee, as was SBC. It would be a Scottish Government decision, and no matter if we said No, it would remain with the Scottish Government to determine.

Councillor McAteer advised that there was one other step within that process, and he was not saying that might change the situation, but a No here and a Yes there, would result in a Public Enquiry as part of that process. He had not however heard of many of those being successful but it was nevertheless part of the process. Councillor McAteer advocated however that we should get to that part of the process, nevertheless.

A representative of the residents against the Calaburn Battery Farm asked if it were possible for HCC to arrange with that Company to present at a future HCC meeting. At the present time, she considered no-one was hearing from that company, and as a resident she had tried to contact them and their response was that they would hold a public meeting but that was back in November. Since then nothing had happened, other than confirmation from the landowner who stated he had already signed a deal with them. They were proceeding apparently based on getting permissions etc at the meeting on the EIA. For the people of Hawick at least for the Stirches Solar Park, there had been public presence of Ib Vogt who were supposedly coming back but for the Calaburn one, it felt like that was completely under the radar with a company that no-one understood who they were, and there was considered to be a real threat to the townspeople with that proposal.

The Chair agreed to send a letter requesting them to attend. Councillor Marshall agreed that to be essential and that townspeople had to understand that Calaburn and the Stirches Solar Park were next door to each other. Councillor Ramage

agreed stating that the proposal was for 90 units on the top of a hill. The Chair considered it would look like an industrial site.

Michael Robertson added that on top of that, a few miles up the road there would be Center Parcs. If anything did contaminate the water, and it was known that battery storage did present that risk, it was important to try to get that Company to at least present themselves, as a step forward.

Councillor Smart said one of the questions would be to tie in all of the developments going on, and yet again it was the power being produced in Scotland potentially being taken away elsewhere, and the people of Scotland were still paying the highest standing charges for their electricity and for their usage and not getting any of the benefits from the power Scotland was actually producing. The same had happened with the oil. It appeared to be the case that as communities we were getting very little say as to how and when that happened. Councillor Marshall agreed, stating there was no incentive whatsoever for the people of Hawick.

Councillor McAteer considered again it was about process. These developments could not take place without public consultation and that had to happen. An eye needed to be kept on all of these developments. He would be attending Upper Teviotdale & Borthwick Water CC meeting at Robertson the following night to support their concerns regarding Mid Hill. They were stating there would be Battery storage but that was more likely to be on the A7 side and not on the Borthwick side. They had reduced the size of that project by 42 turbines to 37 turbines. Battery storage was not part of plans initially but that had now come out and any contamination from that would run directly into the River Teviot. There were serious issues around that Wind Farm as well.

Councillor Ramage referred to a request made for a Mapping Tool to be produced showing exactly all proposed sites for renewable energy – what had been accepted and what had been declined. It was easy she said to be working blindly across the Borders where all the wind farms, solar panels, battery storage were being proposed, and it would be better to be able to look at a map to determine where all those proposals were and their overall effect on our whole countryside.

The Treasurer said what appeared to be happening was that any landowners could easily rent off their land to any company interested in renewable energy, to the landowners benefit only.

Maureen Toogood raised her concerns about what would happen at the end of the battery storage life- who would clear sites, as responsible companies may not still be in existence and then that would fall to the landowners or maybe even the local authority. The landowner for Calaburn would be using monies from the proposed battery storage for his children, however, would they then want to take responsibility for clearance of the site at the end of its lifespan. The Chair advised that would need to be tied up in legal documentation.

Councillor Marshall advised he had not seen anything in writing about clearance of sites, so once they were in situ what would indeed happen at the end of their shelf life. Who would be responsible – it would be the people neighbouring those sites or actually even a local authority. The quicker an EIA was seen, the better too.

Michael Robertson asked if HCC should be contacting Duns (Gordon) to see how they managed to get their BESS refused.

Maureen Toogood advised that a public meeting had also been held at Gattonside as there was a battery storage farm proposed there. She did not know the outcome of that meeting.

The Chair advised that it would be good to have the mapping tool Councillor Ramage spoke about, to identify all the sites across the Borders and the impact on our landscape.

Councillor McAteer thought that a map was already in place however Councillor Ramage thought that was only for Wind Farms. It was agreed that battery storage and solar sites could perhaps be added to that.

The Chair considered Philip Kerr, Southdean CC would be best to contact as he may have such a map. He would contact him to determine.

It was agreed that more had to be done to face up against all these renewable proposals going forward to the detriment of our countryside.

Councillor McAteer advised there was an opportunity for all of the Community Councils to join up across the area. Within Planning Guidance, there was a very strong statement which appeared to be being ignored which stated that the consideration of the community would be at the forefront of decisions. So, if the communities got together, there would certainly be more strength in numbers.

The Chair agreed that the T&L Group could be that power, and he would contact Philip Kerr to progress on such a meeting.

- (g) Hawick Common Riding Committee – No update report. Michael Robertson asked if there had been any recent resignations. Braden George, HCC representative on that group had been unable to attend the most recent meetings, due to work commitments, and could not answer that question. The Chair confirmed that Ex-Acting Father Stuart Sharkey had tendered his resignation.
- (h) Hawick Reivers – The Secretary reported that good progress was being made with Festival preparations. She asked on their behalf of HCC members and members of the public, for volunteers to help with erection and dismantling of gazebos for their Market, stewarding on the Market Day parade and the Torchlight Procession in the evening. The more stewards with Hi-Viz jackets available, the better.

Keith Johnson, a member of the Reivers Committee, also advised that the Event Programme was now available and would be being distributed both locally and throughout the Borders area.

12. Correspondence – None

13. A.O.C.B.

Councillor Smart updated on outstanding matters she was investigating.

Additional Lights at the Mote – it was noted she had eventually been able to get in touch with the appropriate Line Manager on that, but a response remained awaited. It was noted that matter had been already raised with SBC and put forward within financial planning and budgets commencing in April.

Dog Fouling, Decriminalised Parking & Warden Services – Councillor Smart was hoping to extend on that matter, rather than just raise a question at Full Council where only an answer would be provided by the Portfolio Holder. She considered it would be best to revisit the decriminalisation of parking, dog fouling and other type issues within communities, to warrant the reintroduction of warden services. When Officers had looked at those issues previously, they had looked at them she thought separately and determined wardens not to be cost effective. They may not be cost effective separately but may be cost effective if the same person was responsible for all of those issues. Parking would require to be decriminalised, and there was now added legislation in respect of pavement parking being illegal. So, she was working on progressing with that issue as a whole. One of the things Councillors had been requested to look at were not only ways of making budget savings but also to look at ways of increasing revenues. She thought that a warden service provision may be one of the ways of increasing revenues if linking illegal parking to dog fouling and other more minor community problem areas might be feasible.

Michael Robertson stated he had read in the Hawick Paper that Councillors McAteer and Marshall were on the case for dog fouling and he thought it would be great if all 6 Hawick Councillors could back up on all those needs.

Councillor Smart advised what was needed was a report from Council Officers as to what was feasible, what was doable and how much it would cost, and therefore whether those costs could be justified. As Councillors, they had a responsibility for looking after the public purse and they could not just do these things without proper due process. Rest assured, Councillors were still pursuing that whole matter.

Councillor Marshall said he supported Councillor Smart however lessons required to be learned from the last time Council Wardens were in place and the way they were managed. The wardens required to be localised and tasked with Hawick issues, such as littering, fouling, parking and so on. Monies needed to be found to pay a decent wage, and they should be made accountable for their workload locally. If the service was again to be Borders-wide, his fear was that they would be spread too thinly, managing them would not easy, and they would become less effective.

John Campbell asked about the street sweeper. Councillor McAteer advised he had investigated with Council Officers and gone through the routes and the vehicles and had been given assurance. Specific areas, like the Crown Close were discussed and the message provided was that there was an effective process underway. It was interfered with when there was staff sickness and, as was reported, the theft of vehicles and the upshot of that, meant that some vehicles remained to be replaced. Nevertheless, he was reassured with what was happening.

Councillor Marshall advised that any issues should be reported directly to SBC. A good example of that reporting had been where dog fouling immediately outside Wiggly Worms Nursery recently had been immediately reported and he was happy to report that fouling was cleaned up within 1.5 hours. The Council clearly needed to have issues reported directly to them.

Michael Robertson suggested that HCC should have that reporting number within their Facebook page for ease of public reporting.

Litter-picking- A member of the public referred to dog fouling, which he considered had been well covered within the Hawick Paper. He advised he had been doing some litter-picking around various places at night when out walking. Over a period of about 20 x 1-hour walks, he had picked up nearly 5000 bits of litter. On one occasion he had bumped into a Council employee, who had advised him that there was only 1 person employed by SBC to pick up litter, and they had been instructed to pick litter off pavements only. The issue with that was when the wind blew, litter went into bushes and so on and therefore would not be removed. He wondered how we could try to improve the cleanliness and tidiness of the town overall. Were there many people perhaps like himself, who did some litter-picking, and it seemed to him Hornshole Greenway were keen to get involved. He just wondered how many individuals perhaps did do some local litter-picking voluntarily. He didn't know and wondered if it would be worthwhile advertising if anyone keen to do some litter-picking could meet at a certain point, to determine how many were actually keen to help. If resources could be pulled, perhaps that would be more effective.

One of the things that happened abroad he said was that shopkeepers and those in residential areas, were obliged to clean and keep tidy the immediate areas outside their shops and properties. He wondered if that could be adopted in Hawick and make the shopkeepers on the High Street responsible for their immediate areas. The Chair advised that many already did that. He knew of one who certainly washed outside his butcher's shop daily. That shopkeeper though had previously raised his concerns that if he cleared snow in winter and someone fell on that area, where responsibility would lie for any injury claim. Returning to the point of litter-picking, it would be good if something could be inserted in the Hawick Paper. He thought it would be interesting to know how many people did do litter-picking voluntarily and to see where they did that. A cobweb of volunteers to cover the whole of Hawick would be good to be achieved.

He went on to advise that in the Borthwick Valley, that CC had organised a litter pick which had been really well attended. They had obtained a wagon load of litter. They

had obtained litter pickers and tabards from the Council and had received sponsorship as well as a donation of £100 from Greggs. There was he thought a possibility to develop that further. The Chair advised that HCC did an annual litter-pick the week before the first Common-Riding ride out. HCC had its own litter pickers and Hi-Viz vests however the number of people turning out to help had been relatively poor.

It was discussed that 'little and often' was best to get coverage of key areas subject to litter. Michael Robertson suggested HCC obtain some signage associated to litter, and it was noted that had previously been tried to no avail. It was suggested education of High School children might be appropriate, however it was argued whether the schools should need to do that, as opposed to parents educating their children. It was thought that a captive audience at schools might be better. Councillor Ramage confirmed that as a retired art teacher, she used to do that and encourage rubbish to be put in bins. She agreed with the fact of there being a captive audience at school, however considered education should really come from within the home and parents.

Duncan Taylor, as a teacher, agreed that some children did drop litter however he did not like the assumption that all litter in Hawick was down to school children. There had been children involved in the recent litter pick of the High Street, which was great but as a result, there had been negative comments from adults on social media in response to that, stating that the school should not have allowed children to do that. Children were being exposed to risk and required proper training to pick up litter. That was criticism from adults saying lets not encourage young people to pick up litter because it might be too dangerous. So, how then was it possible to win with that attitude prevalent.

In relation to dog fouling, littering, illegal parking, the people responsible were not caring of society for whatever reason and not caring of their town. If we were able to solve that problem, that solution could be bottled and sold worldwide. There was no definitive answer to that. He had seen tidier towns and cities but he did not know whether that was because more money was made available to provide better services. Rest assured, young people were asked to put their litter into bins, and whether they did that or not, sadly there were some children and older people too who simply chose not to.

Councillor McAteer advised that, associated to litter, there were six new bins inserted the previous Friday on the Active Travel Network in key spots. That was a step in the right direction and hopefully those bins would be used.

VE Day - Councillor McAteer advised that fell on the actual Anniversary date of 8th May, and Scottish Borders Council were hoping to be able to organise an event, probably in Kelso. He merely wished to flag that, and further details would follow.

Missing Shares – Councillor McAteer advised that related to residents of property who were unwilling to pay their share of works required and that the Council were now able to help. They may take on that payment and levy a 12% increase to non-payers. That would be integrated into title deeds, and when any non-payer's property was sold, the outstanding payment would be reclaimed by the Council. The reality of the

threat of that would probably be enough to allow works to be carried out. From a community point of view, that was a game-changer.

Wellogate Place - A member of the public advised Councillors of incidents in Wellogate Place where parked cars were being damaged by passing vehicles. The road was narrow from entering into Wellogate Place to Minto Place but even narrower again from Minto Place downhill to Elm Grove. That road was not meant for large vans or vehicles. One particular car owner had twice had damage caused to his car. She was aware that in the past Wellogate Place had been two-way and the Council had made that one-way and had taken space off the gardens at the top end of the street and had built a wall there. She wondered if between Minto Place down to Elm Grove, there could be something similar done to allow more space for passing vehicles, where the road was at its narrowest. Councillor McAteer said it would be worthwhile to ask that question. SBC had already introduced weight restrictions in that area. The problem may be that SBC could argue that parking restrictions be put in place, if it considered parking had become so much of an issue.

Michael Robertson considered that signage should be looked at in the Terraces, as he had noted that another big lorry had got stuck in Douglas Road East again. Councillor McAteer concluded that sat nav was in some cases responsible for issues there.

Councillor McAteer thought that HCC should write to SBC to raise again the continued damage to vehicles and issues with vehicles getting stuck, to request something be done about that. Ward Councillors would continue to try to help with that.

Wheelie Bins at the Old Refuse Tip, Stirches – a member of the public said she walked her dogs around Stirches and at the Old Refuse Tip she wondered why there were so many wheelie bins lying around there. In looking at the proposed solar energy park in that area being a blot on the landscape, it was the case that those wheelie bins were also an eyesore. There were over 100 bins lying around.

Councillor Marshall had been advised that those bins were there as some were faulty and it was a storage area. At one time, he had been advised of around 500 bins in situ and he would be happy to investigate that further with the Council and to report back to the next HCC meeting. He was led to believe that site would be cleared in the near future.

Council Tax Increases - Firstly, Duncan Taylor expressed congratulations to our Councillors for their 100% attendance at the meeting, which was brilliant he said.

On the matter of the Council's Budget and proposed 10% increase in Council Tax for Scottish Borders, he asked how that increase compared to other regions in Scotland. Was that increase for the Scottish Borders higher or lower than in those other regions or about the same.

Councillor Smart had looked at available data not just across Scotland but also parts of England as well and it was her thought that the increase in the Scottish Borders was about average.

Councillor McAteer advised that some areas had not as yet declared. Scottish Borders were early to do so and months ago gave that proposed figure which would be required for its services. Their increase was already at the lower end of the known increases across Scotland, with about 9 or 10 authorities the same, a number 4 or 5 well above that with Aberdeen looking for 20%, and a whole lot as yet undecided. A number of authorities were still at negotiation stages. Therefore to give an answer was not yet possible he said. A more accurate picture would be available once SBC had determined where it was and where it needed to be. There were 5 years of £7m of savings to be had for SBC. People may have to take a hit but he appreciated that was not agreeable for many but that was unfortunately the position at the moment. What 1% of Council Tax generated was £700,000. 10% (£7m) was enough to maintain services, but that was the figure over the next 5 years to be saved. That decision had been made but there was still an understanding to be had on what National Government and Central Government were going to provide in relation to National Insurance. At the moment provision was thought to be 60% which would leave SBC with an additional £1.7-1.8m to find. Forget the position (of 10% increase on Council Tax proposed to date) as that would then need adjustment, and tough times were ahead.

Councillor Smart added that SBC had been held up as being an exemplary Council in relation to its finances. The Finance Team had done a brilliant job in balancing the books so to speak but for instance the National Insurance situation, with unintended consequences of that, only made things harder.

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