

Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

Ordinary Meeting 1st April 2019

Draft Minutes

Location: The meeting was held at Hermitage Hall starting at 7:00pm

Those present were:

Community Councillors Geoffrey Kolbe (Chairman, GK), John Scott (Treasurer, JS), Andrew Warburton (AW) and Lawrence Scott (LS).

Councillors: Davie Paterson and Watson McAteer.

There were also two members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Police Report.

P. C. Allan Patterson spoke to his report, which is attached.

3. Approval of the minutes of the ordinary meeting 4th April 2019

JS pointed out a number of typographical errors.

JS noted that the insurance had been renewed, and that there is one continuing issue with the signatory documents for the bank in regards to the UL&H CC bank account

LS asked why it was that a cheque for £15 had been paid to The Bridge without the prior approval of the Community Council? JS explained that the payment had been approved at that meeting and LS himself had signed the cheque after the payment had been approved. LS commented that decisions were being made at the Agenda meetings which should be properly made at the Ordinary meetings. JS and GK assured him that this was not the case and JS stated that our use of an Agenda meeting was solely to inform and prepare for the next Ordinary meeting. In response to a comment from one of the SBC Councillors, JS noted the UL&HCC Agenda meetings, at which all UL&HCC councillors were invited and informed, did not compare with what appeared to be happening with the Hawick CC.

LS raised the matter of the gritting of the minor road through the Hermitage Valley, stating that whereas the driver had previously made a special effort to grit and plough the road, he had now been instructed to follow SBC policy in gritting the road and we would now have a worse service than we did previously. JS stated that members of the public were fully entitled to make complaints in UL&HCC meetings and it was only proper that any such complaints be acted upon. If the service we now got was provided in accordance with the standard of SBC policy, so be it.

LS pointed out that statements or questions from the audience were recorded in the minutes without naming the individuals. Other Community Councillors and Councillors assured him that this was normal practice.

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by JS and seconded by AW. They were approved by majority.

4. Treasurer's Report.

JS produced a written statement of account, a copy of which is attached. JS stated he would speak to this report at the AGM which will precede the June Ordinary meeting.

JS commented that despite the ringfencing of monies in the account for the previous financial year, the amount in the account was now such that we would not be receiving a grant from SBC for the current financial year (which started today) unless the bank balance became less than £1,080 before the annual grant application was made.

A discussion on future SBC funding of Community Councils followed and Councillor Davie Paterson gave a summary of the SBC 'Fit for 2024' plan, explaining that it had been proposed that funding be allocated to the various wards on population basis and then distributed by approved applications which could involve voting procedures. Both Councillors Paterson and Watson said they had vigorously opposed this. However, assurance was given that the

funding for Community Councils will be maintained for two years, rather than one, on the same basis as before. Barbara Elborn commented that there was going to be a restructuring of Community Councils by Scottish Government, which would be a “game changer” and it was not right that reorganisations of CC funding by SBC should be changed in advance of any such upheaval.

Barbara Elborn stated that the NDCC had recently made a donation of £250 to the Old People’s Welfare Service and recommended the UL&HCC consider a donation. JS noted he attended the recent Welfare coffee morning at which the N&DCC cheque was presented and he supported making a donation. There was discussion as to the amount. JS cautioned the current fiscal year had just begun and we did not know what the demands would be on the bank account. . A motion to donate £100 to the Old People’s Welfare Service, as proposed by AW and seconded by LS was approved unanimously. It was noted that could be increased later in the fiscal year if ULHCC funds were available.

5. Public consultation regarding Community Trust.

GK proposed that this item be taken with item 6 on the agenda (public consultation regarding Scottish Borders National Park) and item 8 (Resilience Plan) and combined with a plan of action as follows:

1. A community consultation meeting be held in Hermitage Hall on Saturday 18th May from 2 to 4pm to discuss: A Community Development Trust, the Scottish Borders National Park proposal and to update the community on the UL&H Resilience Plan.
2. It is proposed that an independent facilitator be asked to chair the meeting above.
3. During April and early May the Community Councillors will visit every home in UL&H CC area to advise of the community consultation date and hand out information sheets and surveys on the Community Trust and on the Scottish Borders National Park. This to be part of a ‘meet and greet’ exercise where Community Councillors go out to meet the constituents and also encourage people to sign up to our email information list.
4. All costs for materials and any posting for the exercise above to be paid for out of the UL&H CC budget.
5. Drafts of the leaflets and other information to be handed out to be finalised by Community Councillors over the next week.

Barbara Elborn was thanked for her suggestion of an independent facilitator. Barbara Elborn also noted that Newcastleton was pushing for the area to be recognised as a ‘Dark Skies’ area and a questionnaire for this could be circulated as part of the UL&H CC consultation. This met with general agreement.

LS suggested that the survey be done by post with reference to the electoral role since people who lived here had more stake in the area than people with second homes. It was pointed out that people with second homes nevertheless did have a stake in the area and so their view should be recognised. However, it was agreed that there should be an element in the survey in which the status of the responder was stated – for example resident, second home, business, etc.

LS asked why it was that a survey regarding the Scottish Borders National Park was being conducted? Who was this survey for? GK replied that firstly, UL&H CC needed to be able to give a position on the SBNP in formal consultations, such as the Main Issues Report which SBC had just undertaken. Secondly, it needed to be able to give its position in other communications where appropriate, and thirdly SBC would be deciding its own position on the SBNP at some stage in the future and a public consultation was needed on which to base their decision.

This plan of action was proposed by JS and seconded by AW. It was passed by a majority.

7. Pines Burn Windfarm Community Benefit.

JS gave a report of the Hawick CC meeting on 11th March/19, at which there was a move for Hawick CC to demand that the apportionment of the Pines Burn Windfarm CB amongst participating Community Councils be according to population of the various CC areas, rather than the position which Hawick CC, along with all other relevant CC’s, had previously agreed of equal shares to each CC with an extra share going to Hobkirk CC as the host CC for the windfarm.

Barbara Elborn informed the meeting that she and Philip Kerr (Southdean CC) had been due to have a meeting with Hawick CC chair Gillian Morgan, but she did not show up. However, Duncan Taylor of EnergieKontor had stated that in the event of a disagreement amongst participating CCs on apportionment, they would revert to their original proposal of an equal share for each participating CC. Barbara Elborn also revealed that on the agenda for the forthcoming Hawick CC meeting on Monday 7th, a statement on the Pines Burn CB would be made. Barbara Elborn hoped Hawick CC would revert to its previously agreed position.

GK noted that Southdean CC had just passed two motions re-affirming their position on the Pines Burn CB and **stated asked** that UL&H CC should echo this by passing the same motions. These two motions were then put to the meeting:

First motion "UL&H CC reiterates its decision on the Pines Burn Community Fund to support a Double Share for Hobkirk CC, with equal shares for other CC's in the Pines Burn Community Fund, and to participate in the SCIO."
Proposer: GK, seconder: AW, passed unanimously

Second motion "UL&H CC emphasises that in the failure of Hobkirk to receive a double share the default position would be equal allocations to all participating community councils, which was the developers default. UL&H CC is not prepared to negotiate further outside those parameters."
Proposer: GK, seconder: AW, passed unanimously

GK proposed a further motion to express the opinion of the meeting on attempts to change Hawick CC's previously agreed position on the Pines Burn CB: "UL&H CC expresses its disappointment in Hawick CC in that Hawick CC considers reneging on its previously agreed position with regard to the allocation of Pines Burn Community Benefit amongst participating Community Councils."
Proposer: GK, seconder: AW, passed unanimously

9. Broadband

GK introduced Daniel Woods of BorderLink (www.borderlink.co.uk), who explained how their company could provide 'fixed wireless' broadband to the community. He explained how a network of radio repeaters could be installed around the area, into which subscribers could tap to gain access to the Internet. The nearest link into their existing network is probably a repeater on Denholm Hill Farm, so the signal would have to be relayed in approximately 10 km hops from there to this area. On being quizzed about the robustness of the system to the Scottish winter, Daniel said that in his experience the system had proved very robust. The network repeaters were powered by solar panels and small wind turbines and stood about 4m tall. Daniel explained he would need a minimum of 15 subscribers in order to put in the infrastructure to this area. There would need to be agreement from land owners on which the repeaters would be placed and it would help if we could get that.

BorderLink offers a number of different broadband packages. The basic residential package is around £25 a month and gives 15mbit download and 5mbit upload speeds. The standard residential package is around £35 a month and gives 30mbit down and 8mbit up. The business and premium package gives 50mbit down and 20mbit up for about £55 a month. There would be no cap on usage in any of these packages.

When asked what would happen to the infrastructure if BorderLink went out of business, Daniel responded that this was not likely as they were well financed and were experiencing very strong growth.

Barbara Elborn commented that there were 128 properties in the area (UL&HCC and NDCC) which did not have broadband. Of these, about 20 or so would probably meet the criteria for prioritised installation of fibre optic broadband under the R100 scheme (The list will be published on 12th April). That leaves about 100 properties which would still not have broadband. Barbara suggested that UL&HCC should combine with NDCC in looking at getting a fixed wireless network put in place for those properties left without broadband.

It was commented that the CCs in the intervening area between Denholm Hill and here should also be prompted to get involved as this would make it easier for us to get the hilltop repeaters installed for the necessary hops between Denholm Hill and this area. Daniel also stated that Oxnam CC were organising a BorderLink installation in their area.

10. Roads.

Councillor Watson McAteer reported that the potholes opening up along the length of the B6357 had been reported and were known about and he would chase up the roads department about getting them fixed.

11. Reports of meetings attended

JS attended the Scottish Borders Community Council Network meeting on 6th of February.

JS attended the NDCC meeting on 12th of February.

JS and AW attended the Hawick CC meeting on 11th of March

Upcoming meetings to be attended;

The NDCC meeting on 9th April, GK

Scottish Borders Community Council Network meeting on 10th April, GK

The Teviot & Liddesdale Area Partnership meeting 16th April, AW

Fawside Community Group meeting 17th April, GK and AW

The Bridge are running a half day event on Land Reform and Community Ownership at Tweed Horizons 24th April, GK, AW

It was noted there will be a meeting about reforming CCs and we will attend once further details are available...

12. Communications

It was reported to the SB Councillors that we still do not seem to be getting communications from SBC in the same quantity as other CCs. An example was given of an email from Jenni Craig which had been received by NDCC today, (as related by Barbara Elborn) but not UL&H CC. Councillor McAteer said he would look into this.

13 Any other business

GK reported that he had purchased the URL ulhcc.scot at a cost of £41.99 and this could be used for a website and for individual email addresses for the CC members. The hosting of the URL for website and emails was currently costing £3.99/mo. It was proposed that UL&H CC purchase this URL from GK (at cost price) and take over the running costs. Proposer: JS, seconder: AW, passed by majority.

It was agreed to set up email addresses for each of the CC officers, with temporary personal email address (name@ulhcc.scot) for non-office holders.

Barbara Elborn revealed that the Online Borders platform on which the UL&H CC website was currently hosted was at risk of losing its funding and would probably not be fully functional in the near future. She recommended downloading all the minutes of past meetings currently on the site and setting up a new stand-alone UL&HCC website.

JS communicated a request by resident for a Royal Mail post box to be put at the junction of the B6399 and the Hermitage road. There are no post boxes on the B6399 between Newcastleton and Langburnshiels, as compared to the B6357. LS commented that this request to Royal Mail had been made before, but he was concerned that this might affect mail pickups from residents on the road. GK commented that there were comparably quite a number of post boxes on the B6357 and this did not seem to affect the delivery or pick up of mail for residents on that road. It was agreed that an approach be made to Royal Mail for a post box to be put at or near Hermitage Hall.

JS reported that Newcastleton First Responders had kindly agreed to provide the Heart Start CPR training course. Dates have been suggested and those dates will be sent out to the UL&HCC and Hermitage Hall email lists for signing up on a first come / first served basis

Councillor Watson McAteer reported that there was about to be a polling site review which UL&HCC and Hermitage Hall should be involved with, as similar issues to removal/rationalisation proposed a few years ago may arise again. JS commented that Judith Turnbull from SBC had already tentatively booked Hermitage Hall in the event of an EU election in May.

LS reported that Scottish Power did not seem concerned about the perilous foundations of the power pole near the river by the entrance to Hartsgarth Farm. Too, the road and the bridge were in danger of collapse!

14 Date of next meeting

Monday 10th of June.

The meeting ended at 9:00 pm