

MINUTE OF MELROSE & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING

7.30 PM, WEDNESDAY 17 AUGUST 2022, THE ORMISTON INSTITUTE UPPER LOUNGE

1. Attendance and Apologies

Present:	Martin Baird (CC)	Apologies:	Willie Kerr (CC)
	Jane Bell (CC)		Cllr Jenny Linehan (SBC)
	Mary Douglas (CC)		Cllr David Parker (SBC)
	Simon Harris (CC)		Lorna Paterson (CC)
	Bruce Jackson (CC)		Cllr John Paton Day (SBC)
	Michael Sherlock (CC)		Douglas Stewart (CC)
	Linda Wilkes (CC)		
	Bruce Wilson (CC)		

2. **Declaration of interests:** No interests of relevance were noted.

3. Minutes of meeting of Wednesday 15 June 2022

The minutes were approved; some modifications had been made to an earlier draft following email feedback.

4. Matters arising from meeting of Wednesday 15 June 2022

Live borders staff would not be attending this meeting but it was agreed that they would attend the Community Council meeting in September instead to address issues raised at the May and June meetings about the very limited opening hours and use of Melrose Library. Melrose Football Club, who had been scheduled to attend the September meeting, had agreed prior to the meeting to come to the August meeting instead. It was noted that a number of the drains had been cleared since the last meeting, though this remains a concern especially in Newstead, where they remain blocked.

5. Additional items and order of business

An additional item, regarding the use of Millar House in Melrose was added as item 7 for discussion. A number of neighbours of Millar house were in attendance.

6. Melrose Football Club Development

Greg Simpson (Chair of Melrose Football Club) outlined recent development, which has included tremendous growth in the numbers of children and young people playing football with the club, growth in the number of volunteers helping it, growth in the amount and range of training activity, and growth in diversity, with one third of the 300 or so players being girls, and with children coming from a variety of schools in the area.

The only building available for changing etc is the former Fire-engine house in Gibson Park. Originally built in 1901 to house a horse-drawn fire pump, it was closed in 2007 and then adopted by Melrose Football club, with a wooden hut annex being attached to the back of the station. A planning application in 2017 to add a larger annex has not been actioned (owing to COVID) and has lapsed. The recent growth and success of the club, and additional legislative and Scottish Football Club requirements for showers and better changing facilities, now separately for girls as well as boys, drives a need for a newly designed club facility that differs substantially from that proposed in 2017.

Gavin Yuill (Architect) presented a new proposed expansion of the club facility, for which the Club will be seeking planning permission, but hoped to reflect the Community Council's comments before doing so. Aside from the additional changing facilities it was noted that the development would include:

- _ New changing and showering facilities to be built to the south of the old fire engine building, and not in direct view of the high street.
- _ A modest expansion of the building to the east of the building.
- _ An improvement to the original engine room, to make it more amenable for community activities on the edge of the park.
- _ The distinctive woodwork on and around the main engine room doors would be restored and returned to the original 1901 colours.
- _ A need to replace one additional tree compared to the 2017 proposal; there is no need to interrupt the main line of trees around Gibson park.

Greg Simpson and Gavin Yuill addressed a number of questions, many of which concerned the financing of the development and its sustainability, and received some informal advice and comments.

After all non-member attendees of the Community Council had left the meeting, the proposed development was discussed and considered. It was agreed that the proposed development would represent a considerable benefit to the Melrose and surrounding area community life, that it had been well considered and designed, and that the development was welcomed and encouraged.

7. The use of Millar House in Melrose

The community council had received expression of concern regarding changes in the use of Millar House in High Cross Avenue in Melrose. This building is currently empty, the previous residents of this sheltered housing facility being vacated since January 2022. David Parker had been contacted and had provided an update on the situation from his knowledge. Sadly, on this occasion, the Community Council did not have the benefit of the knowledge and insight of the area's Councillors on Scottish Borders's Council, who had all given their apologies for being unable to attend the meeting.

David Parker had advised Community Councillors that Eildon Housing, in partnership with NHS Borders and Carr Gomm (a charity that provides mental health care) would be using Millar house to deliver a new mental health service, looking after individuals with a range of mental health problems, supported by full time mental health professionals. The clients would be transferred from units within and outwith the Borders, and the new service would be running in October 2022.

Neighbours of Millar house in attendance at the meeting expressed a number of concerns about the new development and discussed these with the Community Council. The Community council considered these and agreed that it was surprising that such a substantial change, that would inevitably affect Miller House's neighbours and would at least be of significant interest to them, had not been described and discussed with neighbours before a decision had been made to proceed with the development.

Further, the Community Council (though without the benefit of expert advice on this matter) would have expected that the new Mental Health Services to be provided by Carr Gomm at Millar House (specifically a Mental Health Integrated Community Rehabilitation Service) would represent a change of use for planning purposes, since the currently approved planning permission for Miller House is for sheltered housing. If the change that was being progressed did represent a change of use such

as to require planning permission, a full consultation process with neighbours and with the Community Council would ensue.

8. The blocking of public access to paths etc

Communication has been received concerning the blocking of access to country areas through the chaining and locking of field entrances, in Darnick, in Newstead, and in Leaderfoot. It is likely that this is the result of the risk of unauthorised vehicular access to these fields and the damage and loss of use that might result. A negative outcome, however, is restriction of access to pedestrians, especially those with restricted mobility, this access being an essential benefit for residents in the area, and a key attraction for visitors. The Community Council was advised that loss of access to roam in these circumstances should be reported to Scottish Borders council's access team. The access contact at SBC is Susan Gray, and the council has an online report form www.scotborders.gov.uk/forms/form/95/en/contact_the_access_officer.

9. Planning issues: Other applications to discuss

A couple of important new developments had been proposed that Bruce Jackson had circulated by email, and Community Councillors were prompted to examine these with some urgency.

10. Playpark Consultation

Newstead's childrens playpark in the orchard is one of four receiving investment in the Borders this year. Those in Newstead have been encouraged to engage in the consultation.

11. Signatories for Bank account

Dougal Stewart's 4 month struggle to gain signatory status with the Royal Bank of Scotland for access to the bank account has finally succeeded. Mary Douglas has now started the fight to get it for herself, and at some stage it will be the turn of Bruce Jackson and Simon Harris.

12. Policing progress

Our new Community Policeman is Constable Ian Porter. He had organised leave on this day, but we hope that he will join a future Community Council meeting. We have not had crime reports since June and these are being requested.

13. Any other competent business

It is of great concern that the need to insert 30p in coins for access to the public toilets is effectively precluding access at a time when fewer people carry cash at all, and alternatives should be considered by the council.

The website is recording more and more visits each month.

It was agreed that the approval of minutes would take place by e-mail, so that agreed minutes could be posted for public information as soon as possible after the meeting.

14. Questions from the floor. There were no questions from the floor.

16. Time date and location of next Community Council meeting.

Wednesday 21 September at 7.30pm in the Ormiston Institute.