

Melrose and District Community Council

Minutes of Meeting 28 June 2023

Smith Hall, Darnick 7.30pm

1. Attendance and Apologies:

Attendance: Community Council: Mary Douglas (Chair), Bruce Wilson, Willie Kerr, Bruce Jackson, Lorna Paterson, Douglas Stewart, Jane Bell

SBC Councillors: David Parker, Jenny Linehan, John Paton Day

Public: Sarah Milne, Ros Anderson, Graham Stormont, Sue Palmer, Kate Houston, Val Miller, J D Clinkscales, Graham Barker, George Bunyan

Police Scotland: Ian Porter

Apologies: Martin Baird, Michael Sherlock, Simon Harris

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chairman informed the meeting that Lynda Wilks had resigned from the Community Council, and she was thanked for her involvement.

2. Police report

There were no comments on the latest police report. There was an extended discussion with public input about concerns over anti-social behaviour in the daytime in the centre of Melrose. PC Porter emphasised that action could only be taken if incidents were reported at the time by those involved. He stated that outdoor drinking was not in itself an offence as SBC had no byelaw against this. Cllr Parker referred to an extensive public consultation throughout the Borders a few years ago which showed little support for such a byelaw. It was agreed that every effort should be made to ensure that everyone, particularly businesses, understood the need to make a formal report of incidents. Incidents could also be logged with SBC Anti-Social Behaviour Unit.

Plain clothes police will be active in the area to make drivers aware of the new requirements to leave adequate space for cyclists, The Chair asked that it should also be made clear to cyclists to use cycle paths when these are available. A point was made from the floor that some cycle paths were in need of repair.

3. Minutes of last meeting, matters arising.

Minutes of 19th April approved.

4. Gattonside Meeting

It was agreed that the September meeting, to be held at Gattonside, would take place on Tuesday 19 September, as the Hall was regularly booked for Wednesdays.

5. Bike parking provision

A recent study by SBC indicated that cyclists, particularly those in large groups, felt there was inadequate cycle parking in central Melrose, for example in the Market Square. While the meeting agreed that it would be desirable to improve provision, it was felt this should not be achieved by the removal of existing car parking spaces, as this was already insufficient. SBC were asked to investigate other options.

6. Community Council organisation and administration

Earlston Community Council had recently advertised for paid support to prepare minutes and meeting papers, and it was agreed that a similar step should be taken for Melrose. A similar arrangement had been in place prior to 2022, and the Treasurer indicated that funds were available to cover reasonable costs.

7. Street Sweeping in Melrose.

Concerns had been raised by the public with Melrose in Bloom (MiB) volunteers about the recent lack of street sweeping. SBC has been experiencing staffing shortages in Eildon and currently arrangements were being made to use contractors to support street cleaning and grass cutting. In addition a new cleaning vehicle was now in use and employed in Melrose. Gutter cleaning is on a 2/3 week cycle, but it was suggested that the 1-way system in the town centre made this difficult. Parking enforcement was also raised, and Police Scotland indicated that this was difficult until the lines had been repainted, which is scheduled for later this summer.

8. Public Toilets

Concerns have been raised about the shortage of public toilets, particularly in the vicinity of Gibson Park and the Triangle when there were large scale events being held. SBC indicated that there was no funding available to re-open the old toilets adjacent to the Rugby Club, even only at a time events were taking place. While large scale events requiring licensing could be required to ensure provision, smaller events did not go through this process. There are national guidelines for organisers and the Chair undertook to look at these and see what could be done to ensure organisers followed these, with any costs being met by the event organisers.

9. Memorial Seat Application

Recently a request had been received to allow a memorial bench to be placed on Weirhill in view of the Rugby Club. The meeting agreed in principle to this, but it was agreed that the proposer should be aware of the additional charge for maintenance which would be requested by SBC. The Chair would write back to the proposer.

10. Planning Applications.

There were no concerns raised in relation to any of the recent applications, and responses had been sent to SBC on all required. It was agreed that the next meeting would allocate some time to discuss the draft Newstead Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan at the next meeting.

11 AOCB

11/1 Cllr Parker had drawn the attention of MCC to a proposal to reposition tables and chairs at Abbey Fine Wines on the Market Square. While this had been dealt with by Licensing officers under delegated powers, MCC was asked to give their views on to where a bench and a litter bin should be re-located. Considerable concern was expressed by public attending as there had been agreement when the present hard landscaping and seating in the Square had been carried that businesses could not encroach on what was to be a community area, and also concern that there had been no consultation by SBC with MCC over the proposed changes. Cllr Parker pointed out that as this was not a Planning matter there had been no legal requirement to seek the observations of MCC.

[NB Subsequent to the meeting, a site visit was held on 30 June when the repositioning was agreed, but there was still considerable disquiet from several present over the failure to consult].

11/2 In response to a question Cllr Parker said there were no plans for a Tourist Tax in the SBC area.

11/3 Again in response, it was stated that there was no awareness of any complaints about either the process or the outcomes of the Short Stay Licencing process, but that this could perhaps be checked.

11/4 MCC is aware of the need to be looking into means of raising additional funding, and a book sale is being investigated. Any Further suggestions are welcomed. The treasurer indicated that the annual funding from SBC had not yet been requested.

11/5 Pot holes on Tower Road were causing concern and it was advised that these should be reported through the Pot Holes website. Cllr Linehan asked for further information.

11/6 The road up to the Cemetery was now scheduled for repair by SBC

11/7 It was suggested that the Hedge behind the Parish Church required cutting back. This would be looked into

11. Questions from the floor.

There were dealt with under AOCB above

The next meeting will be in Newstead Village Hall at 7.30 on Wednesday 16 August 2023