

# MINUTES OF MELROSE & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING 7.30PM WEDNESDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2023, ORMISTON ROOMS

## 1. Welcome, Attendance, Apologies, Declarations of Interest

**Present:** Mary Douglas (Chair) (CC), Willie Kerr (CC), Jane Bell (CC), David Parker (SBC), Mike Sherlock (CC), Bruce Wilson (CC), Simon Harris (CC), Dougal Stewart (CC), Bruce Jackson (CC), Martin Baird (CC), Lorna Paterson (CC), Jenny Linehan (SBC).

**In Attendance:** Ian Porter (Police Scotland), Allan Dawson (Melrose 7s Committee), Abi Smith (Melrose 7s Committee), Gordon Stewart (NTS), John Hislop (Border Telegraph), Catherine and Mark Bauer (NC Melrose/Treetop Toys), Frank Preston.

**Apologies:** John Paton Day (SBC)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## 2. Police Report

IP had circulated the report prior to the meeting, and welcomed any questions.

- He reported on the continuing problem of youth disturbances, particularly in the Gibson Park and Prior's Walk areas. The police continued to be proactive in meeting this challenge.
- There had been no reported issues over Halloween and Bonfire Night.
- Stewart Fletcher had been appointed Local Area Commander after the departure of Vinnie Fisher to pastures new.
- The road safety drive was building up to the festive period.
- The police were undertaking a proactive drive on organised crime in the area, and a large haul of home-grown cannabis with a value of c£1m had been seized in Galashiels in October.
- Parking on pavements was raised again as a cause for concern. Each local authority was responsible for its own enforcement of legislation, and IP undertook to look into this and revert at the next meeting.

Action: IP

### 3. Melrose 7s Update – Allan Dawson and Abi Smith

AD reported that the plans for 2024 were following largely the same formula as 2023, with a dinner on the Thursday, Friday under-18s matches, and a party on the Saturday night. The footprint of the event, including fencing, marquees, Gibson Park and the Triangle, would be similar to 2023. Following recommendations from the Police (confirmed by IP) and SAG, it was proposed that the High Street should be closed on the Friday as well as the Saturday. This was because of the large numbers of under-18s that would be in the area for the matches, and the increased danger in road crossing etc. MB (CC) raised concerns on behalf of traders, and the major impact this closure would have on businesses. This was echoed by traders from the floor. It would also impact vehicular access for residents, and AD confirmed that residents' passes would be issued. The access issue for St Mary's Road was also raised by BJ (CC), and AD confirmed that letters and information would be sent out to residents. The noise impact of the event was also discussed, although no formal complaints had been received in 2023.

Concerns were raised about the access to schools for disabled pupils.

The 7s committee were considering encouraging small market stalls in the main streets, but traders felt this to be unnecessary – Melrose already had a plethora of good independent shops and eateries.

AS reported that the 7s committee was keen to see the event as a family day out.

The overall feeling from local traders was that they were supportive of the Melrose 7s and its importance to the community, but that there was a lesser reciprocal support towards them from the Rugby Club.

It was concluded that traders were not in favour the road closures on the Friday.

AS and AD took the comments of the meeting on board, and would take them to the next SAG and 7s committee meetings early next year, and revert.

### 4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting, and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

- **Priorwood Gardens:** BJ (CC) confirmed that the application was pending, and nothing had been submitted as yet. GS (NTS) reported that Priorwood had not been successful in its bid to become Centenary Garden, marking the Trust's Centenary in 2023. NTS was considering constructing a café in the gardens, and possibly recreating the glass house, with a view to encouraging coach parties and tourists to the gardens. However, traders were concerned about the impact this would have on local parking and on the existing café owners in Melrose. GS would take the comments back to the NTS and revert at a future date.
- **Harmony Gardens:** The NTS had confirmed by correspondence that it had no intention to sell the Orchard, and the plan was to re-establish the apple trees, and to continue accommodating the Book Fair. Other areas of the Gardens could be for

sale. The NTS would not obstruct a community buyout. It was confirmed that the NTS had put the project forward as a development site, not SBC.

MD (CC) requested that the NTS clarify the situation and revert.

**Action: GS(NTS)**

- The Abbey Street lights were now functioning.
- The Gattonside street lights were still not functioning.

## 5. Tweedbank Roundabout Development Update

DS (CC) had requested an update. DP (SBC) confirmed that Lidl had pulled out, and sold its plot to B&Q – no application for a retail outlet had yet been received. A Costa Coffee would be going in, as would five business units of varying sizes. The proposed hotel would not be going ahead. DP confirmed that a full specification for the area could be found on the Council's website, albeit still including Lidl and the Hotel. It was agreed that the current signage and numerous flags were distracting to road users, and DP confirmed that both were temporary.

## 6. Lowood Estate Status Update

DP (SBC) reported that the first services roads were being constructed for the Care Village due for completion in 2026. Demolition of Lowood House continued to be the favoured option, but the feasibility of utilising the house was still being considered.

## 7. Coordination of Bus & Train Services at Tweedbank

JL (SBC) confirmed that the buses should tie up with the Interchange at Galashiels. The Council was looking at putting more intelligent matrix information boards up at the Tweedbank bus stop.

DS (CC) said that the problems existed for the outlying areas, and that improved coordination of trains and buses was needed at Tweedbank, as the current situation was not working efficiently. It was a particular issue for people arriving at Tweedbank and trying to get a bus for an onward journey to outlying areas. DS had produced a spreadsheet illustrating the times of trains and buses, which he passed to JL and would distribute to Committee members.

The challenge of coordinating the buses and trains was ongoing for the Council.

## 8. Phone Box in Gattonside

The Gattonside community was interested in buying the phone box. MD would proceed with that.

**Action: MD**

## 9. Faulty Street Lights in Monkswood

JB (CC) was concerned at the lack of street lighting in Monkswood. DP (SBC) confirmed that the problem was the road hadn't been adopted, so wasn't 'entitled' to street lighting. This was the responsibility of the builders, and DP undertook to contact them, and revert.

**Action: DP**

## 10. AOCB

- BW (CC) had been asked whether one of the two benches currently at the bottom of the High Street could be relocated to the bus stop opposite the Coop. This was generally agreed to be a good idea, and the Councillors would give it consideration.

## 11. Questions from the Floor

- JB (CC) was concerned at the blocked drain at the top of the Loan in Gattonside. It was agreed that blocked and open drains in Melrose were an issue, and potentially dangerous.
- FP was concerned at the road levels at Lowood Road. DP (SBC) would take this concern to the Council.

**Action: DP**

- DS (CC) asked if there was any record of the number of holiday homes and Airbnbs in the area. DP said that registrations were still being received, and until that was completed there was no definitive answer. The Councillors would revert when the information was available.

**Action: Councillors**

The meeting concluded at 8.45pm.

Date of next meeting: 17 January 2024, Ormiston Rooms, Melrose.