

Heriot Community Council

Minutes of meeting
19:00 10th April 2024

Present: J Williams (Chair), F. Connelly, H. Brinkworth, S. Sharp, G Whittaker, Cllr Mackinnon, Cllr Sinclair. Plus 11 members of the public.

Apologies: E. Jardine

1. **Minutes of previous meeting** were accepted with minor typographical changes

2. **Torfichen Wind Farm**

Joanna McGrath (Chair, Moorfoot CC) was in attendance for this part of the meeting

- An outline of the proposal was provided
- A joint letter of objection with Moorfoot CC had been submitted to ECU
- Midlothian Council had since requested more detailed information on the proposal that would delay the process.
- A Landscape architect, paid for by Raeshaw Estates had submitted a strong objection to the proposal
- An MOD objection in respect of the Eskdalemuir monitoring station was reported
- JM expressed her thanks on behalf of Moorfoot CC to the Chair for assistance in understanding the issues and drafting the joint objection letter.

3. **Police Report**

- The police report almost exclusively covered crimes and antisocial behaviour in Galashiels, with no rural crimes recorded.
- It was noted that the report only covered the period to the end of Feb. so did not include the recent car thefts and potential arson attacks in Stow.

4. **Petition on S36 applications**

- A petition to require elected councillors to consider the opinions of constituents in respect of Section 36 planning applications had been submitted.
- JW had attended the petitions committee meeting that discussed the issue
- The SBC officials argued that their position was that SBCs response to S36 applications should only consider the opinions of officials, but that individuals and community councils were free to submit their own opinions
- A compromise list of agreements was the result:
 - Improving links from the SBC website so that councillors can view submissions from the community.
 - Councillors will be permitted to take constituents opinions into consideration
 - SBC will write to ECU to request that submissions are reported in a timely manner, so that submissions can be seen in good time, and before important planning meetings take place.

5. Fountainhall nursery

Just before Easter, SBC had notified parents that Fountainhall nursery would be suspended for one year due to insufficient numbers of attendees. This approach raised a number of complaints from parents and the wider community:

- Firstly, the precipitous action had been taken without warning and without any consultation with parents.
- Parents had already planned work schedules for the year ahead based on nursery availability
- The SBC alternative of Stow nursery was impractical for many parents, not least because it required a minimum drive time of 80 minutes per day to get from Heriot to Stow for drop-off and pick-up, in the wrong direction for parents who work in Edinburgh.
- Parents representatives had written to SBC to make these points
- Heriot CC and Stow & Fountainhall CC had written a joint letter of objection to SBC's approach.

Natasha King, speaking on behalf of the affected parents spoke on the issue and noted that:

- Parents were not consulted
- Parents were willing to increase the number of days they use the nursery in order to avoid its suspension
- While SBC monitor and suspend or close facilities if they attract 5 children or fewer, SBC was working with incorrect and incomplete information as at least 8 parents were planning to register for the coming year.
- Small ratios, which SBC appear to disfavour, is actually attractive to some parents as their children are happier in these situations.
- The absence of a nursery, even for only a year, removes continuity and threatens Fountainhall PS by removing the nursery that feeds into it.
- Child numbers in rural communities naturally fluctuate and SBC should allow for this.

Cllr Sinclair (SBC Education sub-committee) noted the comments and advised that the official responsible for the decision was currently on holiday, returning Monday 15/4/24. She agreed to review the decision with the official when she returns in the light of the information provided by the parents.

Other comments in the discussion included statements that this approach was simply a repeat of a previous pattern of ill-advised decision-making by SBC education officials, a pattern of poor or non-existent consultation and poor information-gathering methodologies

It was agreed that no actions were required from the CC, pending the discussions with the SBC education officials.

6. Wind Farms updates:

- *Greystone Knowe:*
 - Planning officers had recommended no objection, but...
 - SBC Planning Committee agreed to submit an objection to ECU
 - The Planning Committee Chair noted in particular that the applicant had failed to engage with SBC over its objections
 - There should now be a PLI (Public Local Inquiry) to assess the merits or otherwise of the proposal, at which any person may make representation
 - SBC would probably be represented by an independent planning advisor
 - Corsehope will be severely affected by both overbearing visual intrusion and noise
- *Longcroft*
 - An objection to this had been submitted on the grounds of cumulative impact and visual impact from elevated ground.
- *Wull Muir*
 - Probably being considered at the next planning meeting
- *Leithenwater*
 - Probably going live on the planning portal soon
- *Scawd Law*
 - Probably being submitted in June.

7. Planning Meeting at SBC

- JW had attended. Due to the other attendees requiring remedial education in planning issues, this was reported to be not a particularly useful evening

8. Heating in Homes

- Holyrood is proposing significant and potentially onerous heating standards in new and existing homes.
- Many of the proposals (banning woodburning stoves, requiring specific forms of heating and demanding extremely high insulation standards, for example) were regarded as both impractical, hugely expensive and, in some cases, virtually impossible to implement.
- Insufficient consideration was given to the risks to life from power cuts in rural communities where temperatures can reach -15°C for days at a time
- SS had submitted comments to this effect to the Scottish Government to this effect.

9. Community funds

- First aid course – this had been run successfully and feedback had been very positive
- Defibrillators – due to the difficulty of conveying the information to the community, it was agreed that small notes would be added to the defibrillator cabinets stating that no access code was needed to open the cabinets.
- Noticeboard improvements – FC reported that work on their refurbishment had started and that a new noticeboard at the school was being provided by SBC.

- FC reported that the DLX microgrant fund had been increased to £1750 per annum. In future, small grants of up to £500 may be awarded by the CC, with grants of up to £1000 available for single projects providing they also have DLX Trust approval.

10. AOB

- FC reported that the CC needs to spend more of its capital in order to qualify for SBC funding in future
- All the Community Councillors agreed to abide by the councillors code of conduct.
- SS asked about funding for John Campbell KC, who is available to the CC for legal advice. JW advised that he was working pro bono but, if that changed, the CC would be advised in advance of any costs and would have the opportunity to vote on them.
- GW asked about whether there was interest in running a hedge-laying course, funded by the CC/community funds. This was agreed, along with a request for a drystone walling course.
- Playpark. GW reported that he and FC had pretty much exhausted every avenue with SBC (including playpark and amenity officials, flood prevention officers and maintenance engineers) and had no good way forward. Cllr Mackinnon agreed to look into taking this forward with SBC officials. HB offered to assist.
- Community Action Plan: FC is carrying this forward, and aims to create a panel/committee with volunteers from the community.
- An accident at the telephone exchange (the first in 18 months) involving a lorry that broke through the fence on the east of the bend was reported to have been caused by a tyre unfortunately blowing out, rather than excessive speed or driver carelessness.
- Inconsistent speed signs were reported north of Stow, but may be in the process of being fixed or replaced.

The meeting finished at 21:04.