

## MINUTES OF AGM OF LEITHOLM ECCLES AND BIRGHAM

### COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Birgham Village Hall on Wednesday 24 May 2023

At 7.00pm

#### 1. Attendance and Apologies

Apologies: Gill Murray, Gwenda Fuller, Roger Dodd and Councillor John Greenwell

Attendance: Bob Hope (Chair), Susan Walker (Treasurer), Councillor Donald Moffat, Alan Livingstone, Seonaid Blackie, Gregg Pearson, Julie Jackson and various residents of Birgham, Eccles and Leitholm.

#### 2. Minutes of Meeting held at Eccles Church on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2023

These were summarised by Bob Hope, proposed by Gregg Pearson and seconded by Alan Livingstone.

#### 3. Matters Arising

Banner Board: Julie Jackson reported that Gill Murray is looking into this. Bob Hope suggested that they use the CC logo designed by Julie Jackson. Julie noted wording also needed to be agreed. There is a catch-up at Leitholm scheduled for 14 June and Bob Hope suggested that the decision on the banner board is delegated to that meeting and they circulate the proposed design to the CC for approval.

CC consultation on a Plan for Place: all households in the three villages and surrounding areas should by now have received a questionnaire. Bob Hope reported a return rate for Birgham of around 20%. Bob Hope, Gregg Pearson and Julie Jackson are collating the responses and completing the shared spreadsheet and will update on this at the next meeting.

#### 4. Chair's Report

Bob Hope delivered his update and referred to the Plan for Place booklet that had been circulated.

Work started on a Plan for Place in June 2022 and around 60 people attended consultation meetings across the three villages. Meetings have taken place with the police and representatives of the road safety department of SBC. Questionnaires

have now been issued to residents and responses are being analysed. The Plan for Place will have an impact when funds are available from SBC and elsewhere for community development and improvement. A copy of the Plan for Place has been lodged with James Purves of SBC. Alan Livingstone noted that the proof will be whether SBC actually listen and respond. Bob Hope noted that SBC will continue to be limited in relation to what they can do due to continuing budget constraints.

Bob Hope noted that Leitholm Hall is being well used, which was one of the objectives of the Plan. Both Leitholm and Eccles have their communities coming together to make things happen. In relation to Birgham, the maxim "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" applies and it makes sense to link the Community Council more closely with the Birgham Community Development Trust.

On behalf of the Community Council, he wished to extend heartfelt thanks to Alan Livingstone, Roger Dodd and Helen Renton for their long, loyal and committed service to the Community Council. All three have retired with effect from this AGM. Bob presented Alan with a gift in thanks for his service and arranged for gifts to be given to Roger and Helen.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

The draft accounts have been circulated to the Community Council for inspection.

Susan Walker reported that at the time the accounts were prepared the Community Council has £1334.44 in its bank accounts. This includes a yet to be presented cheque for £50 for Leitholm Hall hire and the £500 Coronation Fund Grant which has yet to be paid to villages. Julie Jackson undertook to follow up on this unrepresented cheque.

As per previous meetings, it was agreed that £50 is an appropriate amount to cover hall hire for CC meetings. SBC reimburses the CC for the cost of renting halls for meetings.

Alan Livingstone has arranged to get the funds in the RBS account transferred to the Bank of Scotland account.

The accounts should now be presented and approved. Julie Jackson proposed the accounts and Gregg Pearson seconded them.

## **6. Election of Office Bearers**

Roger Dodd, Alan Livingstone, Lesley Brown and Helen Renton have resigned as members of the Community Council.

Nominations for Office Bearers and new members of the CC were sought and notifications had been made via previous meetings and on the CC Facebook page.

The following were proposed as Office Bearers:

- Bob Hope: Chair
- Susan Walker: Treasurer

No other proposals for Office Bearers were received. Bob Hope was confirmed as Chair and Susan Walker was confirmed as Treasurer.

Bob Hope is happy for now to continue with secretarial duties and Katie Douglas will continue for now to take minutes at CC meetings.

There are vacancies for CC members in Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham (one position per village).

Diane Dickinson was proposed to join the CC for Leitholm and Anne Walsh to join for Birgham. No proposals were received for a member for Eccles and Gregg Pearson will follow up on this. No other nominations were received. In the absence of any other nominations, Diane Dickinson was appointed for Leitholm and Anne Walsh appointed for Birgham.

## 7. Community Council Code of Conduct

As a Community Council we must all agree to abide by the Code of Conduct once a year at our AGM. This is a funding requirement.

Bob Hope reminded the Community Council that we have a duty to abide by the Scottish Borders Council Code of Conduct for Community Councils. All Community Councillors agreed to abide by the Code.

## 8. Priorities for coming year

**Birgham:** to work more closely with the Trust.

**Footpaths:** extend footpaths from the villages, ideally to inter-connect and link with cycle paths. Gregg Pearson investigating options.

Bob Hope raised the issue of the **battery farm** that is planned to be situated next to the electricity sub-station between Eccles and Coldstream. Bob noted that the planning applications for this appear to have been “drip fed” and are numerous. It was noted that it was not entirely clear the whole area covered by the numerous applications and therefore the total site area proposed.

Gregg Pearson noted that it was a section 76 application which means that SBC is not hugely involved in the planning process as it's dealt with at Scottish Government level as national infrastructure. Gregg volunteered to work through the five separate applications and seek a meeting with the planners and the energy

consultants engaged by SP Energy Networks. Bob and Gregg agreed to meet and try to map out the whole area covered by the various applications.

Seonaid Blackie noted that she has had a letter of concern delivered to her from a local resident who is worried about the implications of the proposed development for local residents.

Following discussion amongst those attending, the following issues were identified:

1. Lack of public consultation about what appears to be a highly significant and large scale development.
2. Safety concerns: it was noted that there is an application for a “blast wall” to be built around the site. What is the need for this?
3. Health concerns: what are the possible implications for health/battery storage/risk of fire and explosion/electro-magnetic fields.
4. Implications for wildlife and the environment.
5. Route for transporting heavy plant and equipment: cellars under Coldstream High Street could collapse.
6. Rachael Hamilton MSP statement that she is unable to interfere in planning process – but feeling that her role is to represent constituents and their concerns.

It was agreed that Gregg and Bob will meet to map out the area covered by the planning applications and report back to the CC and next steps can be decided then.

**Leitholm and Eccles community trusts:** Julie Jackson voiced concern that the process to set up a trust is complicated and could make them less agile as a group as then they would be bound by the constitution. Bob Hope stated that the main thing to focus on is doing the best you can and to keep the objectives set out in the constitution broad and just get on and do it. Alan Livingstone supported that view and stated that the only time the members of the Birgham community trust referred to the constitution was when it was originally being drafted. It's there to enable the trust to access funding and to provide a basis for action. Keep the objectives broad and there should be no need for regular referral to it. Bob stated that he is happy to talk more to those in Leitholm and Eccles who are managing the process to set up trusts .

Julie Jackson noted that having a trust structure allows the Leitholm CC members to open a bank account which helps with transparency around funds, e.g. the amounts raised from coffee mornings and other donations. Bob offered for the funds to be paid into the CC bank account however Julie noted that this may slow things down as would then need to apply for funds back. Julie asking if it was possible to retain a float and it was agreed this was appropriate and Seonaid Blackie offered to keep this in her safe.

Bob and Alan noted that Leitholm and Eccles would not be able to open bank accounts without having a constitution. It was an option to use the CC RBS account

but Bob thought better to continue with setting up trusts and drawing up constitutions. If Leitholm can get six people as trustees, they can then draw up constitution, take it to bank and open account and become a SCIO if that is the preference.

Gregg Pearson noted that Eccles is unlikely to be able to secure 6 trustees and Bob noted that fewer (e.g. 4) could suffice. Another option would be to collaborate with Greening Berwickshire although the village may prefer to keep it within the community.

## 9. AOCB

Concerns were raised about the planning application granted for **Eccles Bankhead Farm** for large-scale housed cattle sheds and slurry storage. It was noted that 1000+ cows are being farmed using industrial housed farming methods which results in a very large quantity of slurry to be disposed of. Concerns had been raised with CC members that the slurry was being spread onto fields in higher than acceptable quantities/concentrations and this was polluting waterways. It was noted that tadpoles were dying within days in local burns and waterways (the Leet Water, the Lambden Burn). Concerns were raised that SEPA were not interested in coming out to test the water.

Bob Hope undertook to draft a letter to SEPA from the CC.

Bob Hope asked if there was any update on the planning application for the **water storage tank next to Oliver's yard**. Gregg Pearson confirmed that he was following up with the SBC planning officer on this. He understood that the application had been re-submitted with the fence height raised to 1.8m but the plan was still for the tank to be above ground. Gregg noted that he has a vested interest as a neighbour of the development site and will make this clear to SBC when liaising with them.

Bob Hope asked if there were any volunteers to work on the **new CC website**. The CC has been offered a free build of a website and a volunteer is needed to provide wording for content, e.g. section for minutes, what's on in the three villages. All volunteers and ideas welcome.

## 10. Proposed dates of next meetings:

Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 7pm	Leitholm
Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2023 at 7pm	Eccles
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2023 at 7pm	Birgham
Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> January 2024 7pm	Leitholm
Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 7pm	Birgham
Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2024 at 7pm	Eccles