

**Minutes of Meeting of  
Leitholm & Eccles & Birgham Community Council**

**Wednesday 23 November 2022 at 7pm**

**Attending:** SBC Councillor Donald Moffat, CC Councillors Bob Hope (Chair), Roger Dodd, Susan Walker (Treasurer), Alan Livingstone, Gill Murray, Julie Jackson, Seonaid Blackie

**Apologies:** Helen Renton, Lesley Brown, Gwenda Fuller, Gregg Pearson

**Also attending:** Katie Douglas as minute taker, Fay Renton, Bill Burgess (Chair of the Birgham Community Development Trust) and other residents of Birgham

**Location:** Birgham Village Hall

The meeting opened at 7.05pm and was chaired by Bob Hope. Following online consultation with Community Council members, Katie Douglas has been appointed as minute taker. Bob introduced Katie and welcomed her to our meeting.

**Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes**

Minutes of CC meeting held at Eccles Church on 21 September 2022: these were read by Bob Hope, proposed by the Treasurer and seconded by Gill Murray.

**Matters Arising**

**Constitution**

Roger Dodd has confirmed that any changes to the CC Constitution must be pre-approved by SBC. Bob Hope recommended that the CC run its business in line with the guidance given in the Berwickshire Community Council's Forum booklet.

**Additional Members at Leitholm**

At Leitholm the quota of Community Councillors is four, with recent volunteers the current number is five. We need to address this at our January meeting while noting that all five ladies work hard in the interest of the village and Community Council

**Data Protection – identification of speakers in minutes**

We have had a directive from Scottish Borders Council that care needs to be taken when recording people's names in minutes. Concerns were raised about the possibility of

repercussions for individuals who are named in minutes as making points, when for example, the point was raised by a group and not just the individual. Examples were given, including where extracts of unapproved minutes had been published in the Berwickshire Advertiser and taken out of context.

Bob Hope noted that the CC minutes should never be published before approval. Further, those attending can ask that their names are not recorded and that can be considered. This can be discussed further at meeting in January 2023.

### **Scottish Water Planning Proposal at Oliver's Yard: sewage tank**

Roger Dodd reported that around 6 weeks ago he had seen the plans which reduce the height of the tank and screen it, using fencing and planting. He understands that these amended plans have not yet been submitted to SBC. The only submission currently with SBC is that lodged in March 2022. Kenny Oliver asked Roger Dodd if he was able to improve on the proposal. Roger Dodd confirmed that the new proposal will invalidate previous submissions. Bob Hope confirmed he had spoken with the SBC Planning Officer who was minded to reject the proposal and put it back for redesign. Bob has heard nothing further and no response to his email.

### **Eccles School**

The general understanding is that SBC has decided to clear the school and put it on the market. There was discussion as to whether there is any play equipment or outside seating that may be able to be used elsewhere and Bill Burgess undertook to ascertain this.

### **Treasurer's Report: Susan Walker**

£967.14 in the CC bank account. Susan Walker has paid Birgham and Leitholm Halls for hosting CC meetings.

There was general discussion around increasing the Hall hire rates for hosting CC meetings, to cover rising costs, particularly those of utilities. Birgham Hall is on a fixed utility tariff expiring in March 2023, Leitholm in April 2023. The general view was that the Hall hire rates are too low and this should be reviewed in 2023 and appropriate increases made to reflect increased utility tariffs. A sum of £40 or £50 for hosting a CC meeting was suggested.

Donald Moffat suggested finding out what other halls are charging to host CC meetings. Bob Hope noted that part of the purpose of the SBC grant to the CC is to promote the work of the CC, which includes supporting the village halls within the CC area.

It was confirmed that the CC balance is allowed to go to double the SBC grant of £620.

### **Chair's Report**

The main role of our Community Council is to represent our local area, to consult with local residents and pass their views on to public sector organisations such as Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders.

The “Planning for Place” agenda of the Scottish Government and Scottish Borders Council has provided a framework for us to deliver on this role. In simple terms, “Planning for Place” is the method being used to generate community led planning for public services. Our intention is to develop a plan for each of our three villages in partnership with residents, local businesses and other interested parties which will then be lodged with the council, our local councillors and other public services to provide a focus going forward. Having attended a training meeting at Duns on the subject of “Planning for Place” some of the pointers I would bring to the attention of our Community Councillors are:

- a) In looking at our plan, we need to consult as widely as possible: young people, working people, older people, local businesses and service providers.
- b) Once our plan is established it needs to be seen as a work in progress which can be amended and updated as our needs/aspirations change.
- c) While finance is tight, there are funds available for projects and services at Council, Scottish Government and UK Government levels. An example of such a fund is the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (which has taken over from European development funding).
- d) While our small plan encompassing our three villages may in itself appear insignificant, taken alongside other Community Council plans it is likely that there will be a number of shared priorities which collectively cannot be ignored. These priorities are likely to include: road safety, care provision, village/town maintenance, delivery of core council services, policing, GP services to name a few.

We made a good start to our consultation process at Eccles which was well attended. Priorities there included finding a place to meet and to build the community and the provision of a playpark. This meeting was followed four weeks later when we had a good turnout at Leitholm. Priorities there were slightly different and included: revitalising the use of the village hall post covid, road safety, and enhancing the village through planting (perhaps starting a garden club). Not all priorities will require funding, some may simply involve empowering communities to do things for themselves. In Eccles, Gregg Pearson has pulled together a small committee to take the work forward. Our community councillors in Leitholm have the lead. In Birgham, we are looking to work closely with the Birgham Community Development Trust who have successfully delivered for the community for a number of years.

Our role going forward is to support these communities in their aspirations and pull a cohesive plan together. From then on, our role is to promote the plan with the Council and other public service bodies.

Tonight’s meeting will complete our first round of consultations. Our January meeting will be used to catch up with routine Community Council business and decide our next steps.

There was discussion around how best to consult with the people of Birgham about their aims and priorities. Bob had arranged for leaflets to be printed and delivered around Eccles and Leitholm, which resulted in good attendances at the Planning for Place consultation meetings.

### **Grass Cutting in the Three Villages**

The current annual budget is £450 for the three villages. It was agreed to apply to SBC to increase this amount from the Path Maintenance Budget. Julie Jackson (Community Councillor for Leitholm) will pursue this.

### **Any Other Competent Business.**

A question was asked about whether SBC would require street lighting to be installed at Orange Lane given the pending development of the steading to create three dwellings.

Donald Moffat was actioned to establish how many houses must be present before SBC will require street lighting.

A question was asked about start-up funding and how Birgham got their Community Development Trust off the ground. Alan Livingstone confirmed that the village operated and continues to operate a monthly lottery, with 50% of the income going to village projects and 50% for prizes. This nets approx. £2-3k per annum for village projects. Bill Burgess confirmed that the pub also holds regular raffles to contribute to the Birgham village fund.

Bob Hope suggested that Leitholm and Eccles could assess which local businesses are associated with their villages and ask them about sponsorship for particular village projects. There is also the Small Lottery Fund, which awards grants of up to £10,000. If you are applying for a grant of around £3-5k there is a decent chance it will be awarded, particularly if you haven't applied before. There are also trust funds which give out small grants. In order to be eligible, the organisation must have a constitution in place plus bank account and signatories.

There was discussion around whether the Community Council and organisations like BAVS could act as guarantor and hold funds on behalf of village organisations. Donald Moffat confirmed that some Community Councils hold separate bank accounts to allow small village organisations to do this. Bob Hope confirmed that the CC is happy to help in this regard. In order to get funding, you must have a basic plan in place with aims and priorities and actions. The CC can assist with this and is supportive of villages using a sub-committee of the CC to achieve this. The CC could hold grant funds for a village provided it was "small beer". If there was a larger award of grant, the village committee would need to set up its own bank account.

Bob Hope also suggested it might be an option to speak to Scottish Power about a community grant given its current works to expand the electricity sub-station.

Roger Dodd asked if the Community Council has a rep who attends BAVS meetings and suggested, if not, this would be a good idea as BAVS is a very useful organisation which is a great help with e.g. grant funding and support for village halls and community projects.

Donald Moffat provided the name and email address of Gillian Jardine at SBC who provides local communities with assistance around obtaining grant funding.

Bob Hope extended the CC's congratulations to Birgham for winning the Wee Village category in the Greener Gateway awards. There was general discussion around how difficult it now is to enter this competition and the lack of a judging day acting as a disincentive. Donald Moffat was actioned to raise this with SBC.

### **Next meeting**

7pm on 18 January 2023 at Leitholm Village Hall.

### **Planning for Place: Birgham**

Bob Hope opened the discussion by posing similar questions to those posed at the consultation meetings in Eccles and Leitholm:

*If you were marketing Birgham to sell, how would you describe it? What are the demographics of the village? How much does the village engage with the surrounding rural area? What does Birgham do well? What could it do better or differently? If budget wasn't an issue, what would be your aspirations for Birgham?*

There was general consensus that Birgham is a vibrant, friendly and welcoming village hosting a healthy range of events throughout the year, which are well attended. The feeling was that the same group of volunteers tend to do all the work for the events and that 50-80 people out of a village of 200 attend those events. Some concerns were raised that the village had inadvertently become a retirement village and an aspiration would be to increase the number of younger people and young families living in the village. More could be done to communicate and share events and resources with Eccles and Leitholm and encourage more attendance at each other's events across the three villages.

More detailed notes were taken and will be used at the next Birgham consultation meeting on Planning for Place.

Bob Hope concluded the meeting and it was agreed to try again to get more residents of Birgham to attend a consultation meeting for Planning for Place.