

Meeting of Tweedsmuir Community Council, at the Village Hall, Tweedsmuir, on Thursday, January 29.

Present: Community councillors Gavin Parker, Sarah Northcott, Brian Bushell, Kaitlyn Roper, Lesley Mason and Paul Greaves, and 15 members of the public.

Apologies: Kathleen Mason, of Scottish Borders Council, and SBC councillors Catriona Bhatia, Keith Cockburn and Willie Archibald.

Item 1:

Mr. Rod Sibbald (standing in for Ms. Kathleen Mason of the SBC who was unable to attend due to adverse weather conditions) opened the meeting and welcomed all. He explained the reason for a local person representing the SBC and declared that he would act as chairman and oversee the appointment of a chairperson from the six elected councillors of Tweedsmuir Community Council. Then he would step down and let the newly appointed chairperson conduct the meeting and appoint the other office-bearers.

Item 2:

As all members of the local council were present, this was recorded.

Item 3:

The chairman explained the process of electing the chairman to all assembled. This would involve a person nominating themselves and being proposed and seconded. If there were more than one nomination and attendant proposer and seconder, then it would proceed to secret ballot. If there was no overall majority, it would be decided by the nominees drawing from a pack of cards!

Item 4:

In accordance with the rules, the chairman requested the six councillors declare any interests they might have which would have compromised their position on the community council. None were declared. This was noted.

Item 5:

The chairman asked each of the six community councillors to introduce themselves; which they duly did in turn.

Item 6:

Nominations were invited for the post of chairperson. Mr. Gavin Parker nominated himself and was proposed by Mr. Paul Greaves and seconded by Mrs. Lesley Mason. Mr. Brian Bushell also declared his interest and willingness but withdrew as he realised that ., this would make life awkward for the remaining four Councillors as there could be a perceived issue of divided loyalty. Mr. Gavin Parker was duly declared as chairman. Following this Mr. Rod Sibbald stood down. Mr. Gavin Parker then expressed his own thanks and was joined by the other councillors who thanked Mr. Sibbald for his willingness and assistance to facilitate the opening of the inaugural meeting of the Tweedsmuir Community Council.

Item 7:

The chairman then sought nominations for vice-chairperson. Mr. Brian Bushell nominated himself and was proposed by Mr. Paul Greaves and seconded by Ms. Sarah Northcott. There were no other nominations. Mr. Brian Bushell was declared as vice-chairman.

Item 8:

The chairman then sought nominations for secretary. Mr Paul Greaves nominated himself and was proposed by Mr. Brian Bushell and seconded by Mr. Gavin Parker. There were no other nominations. Mr. Paul Greaves was declared as secretary.

Item 9:

The chairman then sought nominations for treasurer. As there were no nominations, Mr. Paul Greaves and Mr. Gavin Parker suggested that Mr. Brian Bushell be appointed (given his experience). Mr. Brian Bushell agreed and was proposed by Mr. Paul Greaves and seconded by Mr. Gavin Parker.

A number of items were then discussed by the meeting:

WHITEHILL BRAE WINDFARM

The chairman said that an application for Whitehill Brae windfarm had now been lodged with the Scottish Government, and that the community council had until February 13 to send its response to Holyrood. He also brought the meeting's attention to an exhibition by 20 20, the company spearheading the windfarm development, at the village hall, on Monday, February 2. The chairman then asked for comment from the meeting.

Ms Kirsty Stevens, whose home is just 1300m from the proposed site, issued photo montages of how the turbines would affect the local landscape, and pointed out that from the head of Fruid reservoir all of the proposed 14 turbines would be visible.

She urged people to object by writing to the government individually, but pointed out that there were specific grounds on which you could object. She offered to email these to anyone who wanted them.

Ms Stevens also pointed out that BBC Ceefax and the Peebleshire News had reported that the application included a new crossing at Carlowse. She said this was incorrect, and that a new bridge was due to be constructed further south of the village. This would mean there would be no windfarm traffic through the centre of Tweedsmuir itself.

Following further discussion, in which it was pointed out that the windfarm was in a special landscape area and that there were ospreys on the site, a straw poll was taken of those present. 14 members of the public voted against the application, with one abstention. All councillors voted to oppose the application.

The chairman said that the council would mirror the meeting's reaction and strongly object to the windfarm proposal.

SBC WEBSITE

A Tweedsmuir resident brought the meeting's attention to an item on the council's website, detailing changes to land use in Tweedsmuir. She urged the council to look into this as some of the changes were significant.

BOUNDARIES

Councillors approved the boundaries to the Tweedsmuir CC area, and circulated maps showing the geographical area of the new council to members of the public present.

COMMUNICATION

The vice chairman proposed that a letter be sent to all Tweedsmuir residents to include contact details of all the councillors. The letter would also ask each resident how they would like to be informed of council business. Councillor Sarah Northcott said she was keen to set up a website for the council, on the lines of Moffat Online, but said she understood not everyone had access to the internet. The vice chairman said it was vital that people without internet access were not forgotten, and that the council offered to supply information through the post. The meeting agreed that the vice chairman should compile the proposed letter, which will also include details of future CC meetings. The vice chairman said he would endeavour to send the letter to residents in the next fortnight.

MEETING FREQUENCY AND NAME

It was agreed that council meetings should be held monthly, but the chairman said it was key to ask SBC councillors what days suited them before settling on any specific dates. The secretary agreed to contact the three councillors in question. Councillor Sarah Northcott said the initials of the Tweedsmuir Community Council were the same as another organisation in the village, Tweedsmuir Community Company, and that this could lead to confusion. She suggested that it might be an idea to change the name of the community council, but the meeting failed to come up with any viable alternatives. The chairman said, for the time being, Tweedsmuir Community Council would have to stay as the organisation's name until a better alternative could be found.

GRITTING

The meeting was told that snow ploughs were not clearing or gritting the road from the village crossroads down to the church. It was pointed out that rubbish lorries would not come down the road during snowy periods which meant no rubbish collection for residents. The council agreed to write to SBC, urging them to look at this matter.

POTHOLE ON THE A701

The vice-chairman said there was a large pothole near the Tweedsmuir turn-off on the A701 which needed urgent attention from the SBC. The council agreed to contact the roads department about the matter.

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

The chairman said he was keen that Tweedsmuir join the SBC initiative, Resilient Communities, which, among many other things, helps communities prepare for emergencies, including bad weather. He said he would look into this possibility and report back to the community council.

BORDERS FORESTRY TRUST/TOUR OF THE BORDERS CYCLE RACE

The chairman also reported that Borders Forestry Trust, which plans to plant forestry at Talla reservoir, had contacted the Tweedsmuir Community Company, offering to give a presentation of its plans. This had been passed on to the community council by TCC chairman Duncan Davidson, who felt the CC would be a more appropriate forum for the presentation. The Tweedsmuir Community Company has also received correspondence from the Tour of the Borders cycle race, due in August. The Tour has also offered to make a presentation to villagers, and Mr Davidson had forwarded on the offer to the CC. In both instances, the secretary agreed to contact the organisations concerned to set up times and dates for the presentations.

HOSPITAL CAR PARKING

A Tweedsmuir resident said she had been fined £140 while parking at Borders General Hospital in Galashiels. She said she had gone to the hospital for a scan, but could find nowhere to park. She faced the dilemma of either missing her appointment, or parking the car in an unauthorised spot. She chose the latter, but felt really strongly that she had no choice. The council said they would forward to the resident contact details of the SBC councillors for the area, and also suggested the matter be raised at the next Tweed Forum meeting.

TALLA LINNS

Following a recent incident when two cars became stuck while attempting to navigate Talla Linns during a period of heavy snow, a Tweedsmuir resident at the meeting urged the SBC to put up signs advising drivers that the Linns were closed. The chairman pointed out that the SBC would probably require a local resident to put up and take down the sign. The resident who raised the matter agreed to carry out this duty, if required. The council agreed to bring this matter to the attention of the SBC.

The chairman then brought the meeting to a close by thanking everyone for attending on such a wintry evening.

