

Gorebridge Community Council

Minutes of Meeting

Tuesday 18 February 2020, 7pm, at Birkenside Pavillion

Present

- Cath McGill (CM) – *Chair*
- Neil Whyte (NW) – *Minutes*
- Seonaid Barker (SB)
- Trevor Taylor (TT)
- Brian Paterson (BP)
- Janice Brown (JB)
- Mary Davidson (MD)
- Cllr Jim Muirhead (JM)
- Cllr Catherine Johnson (CJ)

Apologies:

- Faye Skelton (FS)
- Mary Webb (MW)
- Jason Rutter (JR)
- William Duncan (WD)
- Heather Webb-Nelson (HWN)
- Willie Law (WL)
- PC Pendreich
- PC McGuff

No	Item	Minutes
1.	Chairman's Welcome & Apologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CM welcomed residents from Melville Park Residents Association to the meeting• Apologies as noted above
2.	Actions & Matters arising from previous meeting and Adoption of Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No minutes yet circulated from November meeting<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Action: CM to chase up (carried over)• Remembrance parade, responsibilities still to be outlined<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Action: CM to outline responsibilities so someone else can pick this up (carried over)• Miner's plaque. No volunteer found. Suggestions that Mining Museum or even contacts in Dean Tavern might be able to help.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Action: Volunteer needed for this research work. Guidance available. (carried over)• Surgery group – MW not present, actioned carried over.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Action: MW volunteered to get update from 50+ group (carried over)• January minutes proposed by JB, seconded by MD
3.	Newbattle Abbey College	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Donna Mackie was due to speak, but unfortunately must reschedule due to illness.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Action: NW to add to future agenda, probably March subject to availability

4.	Issues Raised by Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning application 17/00435/DPP (117 houses at Newbyres Site B River Gore Road Gorebridge) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This planning application has been presented in various guises since 2007 ○ Initially 76 houses, now 117 ○ Combination of objections to the development now from residents, including environmental aspects, the area floods already (which may get worse) as well as infrastructure – schools, dentists, nursery places etc. Access to the development (which would be through two existing developments) not suitable for heavy construction traffic. ○ Letter of objection sent on behalf of Melville Park Residents Association to the planning department highlighting these concerns. ○ Cllrs at CC meeting are restricted in what they can discuss as they are part of the planning process. However, both Cllrs JM and CJ advised that concerns are sent to them directly (email) as well as through the official planning channels. Contact details available here: https://midlothian.cmis.uk.com/live/Councillors.aspx ○ Cllr JM gave some background on the original plan for a secondary access road, which has since been dropped after Phase 1 and 2 of development in that area around the Nancy Teuch path. The football club received the land (now an unused portion of the Arniston Rangers car park). It was then acquired by the Co-Op, but never used. A new plan for 12 houses on that spot is also in progress. ○ Cllrs also noted that the Doctor surgery concerns were valid, but that the planned extension to the surgery should resolve that (assuming doctors can be found to staff it, which is not guaranteed). Cllr CJ noted that infrastructure often lags population. ○ The Community Council again expressed concern at the lack of holistic planning – everything just seems to be houses, houses, houses without thought or concern to the other services that are required to support increased population. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Action: Residents of Melville Park (and adjacent development) are encouraged to send concerns directly to Councillors. ▪ Action: NW to write on behalf of Community Council to also express similar concerns • Welcome Signs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cllr JM reported that at the time Gorebridge was considered for Welcome Signs originally was badly timed with the sudden reduction in budgets. However, there is a pot of Developer Contributions originally intended for the Station (some £150k) which, since Gorebridge Community Development Trust (GCDT) pulled out from, is going 'spare'. Cllrs JM, CJ and KM are all lobbying to have some of that money put towards signs. Costings are in progress.
5.	Update on Gillian Cousin and Council Officer Attendance and Community Council Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CM reported that budget cuts at the Council mean Council Officers are no longer able to attend Community Council meetings as a matter of course. • This is disappointing, as Gillian has been able to help us navigate the many pitfalls in interacting with the Council, how to follow procedure, escalation etc • However, Gillian is still available for consultations and Council Officer's attendance as CC meetings are not a historic norm. We can invite her to attend specific meetings (suggested example is for Gorebridge Futures and the High School).
6.	Police Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written report was provided, through unfortunately no officers able to attend this month to discuss. • Report available on the GDCC website: https://communitycouncilgorebridge.weebly.com/minutes.html

7.	Community Council Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair: Nothing to report. • Secretary: Other than getting feet under the desk, main work has been on a report for Welcome Signs and responding to proposed Midlothian Traffic Order R5.3.30 : One-Way Roads, ensuring the road up past the Beacon into the Leisure Centre car park is included (it will be now!). • Treasurer: figures provided in a written report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ £1859.07 in the General Fund (for calendar, lights etc) ○ £1750.83 in the Miner Memorial Fund ○ £253 in the War Memorial Refurbishment Fund ○ £752.67 in the Awards Fund ○ Overall balance is £4633.04 • As an aside on Miner Fund, it was agreed that the presentation materials assembled as part of the mining memorial work could be provided to local schools to support presentation topics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Action: SB to speak to Gorebridge PS to see if there's a suitable time these could be provided • Federation: CM floated the idea that meetings could be attended by a different member each month. To be considered. This month, CM and TT expressed their intent to attend.
8.	Project Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No representatives of GADEG, GCC, GCDT present to update. • SB suggested we reward the core members of GADEG for the work they do in the community. This was agreed, to be paid for out of Award fund. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SB to arrange a thank-you • Station building: Scotrail have mentioned there is some interest from groups looking to take this on, though nothing further to say at this time. • War memorial would benefit from cleaning, to use up the remaining fund (which is what it is intended for). Any required top-up would come from general fund. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CM to ask for quote from Davy Walker
	Councillor Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr CJ provided a verbal report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attended and was moved by a recent Poverty Awareness course – eye-opening to see the extent of this. ○ Traffic wardens: Midlothian now has 3, concentrating on targeted areas mainly. Some discussion around requiring Residents Parking Permits for particularly busy areas ○ Full council meeting held recently, council tax increase by maximum to 4.84% expected to raise additional £1m, enough to avoid most cuts. Some discussion on effectiveness of Mortgage to Rent scheme (where council buys your house and rents it back to you, instead of defaulting on your mortgage and becoming homeless) – the scheme is not well-used, and perhaps the funds could be re-assigned for something more useful? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A question was asked on whether council houses all have pre-pay energy meters, given it's the most expensive way of buying energy possible. Cllr CJ responded that is not the default, however there may be examples where a previous tenant has had debt issues and one has been installed. In this case, usually the energy company will swap it back out for a regular one on request. ○ Health is also getting a focus – with a Gorebridge man likely to live 10 years less than a man from Eskbank. Picking up from January report, latest figures suggest frail individuals (2% of Midlothian residents) account for 30% of A&E time – this is a much bigger proportion than in both Edinburgh and East Lothian. ○ Both Cllrs CJ and JM have a 30-minute meeting organised with practice manager at Newbattle to discuss their new 'e-consult' system. A total of 110 questions have been prepared! A resident gave a real-life example of where this system is failing: their husband felt ill overnight, filled in e-consult form at 6am, the surgery eventually phoned at 11am, then arranged a phone consult with doctor, then another doctor – eventually ended up in hospital at 7.30pm that night and was then kept in for 16 nights. While the system may work for most 'routine' calls, it doesn't seem to be capable of dealing with exceptions. • JM provided a verbal report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Also noted benefit in attending the poverty seminar. ○ Praised great cross-party cooperation in agreeing the budget for the year ahead. Settlement (from Scottish Government) ended up a 1% cut on revenue (expected 2%) but a 17% cut in capital (school building etc) - £1.7m in cash terms. As a result, capital investment projects will likely be restricted to essential only. This will not affect High School plans - £33m already ring-fenced from Developer contributions. ○ Council trying to plan a 3-yr budget, but gap is widening. Council tax increases intended to avoid a larger shock later. It was noted that the Scottish Government projections all assumed councils would rise tax by maximum allowed of 4.84%.

9.	Any Other Business	• None
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Meeting closed by CM at 9pm.