**Newcastleton & District Community Council**

**Minutes of ORDINARY CLOSED MEETING**

**13TH October 2020 @ 7:00 pm VIA ZOOM**

**Present:** Greg Cuthbert (Vice chair), Barbara Elborn (sec), Rob Irwin (part), Scott Wilson, Marcus Day, Keith Brough, Lyndsay Patterson, Ashley Thomson, Ian Nicol (part), Margaret Elliot, Cllr Watson McAteer, Cllr George Turnbull.

**Minutes** from Jan approved; proposed by GC, seconded by SW, and signed for the record.

**Matters arising** – there were no matters arising not on the agenda:

1. **CC membership:**  formal welcome to Marcus Day and Keith Brough who confirmed that had read the constitution and agree to abide by the code of conduct which was provided. Vice Chair thanked Joan for her sterling contribution to the CC and her continued support as a co-opted member. Her contribution over 35 years has been immense and community recognition recognising this will be given in due course.
2. **Bus Cuts:** No change in short term to Hawick routes, 12month reprieve. Community reminded that all need to use the current service provision, or it will become increasingly hard to protect it next year. SBC had requested feedback on proposed Saturday changes. Outline details provided proved to be confusing, further clarification will be sought and circulated to seek community feedback.
3. **Planning application:** 20/00211/FUL Derelict Building North West of the Sawmill, The Greens. Re-instatement, alterations & extension of former dwelling house. Detached garage. No objections
4. **Flooding** Current status on issues and actions required, flood diary feedback & photographs: Many diaries had been returned and would be passed to SBC. Using these, feedback from volunteers the resilience team and local fire service a flood diary had been compiled of events as they unfolded for Saturday Feb 15th.

**Summary:**

* Help was sought by Resilience Team at 15:30, a call was made to the bunker for sandbags.
* Approximately 1 hour later the road from Hawick was impassable and houses in Holmfoot (the southern end of the village) started to see water. SEPA issued their first serious flood warning at 16:25. Coinciding with this the bunker was updated with a further request for help from the Fire service. The team were advised as it wasn’t a threat to life it wouldn’t be despatched. (if the B6399 was closed then how long would the B6357 remain open?) No one came to help us. No police, no fire brigade.
* Our volunteers started doing what they could to move folk in peril. The resilience team, Carers and Doctors opened the health centre to cope with residents in need.
* Around 18:30 the Dumfries and Langholm Fire service arrived but shortly afterwards were sent to Kershopfoot along with our volunteer crew to rescue a family trapped in a car. The village was left to cope on its own until they returned.
* SEPA issued a severe flood warning at 19:00 – many homes in the south did not get this as the comms had gone out (and continue to be out as we write) by which time some of the village was waist deep in water and residents were stranded in their properties. Flood waters were extremely dangerous moving at extreme speeds lifting pavements, roads and manholes, along with palettes and many loose items. Volunteers attempted to reach areas, but water levels made efforts impossible.
* Many residents in the south of the village were cut off from communication with the rest of us at this time and had no idea who was coming, or when they were coming. At approx 21:00 two ambulances arrived in response to callouts, if they got through via the B6357 then why didn’t police and more fire crews? Shortly after this water started to retreat.
* It is clear to the community that the drains played a significant part in the flooding, waters were just unable to escape quickly enough with water exploding through manholes to get out. As a result, it surged into unexpected places and entered many homes from the rear; residents had prepared defences at the front of their properties thus much more damaged was caused as a result. Drains were full on the southern frontage of the riverside before the weekend, and not operating. Why were they not dealt with prior to the weekend?
* A full report with the timeline had been sent to SBC. The CC along with the Resilient Team were expecting to attend the review meeting about protocols. An apology would be sought to rewrite the published account of how they responded to village needs as published in the minutes of the Feb Area Partnership meeting which was grossly incorrect.
* The CC and resilience team had prepared a list of needs to ensure that should this happen again, and no help was forth coming then we would be better equipped and trained to be able to cope ourselves.
* The CC thanked those who risked their lives to help and save others in extreme circumstances and reminded all volunteers that they must register with the Resilience Team locally to be insured. If volunteers take their own actions, then they are NOT insured in the event of injury or death. SBC has a blanket policy to cover all registered volunteers in the event of crisis situations arising. MoP also asked the CC to record grateful thanks from them to the many volunteers and service personnel who helped with clean-up, rehoming and clearances. The community could not have done this without their support.
* **Road works update/signage placement** this continues to be an issue with poor signage placement meaning that users are not immediately aware the road is closed until they are upon it. Whilst this is standard practise it isn’t helpful given distances involved and consideration needs to be given with SBC to change the policy, so it more accurately provides information at point of departure.
* **Communications: EE mast, 101 response times** – serious concerns exist about the time it is taking to restore the village communications. Recent incidents necessitated calls to 101 which were unanswered, callers advised that calls to 999 were unacceptable – advising that the incident wasn’t an emergency. What will happen if Corvid-19 becomes prevalent and access to comms is not restored? Cllrs were urged to continue to push for the comms situation to be concluded so all homes had access to telephone, mobile and broadband. This became a serious issue during flooding, and it continues to remain one for many homes.
* **Next steps and learnings** – Resilient group already developing bespoke plan for village, our teams aware. We all need to be briefed on this and preparatory steps made to ensure we have the kit, the resources and the volunteers all briefed and trained. Review meeting with SBC expect next week subject to development of Corvid-19 and relevant demands
* **Teviot & Liddesdale CC’s flood working group** – Southdean CC proposed working collaboratively to overcome local flood issues; water catchments, run off, general land mgt issues as well as SEPA challenges. NDCC see great benefit working collaboratively as we have done in the past, we always achieve more working together; however, we have reservations about the effectiveness of working as a group within the format of the Area Partnership – water has no boundary, the group needs representation from all impacted or potentially impacted communities.   The group proposed the planned John Lamont meeting would be a good platform for getting this underway – NDCC acknowledges that whilst he has some influence, his role is significantly lessened accessing Ministers etc that need to hear our views in Scotland.  Land Management must cross portfolios; flooding, forestry, roads/infrastructure and connectivity, they all played their part in either the event or the devastation we are still suffering from.  Newcastleton already has direct access to some key people as a result of what happened, and we will continue to have dialogue at that level but see no reason not to participate in wider community dialogue. Massive capital investment must be made available via the Bellwin fund, or some other method, to kick start flood prevention assessments across the wider catchment.

1. **Public Forum/Community Issues**
	1. **Snow plough timings** – requested but nothing received from Cllrs, this will be progressed; contractors seem to be doing some of the work when the community was advised that the old routine would return as the threat of strike action had been averted in Dec.
	2. **Pathways Oliver Place** - requested but nothing back from Cllrs. This concern was now extended to many footpaths that had lifted as a result of the flooding.
	3. **Empty commercial unit Moss Yard** –the CC had requested this as community space if it was not going to be let; emergency store etc for future extreme weather events
	4. **Eildon meeting** – letter circulated, follow up planed late April/Early May
	5. **CCTV update** – Cllrs asked push for the balance of the community funds to be allocated to CCTV from the 2019-20 fund and to seek urgent clarity on the outcomes of SBC policy in respect of community CCTV.
	6. **Bottle bank** – had been emptied and broken tank finally replaced. ‘Go the long way round’ mantra from SBC was being enforced on contractors so the community did not suffer unduly in it service provision due to road closures.
	7. **Grit bins** – these need to topped up again following flooding
	8. **Libby Clegg bike rack** had been moved to grassland in Douglas Square, but this requires to be bolted to paving so it didn’t sink. Cllrs suggest small schemes grant and would progress this,
2. **Open questions from the community**
* NDCT **–** newsletter, jobs now being advertised
* Buccleuch House – core funding confirmed, awaiting contracts to be signed to commence tender process to start the works. Expect this to be in stages. Concerns raised about impact on business from the bunkhouse; additional footfall was designed to support local business not penalise it.
* Drainage in Douglas Square – raised again, complaints about lack of run-off and promises of remedial works not being kept.
* Walking signage appeared at Mangerton – was the path fit for access?
* B6357 – obstacles to slow traffic were not secure enough and kept being knocked over or blown over in winds.
1. **Correspondence**
	1. Traffic regulation order disabled bays – south Hermitage Street
	2. Community Council Scheme Review WG - next meeting 25 March
	3. Public consultation till May 15th: supplementary planning guidance on Tweedbank – vision for growth and sustainability, a community for the future [www.scotborders.gov.uk/TweedbankdraftSPG](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/TweedbankdraftSPG)
2. **Date of next meetings** April 14th – TBC once we know outcome of flood review. Flood meeting likely required to review everything with the community given proper time to discuss issues with respective officers.