

Howgate Community Council. Minutes of 27 February 2019 Meeting

Present:

Bruce Hobbs (chair), Graham Young (treasurer), Ian Quigley (secretary),Jenny Westwood

In attendance

Councillor Debbie McCall, Sgt Michelle Lindsay, James Garry, Stephen Beaumont, Tom Schofield, Colin Roriston, Susan Robson, Irene MacDonald Smith, Mark Snodgrass and Sara Snodgrass.

1. Apologies

Colin Bennett, Ian King, David Wilson, Tommy Goldie.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 23 January 2019.

Approved. Proposed by Bruce Hobbs and seconded by Graham Young.

3. Community Policing Report.

Sgt Michelle Lindsay pointed out certain aspects of the police report for the Penicuik area which had already been circulated.

There have been no recent speed checks in Howgate but members of Roads Policing have been operating in the Howgate area.

Michelle reported on incidents of vandalism in the area of the Tesco supermarket, and on an individual behaving suspiciously in the grounds of Penicuik House trying to lure dogs into a van.

Debbie McCall proposed that we record our thanks to Chief Inspector Kenny Simpson who had recently demitted office as local area commander, and this was approved.

The new local area commander is Arron Clinkscales.

ACTION: BH

4 Consequences of Closure of Howgate Church. Report on results of questionnaire.

Ian Quigley presented a summary of the responses and a note on possible next steps. The report by Ian is attached to these minutes.

It was agreed that the responses from the inhabitants of Howgate Village showed enough interest and enthusiasm to take matters forward.

There were twelve people who have said that they were prepared to become involved in a working group to take matters forward to discuss the formation of a Howgate Village Development Trust. In this context the community would be Howgate Village, including its immediate environs, but did not need to encompass the whole area covered by HCC.

Ian agreed to circulate those 12 to suggest that they meet for preliminary discussions.

Ian emphasised the importance in his view of the new body being very clear at the outset as to its main objective.

ACTION: IQ

5. Report by TommyGoldie, Community Liaison Officer.

There was again no report. Debbie reported that Tommy appeared still to be ill. Good wishes were expressed for his recovery.

6. Roads and Traffic.

Jenny emphasised the dangers of drivers trying to overtake at blind summits and suggested the installation of warning notices. She also reported that the speed sign at Loanstone was not operating properly.

It was mentioned that the signs in Howgate and the rumble strips did not seem to be very effective.

ACTION: DM

7. Any other matters arising.

None were raised.

8. Federation meeting report.

This was carried forward in the absence of David Wilson.

9. Core Path Plan Review.

Bruce reminded the meeting that comments were sought by Midlothian Council.

10. Midlothian Budget.

It was reported that further changes would be proposed.

11. Standing Items.

11.1. Correspondence

No correspondence had been received.

11.2. Planning

Irene MacDonald Smith asked about plans for the site of Wellington School. Ian Q explained that we did not get specific updates and that we had simply to go onto the appropriate website. Ian will send details to Irene.

ACTION: IQ

11.3 HCC funds

Graham Young reported no change and that the current balance is £915.90p.

12. AOCB

Bruce raised the issue of payment for collection of brown bins.

There are two issues.

One issue is the question of asking for an additional payment which some may not be able to afford, but that is a purely political big picture issue which Midlothian Council has decided on.

Another issue, and presumably an unintended consequence, is that there is a risk that those who could not or would not pay might dump garden rubbish beside public roads.

It was agreed that Bruce would write a letter on behalf of HCC along the same lines as that sent by Penicuik Community Council.

ACTION: BH

13. Date of next meeting

27 March 2019.

Appendix: Initial report on questionnaire circulated to HCC households regarding Village Hall and glebe.

REPORT ON RESPONSES

A questionnaire and a short explanatory note were sent out with the January Town Criers explaining possible consequences of the closure of Howgate Church and seeking views on the importance to the residents of a Village Hall and the glebe.

There has been a low level of response from the inhabitants of the HCC area taken as a whole (44 individual responses from 150 households).

There has been a higher level of response from within Howgate Village (26 individual responses from 50 households).

Respondents were asked to give a score based on importance to them, 5 being high and 1 being low. This note shows the scores by those who responded.

On that basis the total score for the importance of having a Village Hall is 201 out of a possible maximum of 220, and the total score for the importance of being able to continue to use the glebe is 161 out of a possible maximum of 220.

NEXT STEPS

There is enough interest within the village to take this further if enough people are prepared to put in the work required. There have been 12 expressions of interest, 11 from within the village and 1 from outside the village, although that person is someone who has been very involved with Howgate Village Hall Association.

The first step would be the establishment of a Howgate Village Development Trust (HVDT).

Such a Trust has to have clear objectives, and I imagine that its main objective would be the creation / procurement of a village hall but this needs to be discussed by those involved.

Clarity is important because different people in the village will have different views, for example, to take opposite ends of the spectrum, some will be prepared to accept some housing development if that includes a new hall being provided, whereas others will not want to see any development at all.

A development trust is not a conservation trust or a preservation trust and those opposed to any development will of course be entitled to make representations to the planning authority if any planning application is ever made.

It is clear that HVDT has to be entirely separate from HCC because HCC has to be neutral.

HVDT would be the body responsible for negotiating with the Church and/or any other potential provider of a hall, would hold title to, or have a lease of, any hall provided, and be responsible for trying to raise sufficient funds, including application for grants.