Minutes of Parish of Stow Community Council Held on August 1st 2022 at 8pm on Zoom

Those present: S.Jeffrey, A. McNeilly, J.Mushlin, W.Ross, G.Murray, Cllr Steel,

Robin Gibson (Glennan Bros)

Apologies: Cllr Sinclair, Cllr MacKinnon, G.Stewart, C.Hendry

Robin Gibson updated the Community Council on the next stage of tree felling at Watherstone and haulage to the A7 via Fountainhall. The machinery is in place to clear the trees which were felled by Storm Arwen. Some trees were blown over the footpath and the fence was destroyed. This is delaying the production of the fourth walk leaflet through Watherstone Forest by Stow Community Council. Robin Gibson stated that the work would be done in the following week.

Haulage is recommencing and will continue until the end of November. It is according to the same plan as last year. This stipulates up to 10 loads per day but is more likely to be 6 -8 loads. Different hauliers are being used as there were complaints about speeding on one section of the road last year. However there were very few issues. Jenny Mushlin should be contacted if there are any issues this year and will communicate them directly with Robin Gibson. Email: jjmushlin@gmail.com. Tel:01578 760297. She found that everything was dealt with promptly last year and the Community Council appreciate that Robin Gibson consults with us and takes everything on board. There will be tree planting next Spring. There are the same arrangements regarding avoiding Fountainhall during the times when children are arriving at school or leaving school. However the Friday afternoon early closure of the school was not taken into account in the plan. Haulage stops at 2pm on a Friday and there will be every effort made to avoid the school closure time.

Robin Gibson left the meeting.

Matters Arising

The Windfarm Panel have agreed that the Community Council Hardship Fund, funded by the windfarms, can remain open, although it was originally created due to the pandemic. This can provide up to £150 to any Stow or Fountainhall resident at times of crisis or with unaffordable bills etc. The initial point of contact is Jenny Mushlin and it is completely confidential. She can also organise the distribution of food in the area from Lauder Larder to people who are finding it difficult to afford to buy food for whatever reason. This is also completely confidential.

Cllr MacKinnon had stated he would look into what is proposed for the toilets in Stow. The Secretary has also written to Cllr Jardine regarding this but can give no update. Residents of Stow feel that the lack of public toilets is a matter of urgency.

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved. Proposed: A.McNeilly.

Seconded: S. Jeffrey

Police Report – There is a new community police officer. The Secretary is to contact her to see if she would attend an in person meeting if we have one. Police officers are not allowed to attend zoom meetings.

Live Borders

Stow Town Hall has been an issue for many years. The following issues need to be addressed by Live Borders:

. The booking of the Hall for a child’s fifth birtday party was cancelled at the last minute. The mother managed to find the keycode, so the party went ahead. It is totally unacceptable for a booking for a much anticipated birthday party to be cancelled.

. The kitchen is not appropriate. Most of the equipment does not work. The heated oven was taken away and the fridge was in the middle of the floor. Knives and forks were provided for the Pensioners’ Christmas Party. These have disappeared. An extra cost is charged for the use of the kitchen, which is not up to standard.

.The toilets are not working

.Mary Craig, the Archivist , who rents space in the Hall, had to clear bird droppings from the steps at the front of the Hall. She should not have to do this.

. The Galawater History and Heritage Association are interested in setting up a Heritage Centre in the two ground floor rooms. They have received no response to their correspondence.

. It is extremely difficult to book the Town Hall. The phone line is not manned and the email states that there will be a response within 5 days.

. It is very expensive. The Town Hall has been put in the same category as Innerleithen for charging but Stow has a much smaller population. Many groups cannot afford to hire the Hall and it is underused.

. There is no caretaker. The Community Council are expected to open up for themselves . In the winter months this will involve someone having to go in advance to switch the heating on, or else to sit in a freezing room.

The Secretary will request Cllr Jardine, who has promised to take the matter up for us, to come to our meeting to give us an update

General Matters

Robin McMillan is working on the Collection Bridge. He needs to do this out of the sun because of the mortar. £7600 was given by the wind farm for the project which has cost £7619.64.

The planters are being planted by residents of Stow and the War Memorial is being cleaned. The Community Council would like to thank them for doing this.

X95 - Cllr Steel has been looking into this. The response that she has received is that the X95 North of Galashiels is not a busy route and is not prioritised. There is a shortage of bus drivers. Recently there was a change to the bus timings from Galashiels, which was not publicised at all. The last bus from Galashiels is now at 16.56 instead of 17..26. 17.26 was far too early. One resident would have missed the last bus, walking to the bus station from Ladhope for the 17.26 when the 16.26 did not appear. However someone noticed her waiting and informed her the time had been changed. There were no notices on buses or email communication about the change in timing whatsoever. The WRVS Canteen at the BGH closes at 16.30. There used to be plenty of time for volunteers from the Galawater to get to Galashiels for the last bus, Now there is a very tight connection which, if delayed, can miss the last bus altogether. It is important that access to the BGH for visitors and volunteers is not reduced. It was suggested that there should be a fixed connection between the bus from the BGH and the X95 and that the X95 should wait until passengers have a chance to transfer buses. Cllr Steel will follow this up. It is very worrying that this change will further deter people from using the bus.

On Wednesday August 10th , the dance troupe, Strawboys will be performing a pop up in Fountainhall School Playground at 11.30am. This is a free event through Borders Live Touring. All are welcome at this. Strawboys will be performing at the Edinburgh Fringe.

Stow Community Trust

A recruitment exercise is continuing for a tenant for the Station House. There is currently a challenge throughout hospitality in recruiting staff.

It is important to get bookings and get the Station House used. It can be used for business meetings.

There is a Walking Festival in September and a Triple Hill Race.

On 20th August Stow Brewery will be providing their craft beer.

On 21st August there will be a Sunday Lunch

G.Murray is going on the SBC working group for Place Standards .

There is now good wifi in the Station House. In person community council meetings could recommence in the Station House once there is a wide screen for hybrid meetings. The Community Council agreed to give a microgrant towards the screen as it will benefit the whole community.

A Solicitor will be contacted regarding ownership of the Cotland Steps. S. Jeffrey will contact the windfarm as to whether it would be possible to get windfarm funding for the steps on privately owned land. They are used by the whole community.

The Secretary has written to Lauderdale Community Council, offering support if they are wishing to object to the tree plantation close to Lauder Common but has received no reply.

The necessary repairs have been done to the reservoir close to the parish boundary. SEPA requested that everything should be emptied. It is refilling but there is no rain. It is unknown what is going to be done with it.

Speeding – Cllr Jardine stated that SBC bought the speed signs. In fact the community council bought two of the signs. Since we have invested in these it is very valid to say we wish to trial speed activated traffic lights. We pay insurance for the speed signs. The council did not consult us when they changed the speed. S. Jeffrey will email them.

The larch wood near the station has been felled apart from 3 trees with heron chicks. The larches are diseased. A windfarm grant has been awarded to the Community Council to erect a viewing platform with a drystone bench .

Treasurer’s Report

The annual community council grant of £630 has not yet been received. It has been at the same level for approximately 15 years. For the first time an insurance payment has been demanded for £250 for all the items the Community Council owns. A breakdown of the costs has been requested but not received.

There is £100.80 remaining in unrestricted funds.

SBC are saving money by not paying costs for Stow Town Hall or Fountainhall Village Hall whilst Community Council meetings are held on zoom but are refusing to pay the cost of the zoom license.

All other grants that the Community Council receive are restricted.

There is still £27.50 for Highland Dancing. If this is no longer continuing, it could be transferred to Stow School for sporting activity.

Councillor’s Report

Cllr Steel is meeting in Heriot with the police about rural crime. This also affects Fountainhall and Stow. They are trying to deter rural crime and sheep worrying.

AOCB

There was a comment regarding the flashing 20s not recording any speed above 28mph. This has been raised with SBC who set the limit. Cllr Jardine is to be requested to put up the limit.

A 40mph sign is desperately needed at Galabank, which has a 60mph limit. People trying to cross the road rely on the ability to hear cars coming. This is impossible with silent electric cars.

The police will not police a 20mph speed limit. The Community Council has been informed that traffic speeds have reduced by 3%. It is noticeable that there are still many cars speeding through Stow. The Secretary will ask N. Hodgson to circulate data from the speed cameras.

It was pointed out that it is extremely difficult for children crossing the A7 at the garage. A child cannot see above the cars parked to see if any traffic is coming.

The need for street lights on the road between the A7 and Fountainhall was raised. Cllr Steel is going to pursue this.

S. Jeffrey will email Colin Smyth , MSP about speeding in Stow and the need for speed limits above 28mph to be registered.

The next meeting of Parish of Stow Community Council will be on Monday 5th September 2022 at 8pm on zoom

ALL WELCOME. Please contact jjmushlin@gmail.com for a zoom link.

 AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

3. POLICE REPORT

4. GENERAL MATTERS

5. TREASURER’S REPORT

6. COUNCILLORS’ REPORTS

7. PLANNING

8. CORRESPONDENCE

9. AOCB