Peebles Placemaking Team / Town Team / Town Manager

To focus on how to build and strengthen the capacity and democratic credentials of the Peebles Placemaking Team to take the Town Action Plan and Place Plan forward, we should consider some of the opportunities / options as described below.

Key focal points arising from discussions to date are:

1. We need a Town Manager / Development Officer or equivalent to move the plan forward.
2. Top priority focus needs to be on how and where to secure long-term funding for one or more development officers as part of a Town Team project.
3. The current Placemaking Team needs to morph into a more formal structure – a governance structure (legal entity with a board) – but in a way that ideally utilises existing structures rather than putting yet more pressure on the relatively small number of people holding executive positions in community groups.
4. There needs to be focus on identifying a mechanism by which this board (and other boards) can better capture and reflect the views of the wider populace rather than simply those voices that shout loudest – such as a variation on the idea of a Citizens Assembly.
5. A measure of the success of a Town Team structure would be that there is evidence of greater collaboration and communication between business and community groups and their activities in the town – an ambition that should guide and impact on how the Town Team is structured and operates.

Objective

Provide the required skills, mentoring and strategic context to drive forward and facilitate delivery of the Peebles Town Action Plan[1] and Place Plan[2].

Sub-objectives

Information / communication

- Maintain familiarity of all aspects of the Peebles Town Action Plan and Place Plan and modify / update as circumstances dictate
- Engage with the Peebles community to reflect community views and changing priorities
- Maintain active communication with a network of (i) community organisations, (ii) business associations, (iii) SBC & planning partners and (iv) funding bodies

Delivery

- Actively promote delivery of priority projects against the Plan timelines – recognising that most of these will be led and taken forward by organisations outside the community
- Actively promote delivery of priority community-led projects – recognising that the Placemaking Team / Town Team / Town Manager is not itself structured or intended to take forward any projects / initiatives – its role is promotional and to facilitate
- Provide mentoring and financial oversight to help community groups succeed

[1] The projects and initiatives defined by the community through public consultation.
[2] The spatial plan defined by the community through public consultation and registered on SBC's place plan register on behalf of Royal Burgh of Peebles and District Community Council, Peebles Community Trust and Peebles Civic Society.

Performance monitoring

- the Placemaking Team / Town Team / Town Manager should actively monitor progress in project delivery against the proposed plan timelines and report on such progress (or lack of progress) to community organisations, planning partners and community members.

Current structure

The current structure of the Peebles Placemaking Team (PPT) has been designed to meet the requirements of Place Plan legislation and draws together support from local community groups. The current initiative was chaired by Crick Carleton on behalf of the Peebles Community Trust (PCT). We also recognise that Crick was the driving force and that without him, we would not be where we are today.

Membership was constructed at Crick's discretion – reflecting the need to engage key decision-making bodies within the community, willing volunteers, and embracing skills and expertise relevant to the work of the Placemaking Team.

As currently structured the Placemaking Team comprises individuals drawn from within key Peebles community groups – the PCT, the Royal Burgh of Peebles & District Community Council (PCC), the Peebles Civic Society (PCS), the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), and Save Kingsmeadows – with links to a number of other organisations and groups – March Street Allotments Association, Chamber Institute, Eastgate Theatre, etc.

- Peter Maudsley – PCC chairman
- Sam Coe – Community Councillor, member of PCS management team, chair of Chambers Institution Beneficiaries Group
- Michael Marshall – Community Councillor and convenor of its planning sub-committee
- Adrian Dunn – employment advisor in the Peebles CAB
- Anthony Newton – Secretary of the PCS

The following have stepped down now that the place plan is registered:

- Crick Carleton – PPT Chairman (nominated by the PCT)
- Catriona McKay – lead in the Save Kingsmeadows group
- Myriam Baete – Board Member, Treasurer and Secretary of the PCT
- Steve Dubé – member of the PCS management team

Recently joined:

- Iain Gibson – Peebles Youth Voice (joined Feb 2025).

Future structure

Local Place Plans and Place Planning are a relatively new type of planning document and there is very little precedent as to how to take such plans forward. Further, Peebles is a medium sized town with a complex range of needs going forward.

To date the Peebles Placemaking Team led by the Peebles Community Trust has been instrumental in the development of the emerging Town Action Plan and Place Plan. This has been achieved with very limited funding (some financial support from PCT resources, some from the SBC Placemaking Programme), plus latterly funding from the SBC Placemaking Funding Framework to allow commissioning of consultants to support the team in finalising the plans.

There is some emerging precedent within the South of Scotland and in Scotland as a whole in actioning plans:

- the core vehicle is the Town Team (in essence simply another name for the Placemaking Team / Town Manager) – without specific definition of what that is
- in a few instances a visible commitment of support to promote and deliver the plan elements from community organisations and planning partners has been established through their signing a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); whilst this has no legal standing, it can be used to evidence a joint decision to support plan implementation / delivery
- in a small number of communities one or two paid development officers are funded as part of the forward programme – though how this might be funded for other communities is unclear (the Borders Inclusive Growth Deal Placemaking Programme may provide some additional guidance here, but the application of this programme in the Borders is focused on the larger disadvantaged settlements of Hawick, Jedburgh, Eyemouth and Galashiels (where the greatest capital spend is envisaged) – communities that are likely to have priority access to this type of funding).

In our case[3]:

- Guiding principle to be visibly representative of the community, including representation from more Peebles community groups (but not so large the core team/board become unwieldy).
- Possible candidates could be drawn from Peebles Youth Voice, Peebles Business community, GoTweed, one of the sports clubs, Peebles Pensioners or similar, the Cleland Avenue project group, Eastgate Theatre, Cavalry Park / South Park Industrial Estate, Greener Peebles, etc.
- Include formal support from a range of community organisations (as in groups possibly signing up to an MoU to also include Council, SOSE, etc. – c.f. the Hawick Place Plan).
- Have a means of soliciting and receiving input from the wider public (further explore the idea of a citizens' assembly or equivalent).

Our ambitions

- Secure funding for one full time Town Manager or two part-time development officers tasked with taking the plans forward
- Locate those officers within an existing community organisation (such as the PCT) to provide context and social interaction for the development officers and an employment mechanism and office base provision
    - The recruitment of a Town Manager requires a person with a wide range of management skills and just as importantly, the gravitas and empathy to work across numerous organisations. Such a position cannot be successful on a stop/start basis as grants are applied for and won and lost.

[3] These 4 bullets are from Crick's email distributing this working document, 13 Nov 2024

- Develop a guidance / decision-making structure along the lines of an executive board – drawing representation from multiple community groups whilst maintaining independence from any one group.
    - Include as a minimum addition a representative of the elected councillors and of the Trader's Association
    - Should SBC be represented on the board or at least have an observer?
    - A good secretary and minute taker is essential
- Enlist the support of planning partners for delivery in the signing of an MoU
- Establish a community "touchstone" group, with a large membership drawn widely from the demography of the town and its community organisations to ensure ongoing plan refreshes truly reflect the wishes of the community.

A proposition

A starting proposition is that the Town Team should centre around one or more paid development officers tasked with promoting and facilitating delivery of **the Town Action Plan**.

Advancing, managing and updating **the Peebles Place Plan** should rest with the Community Council and its planning sub-committee, whilst recognising that, as per the Community Empowerment Act, the Community Council will encourage and canvas views from the community, its businesses and its organisations in forming its views and responses.

The work of the Town Team Development Officers will be guided by a board drawn from amongst key Peebles community and business organisations – much along the lines used in forming the current Placemaking Team. There should be few formal restrictions as to who sits on that board but the individuals should be actively involved in the management of one or more community organisations, and be able to contribute knowledge, skills and expertise that add to and complement the overall complexion of the board. And as a rule of thumb, the total number of board members should be between 7 and 9.

To cement the identity of the Town Team, it should be established as an independent legal entity in the form of a not-for-profit legal structure (CIC or similar). Its board members should be directors, trustees or equivalent of that entity.

The Development Officers cannot operate effectively in isolation, and so would ideally be located within an existing organisational structure (i.e. share an office and facilities alongside other staff) – such as the PCT. The BCA (Borders Community Action) might provide an alternate host organisation, but it is currently restructured on a new model with officers working from home and without a fixed base (as we understand it).

However, the Town Team represents the interests of the community as a whole as guided by the Peebles Town Action Plan. Its interests may not always wholly align with those of its host organisation. Hence the need to establish the Town Team as a distinct legal structure with its own management and lines of command, which helps establish clear boundaries between the Team and its host organisation, and so reduces the opportunity for confusion. Nonetheless, it is recognised as crucial that the Town Team (and its Development Officers) establish effective working relations with key community organisations, the business community, planning partners and funding bodies – and thus including its host organisation. The Town Team, the host organisation and many other

community organisations will no doubt have objectives and interests that overlap to one extent or another – which is right and proper.

The mandate of the Town Team and its Development Officers will be captured in the form of one or more MoUs (tbd) signed by key community organisations and planning partners, recording their commitment to supporting and facilitating implementation of the Town Action Plan.

To better and more transparently reflect the interests of all members of the community, and more evidently reflect the demography of the town, the Town Team should seek guidance in its works, and in updating the Town Action Plan, through periodic input from a touchstone group that might be operated along the lines of something like a Citizens Assembly. This might, for example, comprise a randomised sample of 30 to 50 residents who convene for a period once or twice a year to reflect on and guide the activities and work programme of the Town Team.

Open Questions

Empowering the Peebles Community to make best use of the ever-changing place planning and community empowerment landscape is an ever-changing legislative and policy feast. To avoid boiling the ocean, we leave as open questions the impact of:

- Community development funding from initiatives such as windfarms
- Participatory budgeting (see https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/participatory-budgeting/)