



West Linton Community Council

Chairman's Report 2009

Another Community Council year has passed. Every year tends to present us with challenging issues and this year has been no exception.

At the beginning of the year the procedure for a village facility appraisal was ongoing. The Community Council received funding from the Scottish Communities Action Research Fund (SCARF). It was spent on administration and fees for the mentor who guided the committee through the process. Much work was put in by the SCARF committee which included resident representation. Residents responded well to the questionnaire and a significant contribution was made by village organisations who are the main users of facilities on a regular basis.

The resulting Community Facility Research report was a very professional and extremely comprehensive work: credits and congratulations go to our secretary Graham Tulloch. Our mentor, Douglas Westwater, was a very great help and deserves special mention. The report provides very valuable information which will be put to good use in the future development of West Linton. I do not intend to go into detail in this report but the document is available on the Community Council website at <http://www.west-linton.org.uk/content/community-facilities-research-0#attachments>.

I will mention however the ongoing concern among residents regarding the open space position within the village for sport. At present this need is satisfied by the primary school playing field but there is a worry that this could be lost or considerably reduced in size when the new school is built. A group of residents has formed a committee to take forward the open space issue. At this time neither a new school site nor a design has been tabled so we are in limbo. It is hoped the new school will incorporate a spacious enough hall to satisfy the indoor facility needs of our ever-growing community and thus eliminating the concerns of those who state the village lacks such a venue.

In these days of severe public sector constraints there is a widely held belief that the school building programme will be put back.

Over the past year we have considered some 36 planning applications. This number is down on what we have come to expect and must be due in some part to the recession but also to the lack of availability and sustainability of building sites within the village boundary. 48 houses or so to complete the Robinsland development have not been started yet, no doubt another recession victim.

The Local Plan Amendment states further land has been allocated at Robinsland for 40 houses. As things stand now West Linton must be considered to be at saturation point for housing. The roads infrastructure is simply not adequate, with unbearable congestion being the norm.

The new 5-star hotel approved for Rutherford castle will be a great asset to the surrounding area but as yet no development or planting has taken place and a year has passed since permission was granted. The development of the houses at North Slipperfield has not yet begun, although a road has been formed over the hill from the Baddingsgill Road to the steading. It is assumed amongst other things the Medwyn Road works have not been finalised.

The wind farm proposal for Auchencorth, to which we responded, will be the subject of a Public Enquiry in January 2010.

The private Village Nursery accommodation remains unsettled. It remains in the Old Church Hall for



the time being. An application by Tweed Homes for a nursery facility on the zoned employment land at Robinsland has been lodged; a decision is awaited.

June saw the new Community Council formed. Nine nominations were received, all of which were the outgoing members. The membership of the incoming council was, therefore, unchanged as was that of the office bearers.

The month of June also saw the presentation of the west Linton Citizen of the Year award. It went to Dr Ruth Aitken's Hestavinir Riding for the Disabled (RDA) Group. The award coincided with their tenth anniversary. The facility is first class and the staff are very professional and dedicated. Those Community Council members who attended saw how much pleasure the children derived from the riding and how much their lives are enriched.

August was Floral Gateway Competition time. We felt our chances of a higher placing was on the cards this year as Melrose (the unbeatable) were in another competition. However it was not to be as we slipped to 3rd place. We scored lowest on Community Involvement. The tubs and gardens were beautiful as usual; the Council planting and the village tidiness were excellent. In view of the judges comments we should look at more environmental improvements which of course do not happen overnight. With this in mind perhaps we should miss entering the competition for at least a year to enable us to effect some worthwhile improvements.

The Police presence at our meetings is greatly appreciated. Local crime is reported and discussed which is very useful and it gives us the opportunity to raise concerns and receive on-the-spot advice

On August 3rd the changes to the Scottish Planning System were implemented. It involves changes in development management, enforcement and appeals and Community Councils are given a heightened role. For example: prospective applicants for national & Major developments are required to send Community Councils a Proposal of Application Notice with information on the proposal and how they intend to consult the wider community. Community Councils who make representation on such developments are able to attend and be heard at the Committee meeting stage.

The Scheme of delegation for determining planning applications has now been implemented since August 3rd. This has assisted in the removal of planning decisions being taken by local Councillors at Area Committees; consequently the future of the Area Committees is being discussed. I personally cannot see the need for a monthly meeting as the topics for discussion do not require it as much of the information could be emailed to Community Councils. A quarterly Forum made up of various bodies, local Councillors and a representative of each Community Council in the area could be a worthy substitute.

The festive season is almost upon us. Last year's Christmas lights were a great success. The wall brackets and power boxes are excellent as they allow easier erection of the displays. Nevertheless, it is still quite an operation and we hope for more helpers from within the community this year.

Finally, some words of thanks:

Thank you to our local Councillors for the work they have done for us throughout the year.

Thank you also to our Treasurer, Derek Lawson, for his continued commitment.

To our hard working Secretary, Graham Tulloch: grateful thanks for all his work, much of it over and above the call of duty.

We look forward to another year serving our community.

Margaret Harrison

Chairman, West Linton Community Council.