

## **NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL - COMMUNITY COUNCIL - GENERAL INFORMATION**

Community councils comprise people who care about their community and want to make their area a better place to live. They have an important role in local democracy. They represent local people's views about local services to the local authorities and other agencies.

Some community councils are more active than others but their activities can include:

- help with environmental projects
- organising local galas
- printing and distributing local newsletters
- representing Community Councils' interest in the activities of other organisations
- campaigning on local issues
- conducting local surveys
- commenting on planning applications

Community councils were created by the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1973. The Act required local authorities to introduce community council schemes for their area outlining various arrangements including elections, meetings, boundaries, and finance. Local authorities have the freedom to tailor schemes to the particular circumstances of their area.

Local authorities and other bodies consult with Community Councils on issues that are important to each community. However, local authorities are required to consult community councils on planning applications and involve them in the Community Planning process.

Community Councils are governed by North Lanarkshire Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils.

### **Elected Community Council Members Roles and Responsibilities**

Members of Community councils are elected by the local community. Even if, due to a shortage of nominations, your "seat" was uncontested, and no actual election took place, your Constitution provides for nomination and election. If properly nominated, by two local residents who are on the Electoral Register, you are as much elected as would be the case in a contested election.

As a member you may attend meetings, speak and vote, as of right. You serve for the term allowed by your Community Council's Constitution. As a Community Council member you should represent all the community, not any specific group, although inevitably, different members have particular areas of interest. Such diversity can add to the collective strength of the Community Council.

Most Community Councils invite community Police officers and others, such as council officers, to attend and speak to the meeting by special invitation. Such "guests" can make an important contribution to the meeting.

As a new member of a community council it is important that you understand the role you will play in your community from the outset. This means not simply offering your own views and opinions on local issues, or taking decisions that are based only on your own self-interest.

As a community council member, you need to represent the views of your community. In practice, this involves discussing issues with people in the community in order to clarify their views and measure the strength of their feelings on different topics.

At some point you may find some conflict between your personal views and interests and those of the community that you represent. If such a situation does arise, try to make sure that the views of the community take precedence.

Experience shows that if the views of individuals on the Community Council are allowed to take precedence then the wider community will very quickly lose confidence in the Community Council and its work may be devalued.

The task of any Community Council is to identify the needs and aspirations of its community and to take decisions that will lead to appropriate action in that community. At some point, this might involve setting priorities on the competing or conflicting needs of different sections of the community. This means taking a balanced view of your community's needs and aspirations and giving a fair hearing to representatives from different interest groups in your community.