

Acomb Parish Council – District Councillor’s Report October 2008

Life continues at Tynedale Council, as staff and elected members work hard to ensure that services continue to be delivered efficiently, projects are completed if possible before the birth of the new unitary Northumberland Council on April 1st 2009 and that progress is made in determining how services are delivered after that date.

I recently attended a special meeting of the Tynedale Council’s Community, Health and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider a Countywide Housing Allocations Policy i.e. a common housing allocation policy across Northumberland. This reflects 2 fundamental changes in the way affordable housing is allocated:

1. The Department for Communities and Local Government now requires local authorities to operate a choice-based lettings scheme, which means that housing vacancies must be advertised as widely as possible. Interested parties then “bid for” (or express an interest in) the property. This contrasts with the current situation, where individuals or families are on a housing waiting list and are nominated for consideration for a particular property. Choice-based lettings are already operating quite successfully in Blyth Valley.
2. From April 1st 2009, Northumberland needs a county-wide policy, to replace the 6 district policies currently in place.

While welcoming the idea of giving residents a more active role in choosing accommodation, there was a strong feeling at the meeting that the term “local” needed to be clearly defined, and there were concerns about how vacancies would be advertised to reach the harder to reach e.g. the elderly in remote areas without public notice boards or access to the internet. There was also an appreciation of the additional support required by more vulnerable members of the community, who may not have the skills to put a bid in independently.

Tynedale Council’s Audit Committee, which I chair, will be meeting later this week with Deloitte Touche to discuss the Tynedale Council 2007/8 audit report. This is a very positive report, reflecting the conscientious hard work of Tynedale Council’s staff, who are to be congratulated.

Ever since I became a district councillor, Acomb residents have asked for a bottle bank in the village. Having been on order for quite a while, new recycling facilities, including glass banks, will be coming to the Village Hall car park in the next week or so. I’d like to thank the Clerk to Acomb Parish Council Bill Grigg for all his efforts on this.

If you would like to discuss any of these matters further or if you have suggestions or concerns, please contact me on 01434 681487, e-mail jane.wrigley@tynedale.gov.uk.

Jane Wrigley
September 23rd 2008