

## Acomb Parish Council – District Councillor’s Report November 2006

At the last meeting of the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, we had 2 very interesting presentations.

The first was about a retail study carried out for Tynedale Council by consultants White Young Green, in order to provide background information on shopping in the district for the Local Development Framework Working Group. The consultants had looked at the district’s 3 main towns, Hexham, Prudhoe and Haltwhistle. Overall, their findings were encouraging. For example, in Hexham the shop vacancy rate is 6.8%, below the national average of 7.91%. Predictably, a business survey indicated that Tesco was perceived as the main threat. 80% of shoppers and visitors surveyed thought that Hexham was easy to get around, and 71% saw the range of supermarkets as one of its main strengths. The consultants made 3 main suggestions for a future strategy for Hexham:

- monitor the current situation with regard to the existing Tesco store and the future Waitrose
- improve the bulky goods provision (e.g. for DIY supplies, white goods) to reduce unnecessary journeys elsewhere
- explore opportunities to develop the current quality of offer and distinctiveness (e.g. investigate niche marketing opportunities)

The second topic was the economic opportunities created by 2012 Olympics in London. Dr. Tanya Gray from the regional development agency One North East gave an enthusiastic account of the possibilities for training camps for overseas teams, increased tourism for the host country as the result of Britain’s raised profile, not to mention the chance for businesses to compete for supplies ranging from food and drink to sports equipment. One suggestion which emerged from the discussions was to promote the district’s high quality foodstuffs, especially its meat.

To explore the Olympic idea further, yesterday I attended a regional seminar for councils, which also highlighted the health and sport benefits, citing examples of how the concept of the games could be used to inspire everyone, in particular the young, to be more active and to be more aware of the multi-cultural world outside the north-east. I found it quite inspirational.

Nearly all the meetings held by Tynedale Council are open to the public, except when they are considering confidential matters, such as those which are commercially sensitive. The council’s Corporate Policy and Management Board has taken the process one step further, and has decided to hold its next few meetings outside Hexham to make it easier for residents across the district to hear how its decisions are made, and also, at the end of the meeting, to allow people to put questions to the Board about matters which concern them. The next 3 meetings with question and answer sessions are at the following venues:

Thursday November 2nd 6pm Allendale Village Hall

Thursday November 23rd 6pm Bellingham Town Hall

Thursday December 14th 6pm Haltwhistle Methodist Church Hall

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](mailto:jane.wrigley@tynedale.gov.uk).

Jane Wrigley,  
October 20th 2006