

## **Acomb Parish Council – District Councillor’s Report October 2007**

As I said in last month’s report, local government in Northumberland is set to be reorganised, with a single unitary authority from May 2009. The details are beginning to emerge, but rather slowly, and there are still many issues which need to be agreed. A key feature of Northumberland County Council’s original bid “One Future – One Council” is the concept of characteristic communities and belonging communities. It is envisaged that responsibility for operational services will be delegated to three characteristic communities of:

- South East Northumberland (Blyth Valley and Wansbeck districts, together with the NE part of the present district of Castle Morpeth)
- North Northumberland (Berwick and Alnwick)
- West Northumberland (Tynedale and most of Castle Morpeth districts)

These are deemed to be places with similar socio-economic and geographical characteristics and as such, bind local people together – for example, South East Northumberland includes much of the old coalfield area, while West Northumberland contains much of the Tyneside commuter belt in Northumberland. For Acomb residents, it appears that many of the unitary council’s services will be delivered jointly across Tynedale and Castle Morpeth districts.

There will also be opportunities to consult and influence at grassroots level. 25 “belonging communities” have been identified across Northumberland – Acomb is part of Hexham and Hexhamshire, which spreads from Acomb, Sandhoe and Corbridge in the north to Blanchland in the south, and from Haydon Bridge to Broomhaugh and Riding. Belonging communities are defined as “places that local people regard as where they come from if asked by others with some knowledge of their patch”. This emphasis on “belonging communities” has implications not just for Parish and Town Councils, but also for community partnerships and other local organisations.

There will be a Special Full Council meeting on Tuesday October 16th at 6pm in the Council Chamber in Prospect House, Hexham, which will be open to the public, and which will provide an update on discussions to date.

Following the District Council elections in May, I have been nominated as the Tynedale Council representative on the Northumberland Playing Fields Association, whose purpose, as its name suggests, is to safeguard and develop playing fields and other open spaces for sport and recreation.

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

September 20th 2007