

Acomb Parish Council – District Councillor’s Report September 2007

Local government in Northumberland is set to be reorganised. On July 25th the Department of Communities and Local Government announced that the county bid had been successful for Northumberland to become a single unitary authority from May 2009. The district-backed bid for two unitaries for Northumberland will not be taken forward. Elections to a “shadow” unitary council are expected to take place in May 2008; this will run in parallel with the existing district/county structure until May 2009, when the new unitary will take over.

This decision has a number of wide-ranging consequences. It means that Tynedale Council will cease to exist from May 2009, as will the other district councils in Northumberland. It also means that, initially at least from 2009, the current county council division of Hexham Central with Acomb will be represented by one councillor, rather than the one County Councillor and three/four District Councillors as at present. Parish and town councils will have to play a greater role in ensuring proper democratic representation for everybody in our community. At the time of writing, the implications are only just beginning to sink in, but there is widespread determination among Tynedale councillors to spread the good practice already taking place in Tynedale across the rest of the county, and to ensure that all staff are treated sympathetically and fairly before and during the transfer.

On August 8th Acomb Parish Council met with representatives from Tynedale Council’s Planning Department to discuss the Site Allocations Options document. This document is part of the Local Development Framework process, which replaces the current Local Plan and which will shape development and land use in Tynedale from 2011 to 2021. The Site Allocations Options document lists proposals from councils, developers, other organisations and individuals for the use of particular areas of land in Tynedale. There are 11 sites mentioned in Acomb:

SA066 Garden House Lane	<i>Housing/Affordable Housing</i>
SA067 Town Foot Farm	<i>Housing/Affordable Housing</i>
SA068 White House	<i>Housing/Affordable Housing</i>
SA078 Former Colliery Site	<i>Housing/Affordable Housing</i>
SA146 The Hermitage	<i>Economic Development/Tourism/Mixed Use</i>
SA182 Land West of Garden House Lane	<i>Affordable Housing/Housing</i>
SA220 East Oakwood	<i>General development/Affordable Housing/Housing</i>
SA221 Land at The Riding	<i>Affordable Housing/Housing</i>
SA263 The Hermitage Estate	<i>Economic Development/Tourism/Mixed Use</i>
SA264 Land at Garden House Farm	<i>Affordable Housing</i>
SA1002 Acomb Industrial Estate (part)	<i>Economic Development</i>

At this stage Tynedale Council is simply consulting openly on all suggested options; no decision has been taken on the suitability of any of the sites. The Planning Department welcomes comments on the proposals, which should arrive by September 14th. Further information can be obtained by ringing 01434 562460 or by going to:

<http://www.tynedale.gov.uk/residents/serviceinfo.asp?type=449>.

You may be interested to know that Tynedale Council’s Housing Department has identified a need for an additional 28 affordable homes in Acomb over the next five years.

At the end of the summer term I was invited to take part in a “Question Time” session with Year 10 students (14/15 year olds) at Queen Elizabeth High School. Representatives from the three main parties and the Green Party faced three groups of students, who asked very searching questions on a variety of topics including the environment, Egger, British foreign policy and drugs. Several of the questioners chosen came from Acomb. I was extremely impressed by the maturity of the questions and of the ensuing audience discussions. Much of the media coverage on young people is very negative, but this occasion showed a whole year group in a positive light.

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

August 14th 2007