

## Annual Report of Balerno Community Council 2018<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

2017/18 has again been a busy year for the Council taking into account not only of ordinary business but also the number of new issues which have arisen, some of which are detailed below.

This report cannot of course hope to detail all of the matters with which we have dealt over the past year, but I hope I have managed to convey an impression of the scope of the issues which come to our attention. Copies of minutes of our meetings can be found on our website.

Balerno Community Council (BCC) is the most local tier of statutory representation so far as the community of Balerno is concerned. Our primary purpose is to ascertain and express the views of the community to the local authority and other public bodies. The past year is one in which we can point to some successes but also to some areas in which we wish that we had been able to do more. Overall however we think that the community of Balerno is thriving, and the Council is committed to ensuring so far as it can that that continues for the future.

I hope that this Report will be of interest and help to those who may wish to know more about the work of the Community Council.

Richard M Henderson  
Chair  
Balerno Community Council

10 May 2018

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### Report

#### **Council membership -**

1. The Council's office bearer team in 2017/18 comprised Richard Henderson (Chair), Ian Hynd (Vice Chair), Hugh Watt (Treasurer), Tony Allen (Secretary) and David Brewster (Minutes Secretary). Elected members of the new Council are David Brewster, Kathleen Fiddes, Richard Henderson, Ian Hynd, Jack Kerr, James Polasik, Ken Shade, Dominic Simmons, Hugh Watt. Five local group representatives are Brian Conway (Balerno Children's Gala Committee), Finlay Anderson (Balerno Community Centre), Balerno Parish Church (Rev Andre Groenewald), and Emma Galloway (Balerno Village Trust). William (Bill) Stark, nominated by Balerno Bowling Club) as a member resigned from the Council at the last AGM in September 2017. His contribution to the Council was greatly appreciated.
2. Local councillors for the Balerno area are *ex officio* members of the Council and contribute significantly to our work along with our MSP and MP who are also *ex officio* members, and I would like to thank them all for their help and interest. Following the local elections on May 2017 our City Councillors who hold office as members of the Community council *ex officio* are Cllrs Graeme Bruce, Neil Gardiner, Ricky Henderson and Susan Webber.
3. **BCC meetings** - The Council meets regularly on a monthly basis (except July) and also as demand requires. Its meetings are open to the public.

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<sup>1</sup> Presented in draft for approval by the Council on 3 May 2018.

- (i) *Monthly meetings* –During the year to 31 May 2018 the Council met in JUNE, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER and DECEMBER 2017, and in JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH (twice), April and MAY 2018. The Council had appointed a working group in 2017 to take forward the preparation of a Community Plan following the successful publication of a consultation document in June 2016.
- (ii) *Additional Public Meetings* - The Council convened a Special Meeting, beyond its scheduled monthly meetings, to be held on 28 February 2018 which had to be postponed because of bad weather until 14 March. The meeting was called to enable discussion of Edinburgh Council’s South West Schools Review in particular with representatives of both Edinburgh Council and local groups, organisations and businesses. The meeting was attended by @ 60 people including members of the public.

**4 Communications** - Communication with the public is at the heart of the Council’s work. If the Council is not in contact with the community then it cannot hope to represent it. Communication with CEC and other public bodies is also an important aspect of our work. There are a number of aspects of communication on which I should report, as follows;

- a. *Direct face to face* – The Christmas Lights in Main Street were switched on on ... December. Over 500 people attended which again provided an invaluable opportunity for the Council to engage with the community;
- b. *Balerno Forum* - The Council was again unable to produce a copy of its free Newsletter, Balerno Forum due to lack of resources. We continue to hope however to publish an issue in the future, possibly in 2018;
- c. *Community Plan* – Resources ordinarily assigned to publish the Forum have been diverted in the past year to development of the draft Community Plan, which was published on 8 March. The Plan followed on from the 2016 ‘Vision for our Community’, and a consultation is currently in process until August 2018.
- d. *Notice Boards* – The Council’s ‘new’ Notice Board officially unveiled in August 2014 having been installed in place of the old board on the wall of the Post Office in Main Street, continues to be well used for both Council and local event advertising. In addition the Council also has access to the notice boards installed by the Community Centre in autumn 2016. Copies of draft agendas are displayed on the former.
- e. *Facebook* – The Council entered the 21stC in later 2016 with the opening of a Facebook page for which there are currently 174 followers. Crime prevention circulars are a regular feature of posts with a regular take up of @150 views.

Over the past year the Council has engaged in a number of campaigns focused through the Facebook page, including

- i. *Gritting and snow clearance* – 643 people reached with post on 28 December and 261 engaged.
- ii. *Schools Review* – from November 2017 – 3.1K people reached with the Council’s Interim statement on 6 February and 910 engaged.
- iii. *Potholes survey* – 2.9K people reached with the Council’s initial post of 27 March 2018 and 1K engaged.

This has enabled us to increase markedly awareness of the Council’s activities across the board, although it depends also on material being available and submitted. Members are being encouraged to support the page. We are also grateful to other organisations in the community which will take on and circulate our news, including Balerno Village Trust and Balerno Parish Church to name only two, and in turn the Council Facebook page can be available for forwarding material from other village groups.

- f. *Twitter* – BCC’s Twitter account has published 228 tweets and has 321 followers
- g. *Balerno Business Forum* – The Balerno Business Forum was started in early spring 2017 and now has some 50 members; its Facebook page which is maintained by the Council is an important conduit for enabling contact and

disseminating news and views;

- h. *Website* – BCCS website was re-engineered in late 2016 as a part of an ongoing process for improving our contact with the public at large. It is used mainly to publish material including Council minutes and other papers including the Vision for our Community Paper and the draft Community Plan. While the Council does receive new e-mail contacts via the website the published papers do not attract comment in the way that the FaceBook page does.
- i. *Corporate imaging* – The Council took delivery of 20 branded high-vis vests in December for use principally in connection with the Christmas Lights switch on (December) and the traffic survey (February).
- j. *Farmers Market* – Balerno Farmers Market takes place on the second Saturday of the month and provides a platform at which the Council can meet with residents and answer questions, although we have not for some time had a real presence at the market.

**4. BCC Internal Organisation –**

- a. As noted above BCC Office Bearers comprise the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Minutes Secretary and Planning Convener. There is one standing Sub-Committee, which deals with Planning, chaired by the Planning Convener.
- b. The Planning Sub Committee is currently in abeyance following the resignation of the Convener in November 2016 although it is hoped that it can be revived in the near future. The planning portfolio is currently looked after by the Chair.
- c. As noted above, in the course of the year the Council has met informally in the form of a Working Group tasked with the preparation of a draft Community Plan for Balerno, which was published on 8 March.
- d. In addition some Council members have taken on responsibility for certain portfolio interests. Thus Police and Fire matters are dealt with by Max Downie while Education, Children and Families matters are the responsibility of Marion Milne and Environment by Jack Kerr. Dominic Simmons has taken responsibility for development of our communications in particular IT. Jim Polasik looks after Balerno Business Forum while Hug Watt represents the Council on the Pentlands Regional Park Consultative Committee. Richard Henderson represented the Council on the Neighbourhood Partnership and on its Funding Panel.

**5. Working with other bodies –**

- a. BCC is a member of the Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership and is represented on the Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum, two bodies convened by City of Edinburgh Council.
- b. It is also a member of the South West Communities Forum, along with Juniper Green, Currie, Ratho Community and Colinton Community Councils. The Forum has, amongst other things, enabled the development of common positions amongst local community councils and analogous bodies in relation to planning matters affecting the SW Edinburgh area highlighted through the Local Development Plan process. The Forum is convened by Phil Thomas.

**6. Particular activities and issues during 2013/14 –** The following paragraphs give some flavour of the various issues which have been dealt with by the Council over the past year.

**a. Planning –**

- i. Planning is always one the most important areas of activity for the Council, and we benefitted over the past year until November through having the services of the Planning Sub-Committee helping the Council both through delegation to it of certain decisions and also through access to expert advice on individual cases. I would like to thank the Sub-Committee for their work over the part of the year when they were

able to meet; it is vitally important that the Council revives the Sub Committee given the renewed interest in new planning developments after the approval of the CEC Local Development Plan;

7. **Balerno Business** - The Balerno Business Forum was started in early spring 2017 in order to assist the Council in identifying the business community to enable that community to come together for mutual support. The Forum now has some 50 members, and its Facebook page is an important conduit for enabling contact and disseminating news and views. The Forum meets monthly.



8. **Education, Children and Families** –

*Schools review* - The Council noted with concern the publication of a Schools Review in November 2017 by Edinburgh Council. The Review included Initial Proposals which amongst other things envisaged the temporary closure of Balerno High School for a period of two years from 2022 to allow for refurbishment and extension. During that period BHS would be relocated into Currie High School building which, the plan envisaged would be freed up by relocation of Currie HS on its projected merger with wester Hailes Education Centre.

Unsurprisingly the Review sparked a major public reaction in the affected area including Balerno. The Council met with CEC officials in February and also published three papers on the issue in February and March. It convened a Special Meeting in March and made oral representations at the Education Children and Families meeting on 29 March.

The Council's Facebook post setting out its interim position on 6 February reached 3.1K people and received 40 responses and 14 comments.

9. **Sport and Culture** – The Council was pleased to be able to contribute to the processes for delivery of these assets.
10. **Police & Fire** - Police Scotland continue to report regularly to the Council which is greatly appreciated. The Council has expressed concerns on occasion about policing issues affecting Balerno.
11. **Maintenance** – The Council has been, and continues to be very concerned throughout the year about the standards of maintenance on the part of CEC both in terms of roads, paths and green areas.
- In March it instigated a pothole survey in response to the accelerating deterioration in the condition of all roads in the area.
12. **RBS Branch** – The Council remains very concerned about the withdrawal of face to face banking facilities in the village and now in the whole Water of Leith valley. However it has welcomed the projected Mobile Bank initiative which RBS start at the end of April.
13. **Transport** - Last year we reported that the Council had been considerably concerned about the withdrawal of the 24 Bus service to Livingston St Johns and the projected withdrawal of the 70 service to the Gyle. The Council understands that CEC has allocated funding for an extension to service 63 providing a direct service to Gyle and also enabling a link via service 40 from Hermiston to St John's Livingston. The Council continues to press CEC on the commencement date.
14. **Post Office** - The Council remains concerned about continuing uncertainty over the future of Balerno Post Office, and continues to monitor the situation and press elected representatives to ensure that the best outcome for all concerned can be achieved.

15. **Our Village Our Community** – The Council published its draft Community Plan on 8<sup>th</sup> March. The plan is open for consultation until August at which point a final draft will be prepared for consideration and possible publication.
16. **Christmas Lights** – The Council lights is grateful to CALA homes for their generous donation which allowed extension of the Christmas Lights in 2017. The Council will be considering possible further extension of the lights for Christmas 2018.
17. **Other issues** – The Council has of course dealt with many other issues throughout the year, some perhaps minor and routine while others are potentially very significant.
18. **Finance** – The Council's finance reports are available separately.

Richard M Henderson  
Chair  
Balerno Community Council  
10 May 2018