



Balerno  
Community  
Council

## **Annual Report of Balerno Community Council 2017<sup>1</sup>**

### **Introduction**

2016/17 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. 2016 was also an election year for the Council and I would like to thank Cllr Bill Henderson who acted as Returning Officer for the election process.

This report cannot or course hope to detail all of the matters with which we have dealt over the past year, but I have I hope 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.

As noted above Community Council elections were held in September 2016 and accordingly this report spans the period on which successive councils were in position.

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

7 September 2017

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### **Report**

#### **Council membership -**

1. The office bearer team in the 'old Council' – up to October 2016 - comprised Richard Henderson (Chair), Ian Hynd (Vice Chair), Hugh Watt (Treasurer), Tony Allen (Secretary) and David Brewster (Minutes Secretary), and those appointments were renewed at the first meeting of the 'new Council' on 6 October 2016. Elected members of the new Council are David Brewster, Kathleen Fiddes, Richard Henderson, Ian Hynd Jack Kerr, James Polasik, Ken Shade, Dominic Simmons, and Hugh Watt. 6 local group representatives are William (Bill) Stark (Balerno

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<sup>1</sup> Presented for approval to the Council 7 September 2017



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Bowling Club), Brian Conway (Balerno Children's Gala Committee), Finlay Anderson (Balerno Community Centre), Balerno Parish Church (Rev Andre Groenewald), and Emma Galloway (Balerno Village Trust)

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. I would like to pay tribute to City Councillors, Bill Henderson and Dominic Heslop, who retired from office at the 2017 Local Elections in May. We will welcome new Cllrs Neil Gardiner and Graeme Bruce to the Community Council.
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.

(i) *Monthly meetings* - During the year to 31 May 2017 the Council met in JUNE, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER (twice) and DECEMBER 2016, and in JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH, and MAY 2017. The Council meeting in April 2017 was informal and took the form of a discussion over supper at the Grey Horse Inn. The Council also established a small group in the course of the year which met informally to discuss the preparation of a Community Plan following the successful publication of a consultation document in June 2016. In addition a further small group was established to develop a Balerno Business forum

(ii) *Additional Public Meetings* - The Council did not convene any public meetings, beyond its scheduled monthly meetings, during the year. However it promoted a public meeting at the Balerno Parish Church in association with both Currie and Juniper Green Community Councils (and with the generous support of the C&B News) in the form of a Hustings event related to the 2017 General Election. The Hustings were attended by @150 people.

- 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 photo below was taken at the switch on of Balerno's first ever Christmas Lights display in Main Street. While this is reported on later it is worth making the point here that this event followed



on an initiative by the Community Council and which resulted in, we estimated, over two hundred people coming out on 8 December to witness the event. It provided an invaluable opportunity for the Council to

engage with the community, and similar events in the future will provide that same opportunity;



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- b. *Balerno Forum* - The Council has in the past published a free Newsletter, Balerno Forum; we have not however been able to publish an issue since July 2015 due to lack of resources. We hope however to publish an issue in the not too distant future;
- c. *'A Vision for Balerno'* – Resources ordinarily assigned to publish the Forum had to be diverted to the Consultation Document issued as part of the process for preparation of a Community Plan; results of that consultation are forming the basis for the preparation of the Community Plan referred to above;
- 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. 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 village 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. *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;



g. *Website* – BCC's website was re-engineered in late 2016 as a part of an ongoing process for improving our contact with the public at large.

h. *Corporate Banner* – Balerno CCs logo was updated in November 2017 to provide a higher resolution image suitable for hi-res imaging. In May 2017 we took delivery of a new pvc banner for use principally at outdoor events which made use of the reworked logo; it was first used at the Hustings on 29 May. Assuming we manage to switch on Christmas Lights again for 2017 the

banner would be displayed for that event.

- i. *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.



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- 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;
  - 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 first of a discussion paper to be circulated to each household in the community as the basis of a consultation with a view to the preparation of a Community Plan for Balerno, and secondly for the preparation of such a Plan.
  - 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.
  - e. As noted above in spring 2017 we encouraged the formation of a Balerno Business Forum and the Community Council side of this entity is now being led by Jim Polasik with Richard Henderson, Ian Hynd and Dominic Simmons.
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. While the SWCF met on several occasions in 2015/16, and made submissions on behalf of member Councils in the LDP and SESPlan processes, its position and future is now less certain given retirements and resource issues.
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;
    - ii. Over the course of the year we had to note the approval of housing developments at both Ravelrig and Newmills despite the best endeavors of the Council and community. Since the grant of those permissions the Council has met with the main developer in an endeavor to secure community investment by them; we are hopeful of progress on that while still regretting the grant of permissions for sites which radically affect the Green Belt.



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- iii. The Council remains clear that maintenance of the green Belt is a central plank of its policy. It will continue to monitor and respond vigorously to attempts by developers to reduce the Green Belt, and will articulate its policies in the emerging Community Plan.

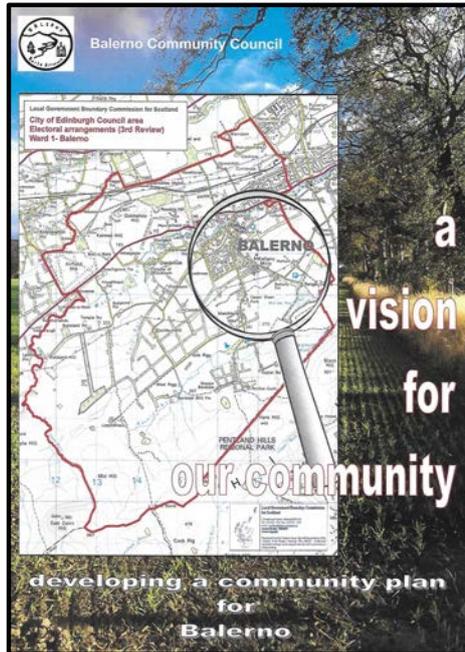
7. **Balerno Business** - The Balerno Business Forum was started in early spring 2017 in order to assist the Council in identifying the business community to enable that community to come together for mutual support. The Forum now has some 50 members, and its Facebook page is an important conduit for enabling contact and disseminating news and views. The Forum had its first face to face meeting in May 2017 attended by 30 members; it intends to meet monthly



8. **Education, Children and Families** - The Council continues to be concerned about the effect of reorganization in the education sector arising from the of the CATS initiative and the proposals by CEC for assignment of responsibility for resource allocation to Edinburgh Leisure. It will continue to be involved in dialogues to seek to mitigate unwelcome effects.
9. **Sport and Culture** – I reported that we were delighted to be able to report that the completed 3G pitch was officially handed over on 5 June. We are equally delighted to report that the refurbished 2G Pitch was handed over in autumn 2016. 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.
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.
12. **RBS Branch** – While the Council was pleased to note that the former RBS Branch has now been transformed into the new dental surgery it remains very concerned about the withdrawal of face to face banking facilities in the village and now in the whole Water of Leith valley. It has been and continues to co-operate with neighbouring Community councils to seek to identify some outcome which can allow for personal banking facilities to be available.
13. **Transport** - Last year I 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 has not been able to secure any amelioration in the situation but is hopeful that an extension to service 63 indicated by CEC as a possibility could be brought to fruition; this would provide a direct service to Gyle and also enable a link via service 40 from Hermiston to St John’s Livingston. The Council continues to press CEC on the issue.
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.



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15. **A Vision for Balerno** – The Council decided in late 2015 that in the face of continuing uncertainty as to the likely date of approval of LDP2, the onset of the new SESPlan2 process and the likely start on LDP3 shortly after LDP2 was eventually approved, that it was appropriate to try to set out how Balerno people actually wanted the community to develop, and what they wanted the future of the community to be. Vision for Balerno was published on 11 June with responses and comments being sought by November 2016. The Council has also secured access to Balerno Village Trust's consultation responses in relation to their Action Plan development process. The Council hopes to be able to produce an initial draft Plan by autumn 2017.

16. **Christmas Lights** – In summer 2016 the Council approved proposals to try to raise finance to install Christmas Lights in main Street. The Council is grateful to the local groups, organisations and business who responded generously to the initiative. The Council is also grateful to Balerno Village Trust for having partnered in the project in particular through a highly successful crowd funding initiative which enabled installation of lights on three trees in Main Street in early December. The Council has still funds for installation of further lights for Christmas 2017 and will be taking that forward in summer and autumn 2017.

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  
7 September 2017



**Christmas Lights in Main Street – December 2016**

Photo courtesy of Ian Gidney