



DUNBAR
COMMUNITY
COUNCIL

AGM 2023

CHAIR'S REPORT

Pippa Swan

The past year has been a busy one and I am delighted that we have been able to maintain a core group of at 10 councillors.

All Community Councillors are volunteers and their primary job it to try to capture community views and convey these to East Lothian Council. This is much easier said than done.

Councillors are asked to gather information on dozens of subjects each year and reaching out to all constituents is a challenge with perhaps 40% of our residents unable to access the internet.

Our major project for 2023 has been the development of our Local Place Plan. Working with West Barns Community Council, Dunbar Trades' Association, Sustaining Dunbar and the Area Partnership, a small steering group has designed, distributed, hosted and analysed questionnaires, invitations, meetings and responses from over 800 people. Every household was canvassed and thousands of pieces of gathered information will be processed to build a paper intended to set out development ambitions for Dunbar and West Barns for the next decade.

The Local Place Plan will address issues relating to housing, recreation, education and training, health care, the local economy and the environment and will inform plans created both by East Lothian Council and more local strategies fostered by our Community Councils, existing and new community groups and our Area Partnership. There will be a lot to do to meet the expectations of constituents of all ages.

It is hoped that the Local Place Plan work will be complete early in 2024 – and a huge vote of thanks must go to all the players to date, some of whom have given hundreds of hours of their private time to this important endeavour.

Dunbar Community Council heads up Dunbar Civic Week, Dunbar Christmas Lights and High Street displays and Dunbar Against Litter, all of which are standalone operations under our DCC umbrella.

Dunbar Civic Week ran from June 9th – 18th and was a triumph thanks to the most wonderful organisational skills of Community Councillor Sanchita Patjoshi and her small team. Civic Week has a long and important history in Dunbar and has become centred on fun for all the family. The Royal Court are all from Dunbar Primary School and they acquitted themselves wonderfully on a hot and sunny Fun Day. So many volunteers played their part to ensure that the week was buzzing and I thank them most sincerely.

Our Community Awards night on June 10th forms part of Civic Week and was warmly received by all the community award winners. Special mention must be made of Ryan Lough, Jo Waddell and Dunbar Grammar School's Intergenerational Team who scooped the trophies in the three award categories.

The Christmas Lights Team, led by Community Councillor Graham Adams, delivers on so many fronts throughout the year. The group meet every Wednesday evening in the Corn Exchange – now a completely usable building thanks to Graham's team's hard work. Summer is about bunting and flag flying but from the late autumn onwards, our High Street is aglow with winter lights. Christmas Lights shine out from the end of November until into the new year and there are literally thousands of individual acts that make this happen for us all. We can never thank you enough!

Romie Blair is a Dunbar legend and the heart and soul behind Dunbar Against Litter. Supported by Community Councillor Alasdair Swan, the team quietly works in all weathers and in every corner of the town collecting other people's litter. Our thanks must go to Community Councillor Kevin Searle who has played an important part in trying to ensure that commercial rubbish from housing estates is controlled. That has not been easy but his determination has been wonderful.

Dunbar has seen the launch of the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme this year and Kevin Searle has again played his part, liaising with East Lothian Council's CARS team. The project has had a slow start and we very much hope to be able to report good progress next year. A fund will be available for Public Realm works which will be executed in 2025 and the Community Council will be working with Dunbar Trades and local residents to ensure that the money delivers real improvements to feel of High Street and West Port.

Alasdair Swan has managed our finances, as he has for the past eight years. He has taken a lead on the management of our important Community Windpower Community Benefit Fund. Working with Anouska Woods of Be Green, he has guided us to give grants to many community groups and initiatives that have made a real difference to the town. Alasdair will speak more of funded projects in a moment.

The coming year will be one with continued challenges. Following work in the summer, the Community Council determined to make changes to the way in which we engage with each other and our Community. Finding the time and space to develop and manage our website, social media,

noticeboards, emails and seemingly endless consultations is exhausting and we will have to prioritise if we are to deliver quality responses on any of these fronts. I hope that we will find another two Community Councillors this year who can share the load and a decision to double the number of meetings each year should help too – I acknowledge the huge additional commitment from you all, here, to do this.

The adverse economic climate is one that is affecting East Lothian Council and all of its services. It will affect us all. The threat of the imposition of car parking charges, the lack of funds to deal with coastal defences, cuts in ELC spending to support local priorities, deficits in health and social care, diminishing resources in education – all of these will impact our town.

We will be called upon to do a great deal more with a great deal less but I expect and know that this committed team will continue to do all that it can in service to Dunbar.

It is a privilege to have led Dunbar Community Council for the past 5 years, and I thank you all, most sincerely, for all that you do.

Pippa Swan

16 October 2023