**An Introduction To Community Councils**

Community Councils were introduced through the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973

"to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the Local Authorities for its area and to public authorities the views of the community which it represents, in relation to matters for which those authorities are responsible."

There are currently approximately 1,200 active Community Councils in Scotland. Community Councils get involved in a wide variety of issues such as road improvements, youth projects, environmental initiatives, upgrading of amenities and community initiatives. These are just a small example of activities which might benefit their area, either working on their own or in partnership with other agencies.

The boundaries of their communities are usually defined naturally, hence the name “Community Council”. The features and rules that describe these boundaries, including the number of Community Council representatives, the populations they represent, and their election procedures are determined by each parent local authority through the Scheme for Community Councils.

The Local Government Scotland Act 1973 empowered all local authorities to assist Community Councils, both with funding and administrative support.

A Community Council can act as a campaigning body in raising awareness of specific local issues. They can be particularly useful in co-ordinating smaller, local organisations to ensure that resources are being used efficiently and effectively.

The local authority, in return, has a duty to consult Community Councils on how local services are delivered and other issues affecting their neighbourhoods. Community Councils have the right to be consulted on planning applications in their areas and are also kept informed about licensing applications.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 also provides new statutory rights for Community Councils along with other community organisations. This includes Part 3 Participation Requests and Part 8 Common Good. The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 has also strengthened Community Council’s engagement with the planning system.

Examples of Community Council Activities can include:

• writing letters following a meeting of the Community Council in order to highlight an issue

• attending meetings with public officials

• holding public meetings either at regular intervals or in response to a specific issue, or to find out what are the areas of concern within the community

• carrying out surveys in the area, typically by using questionnaires

• meeting with other Community Councils or other community groups

• writing in response to a draft policy report or consultation document

• receiving and responding to enquiries and problems raised by members of the public

• sending representatives to attend a meeting of a council area committee, advisory group or regeneration partnership

• producing a newsletter and distributing it to all homes in the area, or electronically via social media or the Community Council website

• arranging for public officials or others to attend future meetings of the Community Council

• negotiating codes of practice with local authorities

• or arranging community events such as gala days, fetes, or clean up days in order to promote the Community Council.