

20th April 2010
Kilsyth

Kilsyth Community Council – Chairman’s Report 2009 – 2010

First Year in Office

Today marks the end of my first year in office. It has been difficult to emulate the level of success achieved by our former chair Margot MacMillan and I have to thank her for continued support through the last year.

Secondly, to Alex Machray who is standing down as our illustrious secretary, undoubtedly the most difficult job on the committee. Alex will leave a position difficult to fill, however I hope that he will continue to give his fair and balanced wisdom as a back bencher!

Finally, to the rest of the committee, who continue to give your free time to be involved in community and public life.

Town Centre Optimism

The condition of Kilsyth Main Street has undoubtedly been one of the single biggest issues of the Community Council in the last few years. This year, finally, it looks as if we are moving forward at last. Our role in this should not be underestimated. If it were not for the Community Council, the other parties (who were far from reaching a deal) would not have been forced together by our proactive stance that stated that if they were unable to take the grants and get the job done we would! This approach of calculated risk and confidence in ourselves has, I think, achieved the best outcome for Kilsyth. A scene of dereliction has now become a construction site that will hopefully stimulate demand in the retail units, have more people living in the town centre and hopefully a new police office, ending the area’s association with youth disorder and petty crime.

Also, with some of the other development sites such as Mowlems on Stirling Road and The Main Street / W. Burnside Street now showing signs of movement, we may soon see a real revival of the towns built environment. It seems that the “green shoots” discussed by economists may well be reaching Kilsyth.

To Consult or Not to Consult

An ever increasing part of our workload comes from responding to consultations. This has ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous in the last year, we have even been sent a consultation on how good a previous consultation has been.

Moreover, with more than one quarter of our grant funded investment in vital local improvements going on consultants fees, and even more concerning is that the Colzium Clock Theatre project has spent NLC tax payers monies to a consultant to prepare a report for a project that has no funding at all, is not acceptable.

This money is our money and we must fight for efficiencies that allow it to be spent locally on things that will make a real difference. In stead of employing consultants, ask us!

I think that we should continue to expose this issue both locally and nationally to get a better deal out of, what is likely to be a vastly diminishing, public purse.

Events

Building a community involves taking part. We have had great success in getting the community involved in our historical event and we have one more in the planning.

Given that our job is to represent the community as a statutory body of local government, I think that it is prudent to assess this coming year how we can more effectively engage with the community at large on the issues that are important to them. We need to review our existing channels of public engagement and possible new ways. I suggest that this is put on the agenda and becomes part of our work stream

Local and National Government

It is critical, and mutually beneficial, that we have the attendance of our local councillors and contact with our MSP and MP. Indeed, following the 6th May we will have a new relationship to build with the successful parliamentary candidate.

We have to give thanks to the support from Mark Griffin and Jean Jones. By working together we are all more effective.

As I mentioned at the previous meeting, we received great praise from our current serving MP, Rosemary McKenna, who suggests that we are one of the most pro active community councils in the area. I will send a letter of good will on your behalf on her retrial from public life on the 6th May

Membership

With the loss of one member and office bearer, it is vital that we seek new members, not only to keep the committee revitalised and fresh of ideas, but a well supported council is a more effective and more credible body. We must give this our fullest attention going forward.

Conclusion

Given the problems recently faced by other community councils in the area, primarily due to lack of support, we are in a very positive and privileged position. This should not be damaged by complacency. We are in a good place but must work hard to remain so.

Finally, as well as making a difference to the place we all live, we must also enjoy taking part and being involved. So let us go forward together by combining the serious with good cheer as the coming year delivers its problems and its opportunities.

Scott M Johnson
Chairman