

# About Community Councils

Community Councils are groups of people who give time to, and have a genuine interest in, the well-being of their community. They meet, usually once a month, and their chief role is representative; to consult the local community and to make known to the local authority and other public bodies the views of local people on all matters affecting them.

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 any planning applications in their areas and are also kept informed about licensing applications.

Community councils were introduced through the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The Act defined the purpose of a community council as:

"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."

This has allowed community councils to get involved in a wide variety of issues. A recent survey by the Association of Scottish Community Councils identified over 1,000 different activities which community councils have undertaken. These included road improvements, youth projects, environmental initiatives, upgrading of amenities and community initiatives.

In addition to this, there are any number of activities which they can become involved in which might benefit their area, either working on their own or in partnership with other agencies.

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 aren't being wasted and that several groups aren't all trying to do the same job.

The Local Government Scotland Act, 1973 empowered all local authorities to assist community councils, both with funding and administrative support. There are currently about 1200 community councils in Scotland covering populations ranging from 35 to 34,000.

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.