Interviews with Community Councillors for IL-DEM project[[1]](#footnote-1) November – December 2016

# CCllr interview 01

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Chair |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

4 years |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Very urban |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

To express to relevant authorities the opinions of the citizens (and, to some extent, local businesses) that we serve. We also place a heavy emphasis on being proactive via projects that we initiate ourselves in the interests of the area, e.g. about shared spaces or green spaces, traffic issues, dog-fouling.We do pass on information from [LA council] to some extent but don’t see ourselves as its mouthpiece. We perhaps complement the efforts of the council. |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

[not asked] |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

I have in the past initiated surveys to find out what local people think, what they are concerned about. I can’t just assume that what bothers me bothers them – printed surveys, street surveys, questionnaires.I'm conscious that it's not our job to push a particular agenda. I and others on the CC have training in social sciences of various kinds, so we have some experience of devising questionnaires that have open questions, aren't leading. We've all got a bit of academic training. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

My main reference for our role and what we can do is the Council has produced a pack of constitution, standing orders, and that says quite clearly what [we can do], and there's a code of conduct and there’s a document that says what CCllrs can expect from the council, and what council officers can expect from CCllrs. I’ve never found any other useful resources. When [the information pack] was updated in 2012, I made a point of getting a few printed copies, using CC funding, and I made a point of giving them to people who joined the CC. There’s not much effort from SG of the council to make CCs aware of their responsibilities. There’s that website from the IS but it’s pretty basic. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

Just the Council pack. It’s quite heavy-going but it tells you pretty much everything you need to know about what you can and can’t do. The limit of it is that it’s open to interpretation because the remit of CCs is pretty much as large as you want to make it. So to really understand what you can and can’t do, what does and doesn’t work, you have to learn a bit from other CCs. So although that [pack] lays down the rules, and it is very helpful in that respect, to really understand what the opportunities are, what the different ways of exercising your responsibilities are, that’s quite difficult to find out. You have to be creative, take quite a lot of initiative to find out what’s out there. Another resource I’ve used is the press, simply searching on Google for either stuff to do with CCs. So I have searched for CCs, to see what comes up. I look at Google news to see what CCs are doing, and I might find out that in [another area] there’s quite a militant CC that does confrontational stuff about – I can’t remember what it was but they were getting bothered about something. There was another rural CC that was putting up posters and stenciling onto pavements socially responsible messages about dog-pooh. So we got a stencil and stenciled messages on the pavement. So I suppose just looking at the press to see what other CCs are doing is quite useful. That helps you to understand in practice what you can and can’t do. In the CC constitution, it says ‘represent’ but the second part is ‘do anything else that’s in the interests of the local area. Obviously that can be interpreted in any number of ways, so it’s good to see examples of that. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

[not asked] |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

[not asked] |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

As a rule, the only thing I do in a structured fashion to pass on is about planning regulations and traffic regulation orders. The way I do it is I’ve got an alert set up on TellMeScotland. Every Friday I get an email telling me if there’s been an application within a 1-mile radius of the middle of the CC area. If something is relevant then I’ll post it on Facebook and I might send - we have an e-newsletter mailing list with 160 or so people on it – to get some feedback, to see how people feel about it, but only if it’s an important thing |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

[See above] |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

No. We have quite a good Facebook following, so that that’s the way we keep in touch with people. If we could we would do printed newsletters – they are the most effective way of communicating with people but we just can’t afford it. Facebook is the one that we can afford. We tend to try and – anything that’s interesting and pertinent, we’ll put it out there – and it tends to be whatever comes across, when it comes to the attention of any of the CCLrs – there are 3 or 4 Facebook admins. The other CCllrs will pass on to the admins things that they hear about. For example, something that a lot of people are very interested in lately is roadworks because they’re putting an enormous new sewer in [name of city], so that’s caused a lot of disruption, so when we hear about something like that (the latest thing is that they’re extending the time that the road is going to be closed for). When we hear about it, we’ll post it on Facebook, but we don’t go out looking for roadworks information. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

One thing about social media is that you can immediately get feedback about whether people are interested. You’ll see how many people viewed it, how many people clicked on it, liked it, shared it. So we very quickly get a sense of what topics people are interested in, that is the topics that our social media following is interested in |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

Facebook primarily. Twitter not so much. Once a year we’ll do a printed newsletter. We have an email distribution list using MailChimp to make it look nice. We don’t have a noticeboard. There is the meeting once a month, but very few people come along. If we can get the money, we’ll do a printed newsletter. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

I can’t think of anything. It’s never led to anything but there have been times when I’ve spotted something using online tools and I might have emailed them. For example, the Democratic Society go on about something called participare. I emailed them but they never replied. If there’s something quite academic or I want to know ‘how does that work?’ I might contact somebody offline, if I’ve spotted it on their website. I can’t really think of any examples. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

I can’t think of particular examples but one area is that CCllrs must not be party-political, but very often CCllrs are party-political outside their CC responsibilities, so they might have heard something through their party-political contacts, but can’t really use it, or they have to be very careful about how they use it. Also, they might have found out about something through the CC, which might give advantage to a political party, so there is that sort of divide which has to be treated respectfully, if only to make sure that you do compartmentalise parts of your life, but I don’t think it’s ever been a problem, just something to watch out for. |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

It’s quite important (3 out of 5)I forgot to mention the website – we don’t really get Google analytics, but all of the traffic for that website comes from Facebook. In Facebook you can see the demographics of whose interacting with you so you can see it’s 50-55-60% women, most of them are between 30 and 40. We have a sense of how representative or unrepresentative our following is. |

## Other RQs

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| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

At university, I studied social sciences (I’m an engineer but I did do a social sciences elective) and I learnt about participatory research, about structuring surveys and discussions and interactive exercise that bring opinions and conflicts to the surface, so academic training is definitely relevant. When it comes to survey analysis, a bit of statistics is useful, and again that’s relevant to my day-job. The third thing that I think is important is marketing, so my last job I was supply-team manager for a very big consumer goods company. My job would be in multifunctional teams, I’d have marketing people next to me, finance, sales and in that job I became exposed to marketing methods and how to build up a following, and I think that’s really important for CCs. We’re competing for attention from people who are bombarded with all sorts of marketing messages all day long, so if I want to get to them about their opinions in a certain topic, then I have to somehow get their attention. We’ve got a logo, a consistent communications strategy – that’s something I got from work. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

We have prescribed roles, so we have a communications secretary who takes care of the overall strategy for Facebook, Twitter, the website and the email newsletter. We have somebody who is principally responsible for the Twitter account, then we have the secretary, treasurer, minutes secretary, then we have the people who are responsible for particular projects. So the first thing is to make clear the roles and responsibilities.If we have a project, say, to do with [big sports stadium], then there are two tasks. One is about surveying the public, which we mainly do online (that’s my job). The other is talking to the managing director of the stadium. There’s a lady on the CC who has that particular job |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

They do help us by allowing us to put posters, put reports there. We once had a display area on which we put all kinds of information about a consultation we were running about parking and traffic. That was really helpful because it gave us a physical place for people to go and look at stuff. We’ve never asked for any training or anything like that. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

[Council document pack mentioned earlier] |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

No, I wouldn’t say there are any issues. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

Information skills are critically important. |
| 1. Anything else?

The more that the resources can be centralised and supported, without each CC having to develop everything for itself, the better – that would be a big help.In our CC, everyone uses email and is relatively computer-literate, which is great – it’s an enormous enabler in that we don’t have to post things to people. But other CCs struggle with that, so we had to go through a very difficult phase of making ourselves credible enough and professional enough and approachable enough that new people would think about participating. Other CCs are stagnant because they’re not willing to make that change or don’t know how to. So they’re stuck with a small group of older people who just don’t know how to engage online or in any other way. So it’s really important … it’s not the best use of resources to try to help CCs to go online when they have no interest in doing it themselves. What’s probably more important is to make CCs more attractive to get people in who have the right skills. Also CCs should be representative of the communities they’re representing, so if you’ve got a group of people who are all over 60 and don’t know how to email each other, that’s not so good. [Bruce mentions lack of ethnic representation in a CC he works with.] Another thing that’s strange about our CC is that it’s mostly not Scottish people, mostly English people, which again is bizarre. I don’t know how we’ve ended up in this position but it’s not representative. The only way to raise the profile of CCs as a whole is at LA or national level. |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[40-49] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Male  |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White British |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Master’s degree |
| 1. How long ago was this?

15 years |

# CCllr interview 02

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Secretary |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

8 years on CC, 5 years as secretary |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Very urban |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

Soundboard for opinions in the community, and by virtue of the fact that various LA councilors are sitting in the room, these concerns are discussed and they can take them forward. They can get the opinion of the community, or rather of those who turn up [to CC meetings]. |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

[not asked] |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

I think that when I first started, I didn’t think so, but I believe now you need to have some basic awareness of how the CC fits into the democratic network, so to speak. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

I went to a couple of evenings that were, I used to go to quite a lot when I was only a member, I’d go to the training evenings that the council gave, and there would be other things that I felt were useful to understand better what we were doing, so like [city-wide architectural preservation society] meetings were very helpful. [mainly face-to-face training].Once you’re elected, they know your email address so they just do batch emails to every CCllr in [this city]. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

Yes [it was useful] because mainly it was an invitation to an evening – it wasn’t any more than an email inviting you |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

No, except I’m more likely to respond to an invite than to an email that means I need to read lots of information about CCs. I like things personalized. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

It could be argued that that’s a very arbitrary decision because it’s mine alone. For example, I’m talking about all this parking stuff so there’s [council official] who sent me a long email about what the council’s protocols are and this will turn into a blog, so I came to the bit that I really wanted to read about parking, which I feel is ideal for this street, and then it said there ‘not suitable for densely populated area’. I thought this is a complete nonsense because parking restrictions are by definition useful for densely populated areas, so I went back to him and said ‘I really want to publish what you’ve say but I’m not going to put that sentence in.’ So he’s now gone back and rewritten it to make it a more neutral stance, because we’ve of course been shouting every time anyone will listen that [this area] is the most densely populated [in this city]. So I’ve been talking to this guy for a couple of half-hours over the phone, and we’re just working together. I see whether it fits with my wish to achieve regulated parking of some kind, but at the same time for any council official in charge of parking to say ‘regulated parking is not good in a densely populated area is a bit of nonsense’. |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

Oh yes! Simple thing like planning – I receive unsolicited mail from developers wishing to put in a PAN application but the other thing is sometimes people come to us, like [name of person] saying ‘can you discuss the [name of road] junction, and I’m acutely aware that he is at that point advocating what he would like to happen, as I am aware that I would advocate restricted parking, and I just collate it, and I have a list at every meeting of what it is. I have the correspondence or documents on the table in case someone wants to read it and I’ll make sure it gets onto the agenda one way or another. [agrees with suggestion that she has a set routine of things to check about possible agenda matters.] *Do you have a set routine?*Yes, and often [acting-chair] and I will have a Sunday afternoon where we go through things and again, of course, it can be argued that this is a cosy coterie of 2 that is setting the agenda, but I think we’re also easy-going enough for anyone else to go ‘hey, can you put that on the agenda?’, and people frequently do. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

The information now comes to us. After years of really having to battle with the planning department, I think we have also made a bit of a name for ourselves in that we will have a proper meeting about it, not a shout at the developers if you can, and I think that has made a difference, so any sizable application will be discussed, we all get an alert from the council that gives you a weekly planning list. Having said that, the system is still very heavily weighted in favour of the developer and against people who either aren’t in the know or are only partially in the know, because they get paid to develop, we do it out of the kindness of our hearts to go through these really boring lists of information. It’s very difficult – you look at the [regional plan] and stuff [mimes it going over her head]. Well [this plan] is the top of the tree – it makes you want to cry, it is so dull and also then you can say ‘who am I?’ if you’re just reading it as Joe Public, ‘who am I to comment on this?’ because you know your comment to be fair is invited and you can say what you like. To then try and get a group of 16 people to read this (or just some of them to read it) is like herding cats. So any opinion is always going to be the opinion of one of them, and everyone else says ‘I’ll go with what he says’. You know, it’s a bit of a wooly argument, but I think that’s how it works at the moment. I’ve been doing this for about 10 years – it’ll be hard for new CCllrs, who can see and say things about their road to work on big things like this.I got an email from some other CCllr who said ‘we are against the strategic cycling routes that are proposed’ [Pulls face] ‘and will you please protest against it?’ and I just ignore it. That’s the other thing – you haven’t got time to respond to all these people. So I filter it already. With my hand on my heart, I was going to write something in favour of the proposed long-distance cycling paths but I’m going to do it in my own name, not in the name of the CC, because we simply have not had the opportunity to discuss it in any way |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

[see above and below] |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

[not asked] |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

Via email, but I’m acutely ware that even on the hot topic of a thing like parking, I have a group of five who want to be informed. There’s only two who have got back on occasion. It’s not ‘I’ve just read this, this is really interesting!’ So I use my share [i.e. forward emails to others] button with great carefulness because there’s one person [names council official], and I’m sure that’s her job but I just don’t look at her emails.This CC also has a blog-based website, which I contribute to, and a Twitter account, which I have access to. There’s also the community noticeboard, but that fell off my AOCB list – I’m still pursuing the key, now [the noticeboard] is in the right place. I don’t know where the key is but I can find that out. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

I think [offline sharing] only rarely happens. Of course, the vice-chair/planning convener[[2]](#footnote-2) lives only just across the road so there’s communication with him that is definitely offline. Occasionally with [CCllr who is a retired civil engineer and interested in planning], but that is only a propos of seeing him and either of us saying ‘I want you to see this’. I think also because I don’t at this stage know all the new CCllrs[[3]](#footnote-3) at all, that I don’t see any point in just sharing with them privately but I would have done in the past. But it’s almost kind of being geographically in the same neighbourhood, which I like. *So you use face to face for communicating with other CC office-bearers*I think also to discuss something. There is something in that once something is written down it can be difficult. For example, [vice-chair/planning convener] says ‘you’re on a hiding to nothing with this registered parking idea but I’m in favour of it, but he just doesn’t want to. And I suppose once you reach a level of trust with others in your CC, it’s easier to have these discussions where you can make your views known without eliciting strong reactions. There is a lot to be said about things, like when a hot potato like parking, and I will also interact with some local woman who wants to talk about parking, and I’ll talk to her over coffee, because I can’t be arsed to have an email conversation, because that will inevitably be a ‘she’ll put in her thing, I’ll put in mine’. *So you’re using offline for discussion and online for broadcasting news when you come to a finished point?*Yep, but also you know with the new CCllrs, it’s a little bit dependent on [family circumstance which is nnow taking up a lot of the interviewee’s time] but in the past I’d meet with them and have a cup of coffee with them and just talk to them about nothing.*[Interviewer explains lurking]*I don’t do much lurking, so for example, my parking group – they do a lot of lurking. I think also it takes up too much of my head-space. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

No – the only conflict was yesterday [at the CC meeting] when [former treasurer] arrived and I said ‘Oh hi! I thought you’d resigned because you’re not on the list of elected CCllrs’… [discussion over how this person was unaware of nomination process in recent CC elections] |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

It’s not hugely important [that we get responses online]. It’s gratifying if people respond to things, and useful, but it’s like the blog, you know there’s all this useful information, and I don’t know how many hits we get, but it will be, I just think that that everyone wants to absorb information but no-one wants to go out of their way to give feedback, because they think ‘I should get paid for this’.I have no idea [who reads the blog]. If [the personal circumstance] hadn’t happened, I would have been more likely to use my time to actually start doing a bit more because it’s something I quite enjoy. My available time to this this kind of thing is reduced at the moment. |

## Other RQs

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| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

Yeah, I suppose [local environmental group, of which this interviewee was a founder-member]. Talking to our neighbours – you know I think we have a strong community in [this] street, and I think things like this [personal circumstance] have made that hugely more important – there are 10 neighbours who’ve all been to Christmas parties so they all talk to each other. They’ll come to me if there is some issue that they think I’m able to [handle].*And you’ll do the same for them?*Yes, but it’s not totally straightforward, but through [environmental group] we had a message that an unadopted road with 10 trees, half the neighbours wanted to cut them down, the other half said ‘please don’t’, and I was able to get hold of the forestry who said ‘no you can’t cut these trees down without some proper process’, so those trees have been preserved.*Do you think that your schooling or university and other things you’ve done prior to your current status have helped you develop information-handling skills?*No but I do remember that my mum was active in our local council [in European country] and she was active in her local party, and she never even did it on the level that I do it but she was certainly politically aware and engaged. She sat on some committees or whatever it was, and I think that’s just really where you start but in Uni I never was at all organized in any way.*Were you a member of a union ever?*No, I went to art school when I was 17, and that was in 1976, then as a mature student aged 40 with [my son] as I tiny baby I did a degree, so it was always – I did what I could – there was no spare time. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

I try to have relationships with the other office-bearers, and in the way you have been a very good conductor of these things, but similarly, I think now these people often change and it’s a complete change of guard, and I’ve no idea who are [new CCllrs in neighbouring CC. I know [former chair of neighbouring CC] is more of known, also because [member of neighbouring CC] comes to our meetings.*How might you divide the tasks of information-finding, processing and publishing about a big development such as [massive shopping center/tourist development]?*Well I tend to be inclined to put myself as the useful helper, I’m not the spearhead of the activity, and especially considering our chair is not usually very active outside the meetings, we usually have a plan between the two of us. Thinking about it, on stuff like [big development], it would be useful to have the input of other CCs, and they come to stakeholder meetings [about major road which leads from big development]. That would be an opportunity, but I think the developer will think ‘divide and rule’. I think we’ve had the chair of [another neighbouring CC] and I did some Xmas drinks and he came to that, and he is fairly outspoken, and I never really got the impression that he wanted to, well we could join them but they didn’t want to join us, so to speak. We’ve not kept up a connection [with that CC’s planning convener], and I think there is something to be said for that because I there are things that go across boundaries, and there is the danger of divide and rule because developers will do anything to get their [money]. [Vice-chair/planning convener] made the point that [store in big development] is getting money for the inconvenience, and I think people in [CC area, which is very near to the development] should also get some money because we’re going to have four years of huge disruption, pollution and what-have-you and we should be compensated. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

None. They had the whole thing about CC elections, they’ve got to provide the room every month – it’s a difficult subject because librarians are dealing with so many things already that to say ‘it’s up to you to communicate CC information’ is too much. For all I know they’re avid readers of the website, but practically I don’t think … it needs a level of specialization that I don’t expect a librarian to have. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

Well I think those initial CC classes are the beginning, but again it’s like becoming an [LA] councilor – the amount of information that you need to absorb is so great and varied that you’ve got to keep digging deeper and ultimately it’s your experience that starts to count. You’ve dealt with that issue in planning and you know the basis is the same as a different planning issue but the principles are the same. So when I phoned the [LA official] about parking, [LA councilor who was CCllr] has been extremely helpful in explaining what the protocols and processes are.I would expect a call or email from planning if they were going to put controlled parking through the whole of this [city area] but to anticipate what a single CC will say, that’s just not possible |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

Oh huge ones. You know the previous chair used to sit on a licensing body. I’m aware that I have taken myself off some funding panels through the [locality partnership]. I’m completely blind from these recent changes. I know there have been some big changes in that they’ve divvied up the city recently. I used to be totally straightforward in understanding how that worked but now I’m well behind on that, and I think there is so much information online. [Across-the-road neighbours] wanted to put a parking space on their property and I thought ‘surely that can’t be done’ and after a little bit of digging , there are the guidelines for planning applications in conservation areas. You chuck in a few keywords and the system spits it out, and you can write an objection using points that were there word-for-word from the said guide. So the thing that I think is slightly weird is that having made these changes (and again I might have missed this) the council have written to me and said ‘this was the [locality partnership] with those people. It’s now morphed into this, those people have gone, those people are still here, and I kind of expected some of those people who have moved onto different jobs to email to the CCs to say ‘just so you know, [LA official] is no longer in charge of this’ |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

[Information skills are very important – think of the example of our ex-treasurer – she didn’t have the information so she lost the choice. I think [information skills] give you optionality |
| 1. Anything else?

I think the difficulty is that CCllrs almost by definition tend to be of a certain age, so if you find people who are confident in using computers and social media it’s a completely different thing. I was looking at the [blind CCllr] I’m pleased he can read emails but what would we do if he couldn’t? How would we manage to give him information? It’s a bit like the bloke who turned up to talk about his son’s bike that was stolen, but do you think we have time to deal with every single stolen bicycle? I completely sympathise, but if the man had said ‘I need to have everything transcribed into Braille’ then you know I can read it to you but even that would take enormous [time]. I hope he’ll feel confident enough to start getting stuck in but it is hard for him to get going and it is hard for us to support him. [discussion over how interviewer and interviewee would cope with blindness]The other big hiatus is this whole Community Empowerment thing – we’ve had talks about it – theoretically a CC could say ‘we want this public building’ and I would be interested in that but I completely lack the knowledge of the system - that would be a lot of work. It’s all there, it’s just that we haven’t got the resources to get stuck in, and when [LA councilor] was saying that some CCs don’t even exist, it’s because of lack of people feeling that is a possibility, and I don’t know what has made us be who we are. [former planning convener] wrote single-handedly the conservation brief. These people [former secretary, vice-chair/planning convener, current chair, former planning convener] all made a big difference and I was scanning round the table to see who were the ones who are going to do that. [discusses various new CCllrs potential abilities, and potential for CCllrs to embarrass themselves if they don’t agree with their communities] |

## Demographics questions

|  |
| --- |
| 1. How old are you?

[50-59] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female  |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White other |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Degree  |
| 1. How long ago was this?

15 years |

# CCllr interview 03

## Introduction questions

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Vice-chair and planning convener |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

6 years (since LA scheme was rejigged) |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

Yes – preceding version of this CC [see Q11 below] |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

Member  |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Very urban |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

To lever its soft powers to maximum effect, cajoling and asking. The statutory powers are weak and inefficient – the LA can put barriers up and there’s very little we can do. My role as vice-chair and planning [convener] is that I’m interested in the public realm, therefore I’m interested in planning and transport – these have the biggest impact on quality of life, and the role of our CC is to maximize the quality of life for its residents, although this is hard to measure or achieve |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

Well, you play a large role in that with the website and minutes. Twitter has fallen by the wayside. These are the main outlets. The [CC] noticeboard is still sitting [unused because the keys are unavailable]. Information sharing is restricted to what you do. The mailing list goes to 60-odd people, which is nothing given that that there are 25,000 people in the area. Then there’s the meetings themselves but that’s partly self-selected, I guess, but some information gets shared out there, and will get disseminated to their contacts but that will be in the low hundreds. So in absolute numerical terms, not very well at all but in the big scheme of things, maybe not too bad because [although] the national government gets a lot of press coverage in news items this doesn’t actually mean that what they say registers with their recipients who might have forgotten a few days later. So I’m not too worried about it as a democratic deficit – I think that’s a deficit of democracies full stop – a problem of education and motivation |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

I certainly think about it but I’m an information scavenger in any case – my antennae are open just about all the time on all channels and I absorb an awful lot of information. I pride myself that what other people might regard as superficial, to be discarded because it’s labeled as unimportant, I make the decision to filter it according to context, and even if it’s lingering for a while, it’s very relevant. So that’s a very conscious act. I’m aware of overfeeding information. I must be selecting, use time-management. So yes [conscious thought about my duties and rights] is something that I only have to do once in a blue moon, when new information or guidance comes out, I glance at that, like the constitution or new legal documents, and I get my head around it. Problem is that they are shoddily written therefore you have to take them with a pinch of salt and you have to read it [while thinking] what in practice we have to do with this contradictory piece of nonsense. For example in the recent elections, apart from the fact that I was accidentally emailed the private details of all the people who put their nominations forward – addresses, emails, phone numbers. When I finally got the successful nominees, there were several names and email addresses mis-spelled, so that when I mailed out some bounced back. I pieced together the correct data by looking at first names etc. [discussion of use and access to this CC’s MailChimp account] |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

It’s in the mists of time – it’s maybe 20 years that I’ve been going to CCs in one form or another, so it’s by osmosis. It’s a community like any other, discussing planning matters quite a bit so you think that’s one of their roles. Later on when you get to a more responsible role, you read up on what the actual rights are. Just like anything else, I go to the primary legislation, and I can find that if I’m looking for it. I will have done that over time. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

I was too long in the tooth to find any other information that was given out to be useful. When I was on CCs before, the council never approached me and said ‘come to this training session – these are your rights and responsibilities’ – I just learnt by doing. Later on I saw the scheme [of establishment] at the most recent elections. That’s when I became conscious that they had actually made an effort to disseminate information[[4]](#footnote-4). It wasn’t too relevant to me – I took a glance at it and saw it was effectively the same as what I’d seen before. [discussion on how many CC elections interviewer and interviewee had experienced, and training for CCllrs after 2013 elections – interviewee did not attend this.] When [CC chair] was vice-chair of [preceding incarnation of this CC] for yonks, he would have seen such things. [Mention of former CC secretary]. Chairing [meetings] is not that difficult and [current chair]’s role is, shall we say, limited. You will have to ask [current secretary] what knowledge she found available. Being the vice-chair, that’s even less that you have to formally do than the chair.  |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

I do not regularly look at Twitter and Facebook. I usually use that for stalking. If I become aware of somebody I need to find out quickly what they are like or what they are after, I will check them out that way because that information is freely available. I wouldn’t use it ever to feed myself with reliable information. The council has various Twitter things and Facebook as well but I’m not interested in that. If they want to communicate with me officially, they will send me an email or a letter, then I will look at the website.*Why do you avoid those forms of social media?*I don’t have a mobile phone either. I am crucially aware that while you can switch various things to more private, the whole point is that they are social media, so you have at least a handful of so-called friends, and what they do you have no control over. They might share something that is not for sharing. I never get given a form like this [informed consent form] to say to my friends what is shared stays between us, because you don’t do that, so people will do it. Then it takes up time, it’s often superficial. I use it in a professional way: Twitter because there are so many thousands of users in [this city]. I like it because [this CC’s] website posts automatically to Twitter, and you can do the same with MailChimp – there’s no effort in that, if you like it you can get it with this. Other problems – you have Brexit, you have Trump, you have other referenda, like the Scottish independence one, people rely too exclusively on that. I learnt that good quality information is curated, and people don’t have the skills or time to do that, so the whole twittersphere, by definition is not curated. I think we are heading for a disaster, and Mark Zuckerberg, I have personally a low opinion of him.*Interviewer mentions that data protection in Europe is stronger than in the USA.*That’s a different problem. I can safeguard spot intruders. I’m bothered about climate – even the word ‘friend’ insults me – it’s an outrage. And the word ‘like’ – those two words have been usurped by Facebook specifically, and they’re quite important words. To like someone is completely devalued and reduced to a click. From that the very opposite of social happens I think. People behave antisocially because they are behind that screen barrier. I’ll tell you how old-fashioned I am – I only have a land-line, and I think that we as humankind still haven’t actually learned to develop principles of how to interact with a phone in the room and a human being. If the phone rings now, even if I let it run to answering machine, we are both so conditioned that our train of thought will be disrupted. The rudeness of this machine is so disruptive – it’s 100 years old – and we still haven’t developed techniques to keep it out of our minds. And that’s just landlines – mobile phones are even worse, whether they are ringing or buzzing they disrupt the whole room. If it’s on silent it will disrupt you. The other person expects a response, and what is worse with young people, you phone them and nothing will happen. Most people under 25 or 30 will not listen to voicemail. They will say ‘oh, I’ve got a missed call’ and then phone the person back without listening to the voicemail. Or they use missed calls to exchange phone numbers. *I’ve seen that – it’s cheaper!*I know but it also destroys the contract – [if] I leave a message with you [or] I send you a letter, you owe me a response. Now if you make a new rule, a lot of emails going out are classed as spam, so emails are bad as well but there’s a degree of control over them. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

If it’s on a government or council website, it’s reliable. I will spot the spelling mistakes but it’s authoritative. If it’s on another CC’s website, I might check that occasionally perhaps. I will take it with a pinch of salt because I don’t know how reliable it is. Not everyone has [you] and even you make mistakes – you’re not paid enough to be held responsible for those kind of mistakes, unlike colleagues on the council who should be getting it right.  |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

That’s a problem. Until even a few years ago, the [city-wide newspaper] or *The Scotsman* were good sources. They’ve been completely destroyed by advertising revenue dropping away – they have no staff that are paid properly. It’s my fault as well because I haven’t bought any newspapers in a long time. I subscribe consciously to [hyperlocal online newspaper] – that’s quality journalism that they do there – it’s outstanding, witty, and in terms of reliabilility I sometimes take it with a pinch of salt – they overshoot sometimes. They’re not the authority – if the newspaper says ‘the government says XYZ’, I say ‘that’s interesting’ and then I’ll go to the government site and see what the government actually says. For example, yesterday the Autumn Statement was reported in the news, so I said ‘that’s interesting’, then I go to read what the chancellor actually said on the Treasury website, and read it calmly.The main sources are the council planning website, I will also look at [hyperlocal online newspaper] because they also publish planning things of interest. They also have interesting views on this which I can learn from. I sometimes read other planning related websites and other people who publish on this in general terms. If it’s like this in [other big city], it’s not too hard to apply the same logic to us here, because the legislation is the same. For other matters, I do a lot of correspondence with council bodies mostly. I’ll give you another example – I went to work and I [saw] some people cutting down a tree, so that’s where I get my information from – I ask the person who is there ‘who told you to cut it down?’ and ‘what’s your authority?’ If they then tell me ‘oh, it’s a Scottish Water job’, I might write to the relevant person in Scottish Water and say ‘give me the details. Why is it done now? Why do you have to dig so deep?’ – those kind of things. If I get a satisfactory answer then I might report it at the CC. It’s quite possible in your own local area to have information on the ground – that’s the starting information. If someone builds a house here which is much bigger than I thought should be, then I can speak to a workman on the site. That’s got to be done – it’s important I think not to be just on the desk but you have to be out and look at things, and ideally time-wise I walk or cycle – I don’t have a car - you do see things, or hear things or smell things.*Interviewer mentions noise of piledriver in building site on this area’s main throughfare*Did that not come up in the CC meeting? I didn’t bring it up – I had some correspondence with someone who lives nearby who on my instigation directly corresponded with the site owners and contractors. She wasn’t at the meeting so therefore I didn’t make anything of it because she is the one who is right next to it, and if she doesn’t mention it, it’s maybe not an issue at this time. I know it’s not for a long time – maybe 1 week or 10 weeks, or if they pay compensation, at the moment I assume she’s happy enough. That’s the other thing, if people suffer, they must externalize it at some time. If this person quietly suffers in her house and no-one else is aware, [even though] I can hear it here, I can say ‘at least [this brownfield site] will be built on. For the time being I can handle it. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

[see above] |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

Twitter and Facebook – if they’re being organized. If there was an anti-piling Facebook page – this is hypothetical I would take that with a big pinch of salt. Number one you don’t know who controls things, how they open up the channel, who are these individuals, some of whom I’ve never heard of – do they use pseudonyms? Again, for stalking purposes I might quickly look at it but usually I recoil in horror. You sometimes share things and draw my attention to it, that [neighbouring CC] is doing such-and-such, so I will obviously triage it and say ‘how far is that’ because I’m quite ruthless that [neighbouring CC] is here, and we are here, on the other side and I might run out of steam, but if it’s comparable or if the issue will cross the boundary, I will pa attention to it. And if they have a useful learning experience there, then I will case-study that and say ‘how do they deal with that particular pesky councilor or police officer or whatever?’, and if they’ve got a good technique I might learn from it. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

[see above] |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

The residents – we’ve already covered that – we have a limited footprint there. It’s only increased slightly by my own personal contacts. I’m quite widely known, I bump into people and speak with them, they’ll bring things up. Assuming that we have 25,000 people, that’ll be a small fraction. CCllrs – because I’ve been doing the agenda ever since [the secretary] had her setback – I pile things into the agenda – that’s why it’s quite detailed sometimes. Even if we don’t make much progress on a particular line, it’s till that we’ve shared that information.*Which of the channels that you use works the best?*The ones who are subscribed – they are the keen, self-selected people, even though I can see from MailChimp that some don’t open things properly, they presumably read things in some detail. The website I don’t know what the reach is at the moment. Let’s just say that 500 people look at it regularly, 200 glance at it[[5]](#footnote-5). It’s funny – sometimes I get emails that there’s nothing on the website about X,Y,Z. This is something to do with how much effort we spend on structuring things to make things easy to find, so if people need structure then we are not delivering that. We also don’t deliver the light touch where people get bits of the headlines. Twitter does that to some extent – it only shows the first few lines of post. So if people are interested in [new store being built in this area], if they don’t click on the link all they will know is something’s happening with this store. If it comes together with another piece of information, say a neighbor says ‘god! Have you heard about [store]? Something terrible is happening’, then they say ‘I might as well click on that link’ so it’s handy from that point of view. Our website it too intricate in some ways – it’s not light reading, so in terms of efficiency and what we achieve with it…*Question reiterated*The mailings work very well – they go directly to people and there are fairly detailed technical documents – the agenda and minutes are good-quality information, and reliable on the whole. What we put on the website is much more selective and not as well structured. It’s not an in-depth, fully-comprehensive information library. In between it’s the best we can achieve with our resources, and good compared with other things. In terms of value for money I tell you we’re getting a good deal there. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

Let’s think of some examples here. If I find an interesting web page, which could be newspaper or a Scottish Government page, I quite regularly – and I have a little plug-in app – email that to people. So I am using a little bit like other people use Twitter. I’ve got quite a free hand about for I do it. SO I send it to my daughters if it’s to do with their studies. If it’s to do with CC stuff, I will send it occasionally to fellow office-bearers only, not to the whole CC. (I use MailChimp for that.) Contributing comment-wise to the bottom of blog, I do that very, very rarely. I follow Andy Wightman – I know him personally as well. The reason I comment at the bottom of his blog is that I know other people will read it. I wouldn‘t say ‘oh that’s a beautiful piece Andy’ but if there are other comments already which I strongly disagree either in favour or against Andy, then I might add my penny’s worth because that way I know Andy and other people will see it. SO that’s an argument or discussion we have there, it’s not for sharing information.*That’s almost the opposite of lurking – you are contributing*If I share it, click my button and say email X, Y and Z this page, I do that fairly regularly, and with CC business I do it primarily to office bearers. I’ve done it also to [LA transport convenor] – the [city-wide newspaper] says you’ve launched yet another initiative on [main thoroughfare].*Have you even seen some information on Andy Wightman’s site or whatever, and shared that on paper or in person, written to anyone?*Definitely – with Andy Wightman one of my daughters who studies something related I’ve certainly done that. I certainly would do that [on paper]. With my daughter I would first email it, or phone her – I certainly wouldn’t shy away from doing that if it was appropriate. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

The unreliability of information, which is shocking or even actionable - that’s the planning information. I don’t know whether you are aware but it’s something to do with a new provider of IT services for the council. [names previous and new provider.] As part of the changeover or some other cock-up for quite some time, the alerts that I had set up didn’t work so I didn’t know something was happening. It was a serious problem and I’ve lodged serious complaints about this. Otherwise, when the system is working, it tells you X, Y and Z wants to have this kind of permission here, so that’s quite good. Transport doesn’t have this for its Traffic Regulation Orders – advertising them is by far not so sophisticated, perhaps because the statutory basis is weaker – I don’t know precisely what drives that.*Have there been any conflicts form the information you’ve found?*With developers, obviously – I have conflicts with them because I disagree with them but it’s not outright conflict. There’s some arguments between residents when we’ve talked about controlled parking zones. That was more or less triggered by [CC secretary] against my advice. Much as I’m for controlled parking zones, it’s a hornets’ nest and I don’t have the time for it. She then brought it up and [member of neighbouring CC] took it upon himself to run two petitions, one for and one against CPZs, without reference to us, and I got slightly annoyed about this[[6]](#footnote-6). He’s also a council employee – I think he realized he made a slight mistake here. [Discussion of this person] |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

It depends – if you just say ‘here are the minutes’ or ‘here is the agenda’ I don’t expect a single response. If I do get a response, depending on the nature, I might be delighted if people say ‘ooh that’s an interesting agenda item, I’ll come along’ Or if it is ‘ooh, can I put this on the agenda as well?’ I might say that’s a bit late now but it can go in the next one. But you very rarely, well for [this CC] it sometimes comes up tenuously there. [CC secretary] and [former CC member who is now an LA councilor] are quite keen to use it for responses. I am very suspicious of that because you can always provoke a response – that’s easy – but to do something with it without disappointing people, that’s far harder. I would be very happy if we got a passive thing working quite well, improving on the things we have already on the website, improving on what we already have, making it easier to find things, the more time we can spend on that, that will be a service to the community which is already pretty good I think.*When you comment on, say Andy Wightman posts, is it important that anyone comments on them?*[I get an alert] and I’ll click on that. Andy has something – the whole blog is about things I find important. I’m not going along with Andy 100%, or with his angle, and some people can get very fired with it. So I might stick something in quite provocative in an effort to get a response. Or I might want to say ‘this person before [has written’ such utter nonsense’ that I really must tell them that in not too many words. If I don’t’ get a response, then that’s the response I’m looking for – I’ve shut this person up, he’s realized he’s said some nonsense.*Who do you think reads the comments you’ve put? Do you think you have any idea of the audience?*In AW’s case, it’s very much the hardcore of land rights people – I don’t know how many there are. Latterly since he made the mistake of becoming a Green MSP, he has had more followers. I ‘m not so sure whether they understand it or appreciate it but they will read it I guess. |

## Other RQs

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| --- |
| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

Oh yes – that’s my specialty I would say. If I learn a skill in the golf-club or whatever it was, I with ruthlessly apply the same logic, information skill to the school board where I am a member or to the CC or my work or at home. Making information transferable, transferring it is a key 21st century skill, and people who can do that well do well.*Did things you learnt as a child or in your early working career, have any of those been particularly beneficial for your information abilities?*As I child I was an avid reader of primarily books in those days. Across the board was fiction and other things as well. Then I made a friend, who is still a friend decades later, who took me into the lending library magazine reading section, where there were magazines like *The Butcher’s Weekly*, *The Plumber’s Monthly*, really quite obscure specific things that no so-called normal person would look at, and he said look at these things. ‘Why do you do that?’ and he said you don’t’ understand everything, you just look through and get an idea of what kind of things they are interested in, who advertises in there. Now when I read anything, even on a meta level, I might not understand a single word, but I can still get an idea of what they are trying to achieve, who they are addressing. From *The Butcher’s Weekly*, You might not learn all about sausage-making but you learn other things by the by which are useful.That’s the information-foraging – I don’t know why precisely but it will be useful. Even just assessing it and seeing the quality of writing here is quite low and the layout is poor, so they obviously don’t know what they’re doing, and if on the other hand it’s a community group or they’re very young and it’s the first magazine they’ve put together I let them off for the poor layout but the subtext is still quite interesting. Therefore the answer is always from when I could first read.*Have you had any training or support from a trade union or other professional body?*For information-handling, number 1, I studied computer science and artificial intelligence, so I learnt about information-handling, that was in an abstract and sophisticated way. I’ve always taken a great interest in libraries. I know about the Dewey decimal system and how it came about. I admire people who can think in those terms. I know it’s not absolute - there are other systems – but it’s a system [inaudible] again it’s at a meta level, as we were talking about earlier, and information paper piles I have, that’s information-handling – I do it all the time. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

Like a joint research project? Very little at the moment I don’t know whether you were around when we had the planning subcommittee – five planning applications might come in and I say ‘you do this, you do this’ and everyone just takes one and reports back. That’s sharing the workload – is that what you mean?*[Interviewer explains how information-seeking can be coordinated, co-operative or co-creative]*Our CC does none of that – if there’s information-seeking to be done, I generally do it myself. That might be reflected in the way meetings work. I’m not saying that’s desirable but that’s the way it is. It’s to do with skill-sets, time, a number of things. At work, it does happen sometimes but I’m highly skeptical of others’ information-gathering skills. It is a very sophisticated thing to get that right. You’re an academic so you’ll read papers left, right and centre, maybe - you’ve developed skills and methods. Most people do not know that. That’s a key problem for our society – we’re information-consumers, it’s a problem.*I’ll scan the BBC news website or* the Guardian *website but in this sort of thing – I’ll check whether papers are from a decent-quality journal or I’ll take them with a large pinch of salt*You read the BBC or *the Guardian*, you say – well of the two, I would rate the BBC slightly higher because they have bigger resources. They have an obligation to be neutral. Whether they achieve it or not is another question. They have fewer spelling mistakes, famously. But neither of them are bad sources. I will look at *the Sun* or the *Daily Mail* or whatever but again much more of that sort of stalking background – if some scandal breaks loose which I find relevant, I’ll look at their source, what are they saying, is it misreported, so I’m source-selective – that’s where it starts isn’t it. Then the CC, someone might say ‘ooh I’ve heard this road will be closed’, well know, don’t just hear it, go and find out. That’s what our website should achieve, give them some kind of pointer as to whether that road will be really closed or not. Referencing and footnotes – all those boring academic skills - not everyone can do this. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

Not for a long time but way back a lot of planning documents would be placed in libraries. Certainly the local plan would be placed there, but I can’t remember whether that as at my instigation or voluntary, because librarians… There were often other government consultations there before the web really kicked loose. They were sometimes challenged as to categorizing or looking after it quickly, correctly and so on. Since them since the web, everything is available on the web theoretically. So libraries don’t do much for me. I don’t’ know whether they can do much for others – exhibitions, they always tell us developers want to consult, for example, so they go to a library and put a thing there. I don’t know whether they charge them for that – there should be a charge for that. If a developer wants to put an exhibition for a week or a month or whatever, make them pay. If they want to put a consultation in [a newspaper] they would have to pay. They are obliged to advertise as instructed by the planning officer, also we comment on it, that’s a reasonable way of doing consultation. Those costs are minimal – it’s when highly paid consultants come along that’s when it costs. It would help the library but they have no good scheme for doing this.*You haven’t had any training on information-gathering from public libraries here?*In this city? Hmmm – way back, when I was a student and used the central library. The national library, as well – the librarians there were very helpful and taught me how to go about finding things. Most libraries, once you’ve been in there and seen the signposts then I can do 90% of the work myself. The library reference desk – there used to be very good personnel there and sometimes I used to go on a fishing expedition to find out about XYZ, I’d no idea where to look even in the paper indices they had those days, [the librarians] helped, but other than that a grown-up adult person has to have the capacity to learn how to use a given library within a limited amount of time – they get shown around, then they must be able to do it by themselves. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

If you’re joining various mailing lists, in the old days you would subscribe to various hard-copy mails, which was reasonable good. The council also hosts or at least provides space for the civic forum. It’s something where secretarial services are provided by [a local architectural preservation society] and they meet far too little, three times a year on council premises. The agenda is drawn up in a slightly obscure way and is often behind the times because they meet only 3 times a year but people who attend it are from CCs or are residents. Anyone who is one of those can become a amber or come along. There’s no voting – it’s purely an information-sharing thing – there’s debating too. The format is often that the director of planning comes along and talks about planning matters or other issues like this, or to publish a new local plan – the biggest issue will be X, Y or Z, and the timescale will be like this, and here on the graph you can see [inaudible] and people in the room can pipe up and gently influence things. It’s mostly information coming from the council or via the council from the government about planning and public realm issues and that kind of thing. They’re quite useful. The council has the transport forum which tries do the equivalent but is quite differently organized and it’s cack-handed and I’m so angry about it. The difference is that the civic forum meets three times a year at 4:30 or 5pm on a Wednesday or Thursday and is neutrally chaired. The transport forum is run completely by the city council apparatchiks, the agenda is strictly controlled by [LA transport convenor] only and her vice-convenors, the meetings are at 10am in the morning only, so who can get to them. The people who come along are the bus lobby, the lorry-drivers’ lobby, Sustrans and [regional cycling pressure group], people in paid positions. I am there as the northeast [of this city] community representative. I’ve got a job, I’ve got a life, I’m the only person there who comes as a user of the city transport services. Lorries and taxis only use the city to provide a service to us. So if we say ‘we don’t’ want any more lorries in this city, and they say that supermarkets will go, that’s our choice – maybe we want to cycle out to the suburbs or whatever, or some other means – the lorry-drivers are here on our say-so that’s the way I look at it. Of course the legislation is different – if it’s a public road any idiot can drive the biggest lorry anywhere. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

Time is an issue, certainly, but on the whole I think I’m pretty much at the forefront. With things like Twitter and Facebook, I know a little bit more about it than other people. You can always learn more. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

Information skills are vital. We don’t transact actions on the ground, We don’t have any financial power. Our currency is information |
| 1. Anything else?

One of the perennials is Police statistics – I’ve made real efforts there, realising that numbers aren’t in the average police skill-set, and they are bothered with a lot of paperwork, but I also know that they employ statisticians so it shouldn’t be too difficult once the data are in and coded by experts to come out with the same [i.e. consistent] Information every month or every quarter. So I’ve been trying to help the police there.[conversation about web-maps that gets air-quality data from scraping other websites] the problem is that people can very quickly lose confidence in it. I work in finance, and while not every single figure is 100%, the raw picture is there and the deviance is 1% or whatever – we can live with it, so long as I convey trust, everyone believes those figures and makes important decisions based on that. If I slip up, and have to make corrections, maybe once I would get away with that – the second time they wouldn’t believe that piece of paper any longer.*But not everyone can run their own air samplers!*Oh no, but you need to get it from an official, reliable source |

## Demographics questions

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| --- |
| 1. How old are you?

[50-59] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Male |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

I prefer not to say |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Master’s  |
| 1. How long ago was this?

30 years |

# CCllr interview 04

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes, that’s absolutely fine. |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

I’m just a general member. |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

Oh, about 17 years.  |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

Yes, I was secretary for about 15 of those years. |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No. |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

It’s very urban. |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

Um, how would I describe it? Oh. We’re taking on the responsibility for things that happen in our community. We’re being a sounding board for the public that live within the area.  |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

I think we’re quite good, in that we produce a quarterly newsletter. Just the timing of some things is difficult. Because it’s only quarterly, you know, some things are out of date before we can think about publishing the newsletter. |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Do I consciously think about it?*Yes.*Probably not. I probably go and look things up when I need to know them.  |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

I phone the Council. I speak to the liaison person.*Do you have any other sources, like a description of what a CC should be doing?*We have a handbook, with a description of what’s expected of a CC. *How did you learn about that handbook?*Because I was secretary, and when we sign our declaration to [bring folk?] onto the CC every two years, it comes with a list of what’s expected as a CCllr. We have to sign that and send it back.*Basically, the council said ‘here’s what you must do – on you go’?*Yes. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

I suppose I’m very good at seeking out support, so in the beginning there wasn’t a lot. The Chairman that we had at that time was quite fixed in his views, shall we say, so I just did as I was instructed by him. But afterwards I… after he was no longer Chair, he actually died, then I used the liaison person within [LA], who was really helpful.*So that information was useful?*Yes. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

Probably the planning consent. It’s very legal.*Why in particular do you avoid that one?*Because the legal stuff is far too complicated.*Quite understood. I work with three CCs in Edinburgh here and planning just does my head in!*[Laughs]*Has avoiding that source had any effect?*I don’t think it’s had any great effect because there is really not anywhere left to build in our CC area. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

Can you just say that again? How do I find…?*How do you work out if the information you find on your duties and rights as a CCllr is any good?*I suppose I agree with most of them, so therefore I haven’t thought to find out if they are any good. |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

Yes. If I get an e-mail and there’s something there, I would look further, just to see what information I needed.  |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

It would depend on what the issue was. I use the local councillors as a sounding board a lot of the time and again the liaison people in the council are quite helpful. *What sources would you use to find out about, say, a planning development or a burning local issue?*I would Google if I had to. I do use my local library for things, for example we’ve just completed, or we are just about to complete, a brochure on our 50th anniversary. It’s 50 years this year since the first house was built in our estate, and we did a little bit in the local newsletter. And we found out quite a lot from the local library. The librarian there does quite a bit of research with us, you know, to get pictures and things like that. *So you’re going back to printed things and written stuff from your library?*Yes. *Apart from Google, are there any other sources that you use? Any other online resources?*I would attempt the [LA] website, but that would probably be a waste of time. [Laughs]. *I remember from when I lived in [redacted] that [the council website] wasn’t very good, but I think they have sorted it a lot since then.*It’s not that much better. [Laughs] |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

*You’ve told me that you avoid looking at planning sources, so I’ll move onto the next question.* |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

How do I find if the information is any good about…?*About local issues and developments. Say, for example, I wanted to put a dormer window on my house and that was not something that was welcome, how would you find information about that?*There is planning information, there’s a book of planning regulations, so I would be able to obtain that from Planning Department. *Would you be able to then work out that the information you have found is helpful or not?*Yes, it is. It’s complicated, but once you find what you’ve been looking for. |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

We would use the newsletter that we produce. *You don’t have a website or..?*There is a website and there is a Facebook page. Depending on what it was, we could use the website and we could use the Facebook page. I just know that we don’t have an awful lot of followers on them, so the newsletter is usually the last resort. It goes to everybody, whether they want it or not.  |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

I don’t really do anything with the website. That wouldn’t be my decision. If I felt that it needed to be shared, I might mention that. *Does someone else make the decisions on what goes online?*Yes. *If you have had a piece of information about some local development, have you yourself ever chosen deliberately not to share it online?*No. If it’s something that requires to be shared, it would be shared. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

Conflicts from the information that I’ve found?*Yes.*Not that I can think of off the top of my head. There have been conflicts, but not from the information I’ve found, just from things that maybe happened within the boundaries. *Can you give me a brief example?*Well, planning permission for a wind turbine – that caused quite a lot of conflict. We did share all that information but I don’t know that that’s what you’re looking for.  |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

Well, again, it depends what we’re sharing. *Can you give me an example of something where you really wanted a response to something you put online?*When we are looking for volunteers. [Laughs]*I can imagine your frustration there. So, in that case, it would matter if no-one responds.*Yes.*If you, say, put up an article saying ‘there is going to be a bonfire at Plockton Green on Saturday’, would it matter whether you got an online response?*You know what, I doubt we would get a response to something like that. It would have to be very controversial before we got a response.*I know the very feeling. Who do you imagine reads the material your CC puts up online?*I would imagine people in the community. *But you can only imagine that – you don’t know for sure?*Yes. |

## Other RQs

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| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

So my roles in life, has that helped me?*Yes. To do your job as a CCllr.*Yes. I’m a parent, a grandparent, a working mother. I drive. You know all those kinds of things help me with what’s going on in my community. *Can you explain that a little more?*In my working role, I work for the NHS, so if there’s something comes up about the NHS, I can generally comment on that. As a parent I certainly can remember what my children needed within the estate. As a grandparent I’m very aware of school parking issues, that sort of thing. *Do you think that things like your organizational culture at your work, or your gender or any other social factors [interruption from background noise] affected your ability to handle information?*I suppose it’s made me better at it. *Have you had any help with information handling from your trade union or any other professional body?*No.  |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

*Do you work with others to find information?*Do I work with others to find information?*Yes. Other CCllrs?*Not really. There are, there is an organisation that tries to bring them together, but no, we very much work on our own. We can communicate if we need to. *So if you were handling some particular topic, you would do it all yourself?*Usually. Unless it was something that was to cross boundaries. In that case we would work with another CC. *Thinking about working with other people on your CC, do you ever share information finding tasks with others on your CC?*Yes, frequently. *How do you go about that? How do you organize it? Who does what?*Usually we volunteer. Somebody says, ‘I’ll help you’. *Are there any rules or social norms which say, ‘I’ll do this bit, you can do that bit’?*It depends on what expertise the person already brings to the CC. *I guess it’s more about being cooperative, because you and your CC will set the goal of the information, will decide why you are trying to find this information.*Yes. It depends what comes in in the mail as well. *Do you get a fortnightly or monthly list of planning applications from the council?*A weekly*.* |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

A lot of help. Whether you go in to find a book or whether you go in to find your local history stuff. *Is there any extra support you would like from your local library?*I don’t think so. I think they’re very helpful.  |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

From the local authority?*Yes, from the council.*Not any. I suppose I just use my life skills to find out what I need. I haven’t every felt the need to go to the local authority to find that out, unless it’s to do with the council.  |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

Not unless you count Windows 10 as a barrier to finding stuff. [Laughs] *Speaking purely personally, I’m a Mac-head. I don’t like Windows in any way, shape or form, but that’s just me.* |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

Could you run that by me again?*[Repeats]*Well you have to be able to know that what you’re telling people is correct, therefore if you don’t understand or you haven’t researched the information, they’re not going to get the right answer, are they?*That’s absolutely true. Is there any example you can think of where your CC work has helped build social capital or support someone in integrating as a citizen or done anything for their civil rights?*Can’t give you anything like that. |
| 1. Anything else?

Not really. Just when you go to the bother to find something out it is good to share it. |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[50-59] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White Scottish |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Degree. |
| 1. How long ago was this?

20 years |

# CCllr interview 05

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes, I am happy to do that. |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

My role on the CC is planning liaison officer. |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

I am in my second term, so it’s probably just coming up to four years. *And you have been the planning liaison officer for all that time?*I would say three of those four years. |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No, not really. |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No, that’s it. This is my first one.*Hope you are enjoying it!*Oh, it’s fun most of the time. |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

No, I would say it’s ordinary urban. Well we’re a suburb of [big city], so within the city limits and it’s mainly residential housing but there’s quite a bit of green space around us – fields, agricultural use and whatever. *I’m afraid I don’t know your area at all. I did have a quick look on…*That’s OK. |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

How would I describe the CC’s role?*Yes.*Well from my perspective, it’s about helping provide a voice for the community on various matters, particularly planning matters and development, but also services within the community.*And your role within that is…?*My role is on planning, where I actually actively review all planning applications for our area, and make a recommendation to the CC as a whole, whether it should comment on them or not. Most of them don’t require comment but occasionally we do. I keep them abreast of all the things that are happening in the development area for the community.  |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

At sharing information?*Yes.*I missed the last bit, sorry.*[Repeats]*Right, yes. Is that between ourselves or with the community? Well, I’ll address both points. Between ourselves we’re pretty good. We have a distribution list so if things are happening we communicate between the CCllrs. With the community, that’s more of a challenge. What we do have, we have a Facebook page and we have a website. Information goes up on both of those sources to provide information for the community. We also post notices in the public library about meetings.  |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Yes, I think we do. I think collectively we do, and I certainly do. There are a number of documents that are provided by the council to help CCllrs understand what their roles are and the responsibilities.  |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

There are a number of sources. A couple of organizations, one called Planning Democracy, and then the Planning Aid Scotland – they provide information on planning matters, which is very useful to CCs in general and certainly the planning liaison officer. *Are there any printed sources that you use, specifically about your role as a CCllr?*Yes, well the CCs in [this LA] have a model constitution and there is also a document, I think it’s called… what is it called? Model constitution or model operation, a protocol if you like about how CCs should be run. There are a couple of documents which are available for all CCs in [this LA]. *And so those emanate from the council?*Yes, principally from the council, that’s right. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

Other than the documents I referred to, the council has a CC liaison officer, who’s a council officer, and she organizes some training events. So we’ve had sessions on planning, for example, but also on chairing meetings, how to manage the funding of your CC for the treasurer, who went to those sort of sessions, and various other things, such as how to interact with or deal with licensing requests, you know alcohol licensing, as some areas have quite a large number of licensed premises, and they need to be considered. *How useful was this information or support?*It was good, actually. For many, it’s essential. Some come into it completely cold, to the CC, so they are on quite a steep learning curve so these sessions are quite good. It often depends on the quality of the person who is giving the explanation. They’re generally officers within the council and some are better at releasing information than others. *Am I right in thinking your liaison officer is [name of CCLO]?*That’s right. She’s very good actually.*She’s certainly been really helpful when I’ve been doing research around CCs so never met her but from the online relationship or e-mail relationship, she’s very good.*Yes. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

[Not asked] |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

How do we know if the information is any good?*Yes.*Oh, good question that. [Laughs] I guess we have to consider the source of the information, and if we think it’s a trusted source then we tend to rely on it. But some might say, that information may also be biased, so you need to think about if there are biases in the information that’s been given to you to lead you to a particular point of view. *This might be a slightly leading question, but do you do any reality checks like ‘Oh, we’ve been told this but does that work in reality?’*Yes, a little bit. There’s an issue that’s going on in [this LA]at the moment, they want to put in an incinerator burning waste so some people are challenging the information that’s been provided and whether it’s actually independent enough, so quite a lot of work has been done looking at independent sources of information. And unfortunately it’s still a little bit contradictory in many places. Yes, some research is done.  |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

[Request to repeat question, so repeated]. Yes, I would say that we do, generally speaking. We try and think, as a CC we will think through the issues and discuss who needs to be involved and what sources of information we should look to.  |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

I guess it would principally be through the web. Local media, we have a local paper, the [name of paper], which is pretty good at covering local events. Actually, what other sources do we have… there’s the web, there’s local press. *Is there a council planning portal?*The council has a website, of course, I should have mentioned that. It’s quite good. Certainly from a planning perspective, they’re very good. They’ve upgraded the system this year and so all the planning applications that come in are put online. It’s very easy to see what planning applications have come into your area and what they’re about.*Does it display all the documents such as people’s objections?*Yes, generally. Sometimes it takes them a while to get the documents loaded but they’ve got much better at that recently so they’re on there fairly quickly. All the drawings, the specifications, whatever, that are submitted with the planning application get loaded onto the system. *How did you learn about these sources?*Some if it comes through the training that [CCLO] organized, so you when you become a CCllr the training sessions help you identify where to look. Also the handover process, if you like, from the previous CCllrs involved in planning. She handed over all the stuff to me and showed me how she gathered information and what she does.*I like the idea of handover.* Yes.  |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

[Asks for repeat so repeated]. No, I can’t say there is anything I avoid doing. [laughs] |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

Hmm. That’s a good question. I guess we have to take it a little bit on trust, but really speaking to other CCllrs on the CC, they will often have heard something or have a view on something, they may have a different understanding of what the issue is so that’s a way of sense checking whether the CC. That’s the main method I guess.  |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

With the community in general?*Yes.*The main routes that we use, or tools we use, are Facebook and through the CC website. Oh, I also ought to mention we have a community magazine that goes out once a quarter, so we always have a large section in there on CC matters and I write a section on planning issues, to keep people abreast of what’s going on in the area. *Do you do anything through word of mouth?*Word of mouth? Occasionally we will make a presentation to one of the local community groups, and that tends to happen just once a year, I guess. But word of mouth, of course if I am speaking with people I will mention issues and very often they will contact me. The CC newsletter has all the details of the CCllrs so people will often ring me up and that goes to every house in our area, so about 4,000 copies go out. *Just out of nosiness: this isn’t part of the research but, as I say, I work with three Edinburgh CCs so I would like to get them to do some things, how do you afford to get a newsletter printed?*It’s entirely funded by advertising. It started off initially with a small grant from the council as a very simple newssheet, but gradually the number of advertisers grew from the area. We now are actually able to cover the costs of printing quarterly and distributing it. *That’s something I’ll suggest to my colleagues.*It can be done, particularly if you get local businesses interested. They’re quite keen to publicise their services. *There’s no such thing as bad publicity!*That’s right. [laughs] |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

Well, I guess, most of the stuff that goes online is stuff that people think they should know about – like road closures or consultations on planning matters. That always goes onto the Facebook and the website. The offline bit is through the hard copies, either through meetings or through our quarterly newsletter. The newsletter goes to everybody. The meeting minutes get posted on the website but also the public library. That’s about it, I think, so I guess the distinction is the urgency of the matter. We hope… not everybody uses Facebook so not everybody sees that, but hopefully the ones who are interested do that, so they get the information very quickly. *I’m assuming you don’t run the website yourself, or…?*I’m not the main administrator. Our treasurer does that. But I have access to it, so I log documents and make changes to it. *Can you do the same with Facebook?*Yes, I look after Facebook. I’m the Facebook man. *On the assumption that someone has responded online, on Facebook to something that you have put, have you ever contacted them back except via Facebook?*Yes, occasionally someone will get in touch and they will give me an e-mail. We might need to research a matter and then get back to them by e-mail. But you’re right, most of the interaction actually takes place through Facebook because they will send a message or make a comment and then we will respond to the comment. *And you’ll do that all through Facebook rather than…?*Certainly. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

What conflicts? Hmm. I’m just trying to think of an example. Conflicts with the information that we have got or conflicts on sources or…?*I’m thinking more of conflicts with people.*Well, I guess, the main conflicts arise when there is disagreement over a particular planning application – some people are for it and some people are against it, and some people might then challenge the information that’s been submitted as part of the planning application. There one of the challenges or tasks for the CC is to ensure that what the planning applicant is saying is true, and make sure that can be portrayed to those who are concerned about it in an honest fashion. I guess there are potential conflicts there but certainly there are often conflicts round major planning applications but that’s just because people don’t want things to happen – it’s less about information and more about the actual intent. *Does it make a difference whether you share information online or offline to the possibility of conflict?*No, I don’t think so, no. Certainly major disputes on planning, major issues, we will often have public meetings where the local residents will come to a monthly meeting and share their concerns, often with the planning applicant present. I guess in some cases of course there are uncertainties about how the planning application is going to go through, so promises may be made and then never fulfilled – they will often be challenged and that can lead to conflict.*Has that affected how you have approached information gathering or information sharing?*I would say it probably has, particularly when we can see something that we think may well relate to a conflict of interest between the people who live in the area and those who want to take forward a development. We think very carefully now at the CC, well how are we going to manage this, how do we try and take a balanced view. Think not only about the immediate effect on residents, we have to do that, but also think what about the greater community area – do they actually think differently? That does present a challenge for us in terms of how do you establish that point of view, because many don’t get involved in planning stuff until it immediately affects them. *One of the underlying motives for that question is the concept of self-efficacy, the belief that you can do whatever it is, and so another way of asking it is ‘has conflict or the potential for conflict affected your belief that you can gather, process and share information’?*Yes, it certainly causes us to pause and reflect quite frequently. As a CC we will often take a view. I have a potential application at the moment where as a CC we think it’s quite good for the area, but the local residents are very strongly against it, and so we’re now just struggling, but thinking about how we establish a key sense of what the community as a whole thinks as opposed to a small group of residents or the CC itself. *I guess there’s differences in your interests behind that.*Yes, that’s right. What the development may bring may be of greater value to the community as a whole and we need to think carefully about that. *Understood. Fortunately I’ve not had to make such decisions but I can appreciate the position you are in.* |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

It’s good to get a response. [laughs] So, I would say, yes, it is important that we do get responses. Often they are limited. Sometimes people might pass a comment and if you meet them in the street say something, ‘oh, I saw your notice on the Facebook page – I agree with that’. But they might not comment on the page itself. So it is important to get a response. We’re never quite sure how wide or how far the message is reaching. *Getting a response specifically online isn’t hugely important, or…?*I would say it’s important because it actually tells us that people are reading the stuff and thinking about what we’re saying. *So it would matter if no-one responded?*Yes. We would certainly be disappointed. *You’ve almost pre-empted this question, but who do you imagine reading the material you put online?*Online? It’s probably a limited set of the community, but it does capture quite a number of people. Facebook users, [some words inaudible], there are some people who just don’t use it at all. More people look at the stuff that’s on our website because even the older members of our population, many of those go to the website to find out stuff. But there are some who don’t use either method, so they rely fully on the quarterly magazine for getting an update on what’s happening. *How do you know about your online audience? Or how do you know who your online audience is?*Facebook gives the information that somebody has ‘liked’ your page, or they like a posting, so we have an indication through that. We get a weekly Facebook page summary which shows whether you are hitting more people or fewer people. Don’t have a similar measure for the website, so that’s a bit unknown.*I’ve occasionally thought about doing analytics but my head’s gone bang.*[laughs]*Does Facebook tell you any information about your audience, like where they are and what sort of person they are?*No, or at least I have not looked into that. I don’t think so. I’ve not looked into any great depth, though. |

## Other RQs

|  |
| --- |
| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

Yes, I would say so. As an example, I worked as a petroleum engineer with a major oil company, so am very familiar with the use of IT as you might expect and so, I tend to know how to go and look for information and if I don’t know where to look, I know who to speak to to find out. That has set me in good stead, I think. *So your information skills have come from your working life?*Predominantly, yes. *Do you think the organizational culture at [the oil company] was part of that?*Yes.*Can you describe that a little more?*Well, the company itself relies heavily on electronic information and messaging, and information is held online and stored online, so project information is stored on online servers so the aspiration is a paperless organisation. It’s nothing like that but it does mean a lot of information is stored electronically so people have to get used to the tools for managing that. And information is shared electronically because it’s a worldwide organisation so you have to be able to send stuff from one part of the world to another. *Do you think your gender or any other social factor has affected your information handling abilities and methods?*No, I would say I’m fairly neutral on that.*Has a trade union or any other professional body helped you with developing information abilities?*No, I’ve never been a member of trade union. I’m a member of a professional institution, Chartered Engineers, so I share information with that organisation but most of it comes through my work experience with [major oil company]. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not)

(i.e. social context)How do I work with others on the CC on finding and sharing information?*Yes.* We’re pretty well connected. As in may volunteer organizations, you’ve got a heap of individuals, some like doing stuff, others just turn up to offer comment. Those who like doing stuff are pretty active on sharing information. All business tends to be shared with all members of the CC. The ones who like to be engaged will be using e-mail regularly to say ‘well I’m doing this – can you give me a hand with that?’ or ‘how do I do this? Where do I look for that bit of information?’. There’s pretty good e-mail contact. Also we speak to each other on the phone pretty regularly, some of them. *Are there some people who say, write drafts of things and others who edit it later on?*Yes. Very often we might have a document which needs to be, well maybe we will respond to a survey that’s being run by the Council or the Government, and they’re looking for a response from the CC so somebody will take on the responsibility for preparing the response in draft form, which will then be sent to all the members of the CC – some of which will come back with comments, others won’t. Generally you get enough input that you can then formulate a response that everybody is going to be happy with. *Within information literacy theory, there are three conceptions of how people might work together – coordinated being when you and your colleagues work independently towards a common goal which you have not set and you have not set the methods of achieving it; cooperative is when you and your colleagues do set the common goal; and co-constructed is when you and your CC colleagues set the common goal and decide how it might be achieved. Do any of those strike you as being the majority of the way you work?*I’m just thinking, we’re actually doing stuff at the moment where all three models apply. We’ve got someone who’s taken responsibility for getting Christmas lights organized and she’s pretty much done it all. I’ve helped a little bit, but it’s all been left to her and me to a certain extent. We’re putting together what we call a Community Plan, which is involving the bulk of the CC members, and people have been given responsibility for preparing parts of it. That’s certainly something we’re going to have to work collectively on. Then the middle one, we often have something that we agree as a CC but then certain people take ownership of and get on with it  |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

Nothing directly. It’s not something that I have used. We do use the public library occasionally for copying materials. It’s funded by the City Council so we are allowed to do that. The libraries do post our information, so agendas and minutes of meetings get posted on the library noticeboard. I provide a copy of our quarterly magazine to the local studies group at the City Library, but other than that, that’s about my interaction with the library.*Is there any extra support, specifically about information handling, that you would like from the library?*Not that I can think of, to be honest with you. I think we’ve got enough access to various options within the City Council that we can actually deal with it that way. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

Generally it’s good. Some are better than others, as always. Some we have a battle with to try to get any information out of them but by and large, they are helpful. [CCLO] is a hugely valuable resource and very supportive.*Long may she stay in post!*I agree. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

Yes, I didn’t set our website up. I’m not really au fait with most aspects of creating a website so I’d like to know a bit more about that. But I do some editing and posting of stuff on the web, only it’s fairly limited and it’s just the stuff that the guy who did set it up showed me how to do. That would be something I would like to know more about. *I’m going to be ever so slightly nosey and see if I can get onto your website for a second. [pause] I’ve got [URL]?*That’s the one. *I’m going to guess it’s based on Wordpress.* I think it is, yes, that’s right. *It’s taking a little while to load. So the gap is basically how to use Wordpress rather than…?*That’s right, yes. I know the very basic aspects so I can edit documents and can create a new page but there are some things that I don’t know how to do, so I would like to know more about that.*But you’re not aware of any gaps in your information gathering and information processing, it’s just the information publishing where…?*Yes, I think so. I’m reasonably comfortable with how to go about finding stuff on the internet and also contacting individuals directly in the local council. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

I think a recent example is the independent inquiry into planning rules and regulations – it’s quite an extensive bit of work done, sponsored by the Scottish Government gathering input into that. And I think if you were not comfortable using electronic media for searching and finding information, you will have found it difficult to actually get your voice heard. We do know, for example, that there are some CCs in [this LA] whose planning officer does not use e-mail, does not know how to use a computer. I struggle to understand how you can operate in that way, but what we are told is that they see hard copy lists of the planning applications for the area and if they are interested in one then they go along to the council offices and look at the hard copy plan. *OK. If they’ve got time to do that, good luck to them.*[laughs]. Well, I guess they do. But it doesn’t strike me as being very efficient. *So your example of using information skills would be to respond to a government request for information?*Yes, that’s right. There are quite a lot of consultations that come out through the Scottish Government and you really do need to be familiar with the computers and also how to access information to respond to those. *The government website has got huge amounts of stuff.*Yes.*Are there any things where you’ve used information to improve things in your particular community?*In the community itself? I don’t think I can really [inaudible]. The timely sharing of stuff, roadworks for example, sending that out to the community as widely as we can so that they are aware that the road is going to be closed, or there will be some sort of problem, so they can deal with it. That’s one of the key things that we use Facebook for, getting that information out very quickly to members of the community. |
| 1. Anything else?

Just give me a couple of seconds to think about that one. [pause] No, I can’t think of anything.  |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[60-69] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Male |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

BSc. |
| 1. How long ago was this?

40 years |

# CCllr interview 06

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes, sure |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

I’m just a member |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

2 years |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

N/A |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Small urban |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

We’re supposed to be the voice of the community, to represent community views with regard to community matters relating to the city council, like statutory planning and community planning.*Your part within that would be?*To use my knowledge, skills and experience in any roles that support that. I update the website, so I’ve got a kind of … I know about media, social media, stuff like that. So I take on that role to make sure that the people have as much information as possible in a format that’s suitable to them, various formats, and also with my kind of background I can represent the CC at like community planning, youth or community development type stuff |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

Well, not very, we don’t have a lot of, it’s a very old-school CC. I ask for the minutes or agenda from a meeting and it wasn’t available, the secretary hasn’t been sending out agendas. So there’s some very basic stuff that’s not happening. We should be able to get stuff out – we live in a digital age and people expect stuff on their phone or on a website, to read at their convenience, not at the convenience of the person, the secretary, you know, so it’s not a great experience. |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

I do, yes.*Could you describe that a little?*D’you know that way, the kind of information in terms of reference, standing orders, duties, what’s expected. In my experience, there’s some basics that are not happing on the CC. I’ve worked for community groups for 20 years, the roles and expectations of people is not necessarily, people don’t necessarily have access to that kind of information, like it’s not available from the council website, once again it’s not vey accessible. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

D’you know that way I have to email the officer involved in it. I’ll give you an example – there’s a thing called the blue book, I was asking about what rights I had in terms of receiving information from the secretary, and the planning etc – it’s very bureaucratic.*So you have to badger people by email?*Basically yes, and then they come back to you and they want to meet with you to talk about things rather than give you the information.*So there aren’t printed or online…?*There is now, just in the last couple of months. You find it very difficult to find the scheme of delegation and the associated documents.*The scheme of delegation – just out of nosiness, what is that?*That’s the rules and regulations for CCs in [this city]. I’ll just get you the right term – it’s the scheme of establishment for CCs. That’s available but there’s another part that’s not available on the website. I can’t find it to ask questions about it.*So how did you learn about these two information packs?*I used to work with a CC in [another LA] and knew that this information was available. It wasn’t freely available – you had to ask for it. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

None – no introduction, no training offered – still haven’t had any training in two years now.*Am I right in thinking that [this city] has CC elections same day all across the city?*I don’t think so, no.*That’s a surprise, because Edinburgh’s just been through it where the whole lot got…*I think in terms of that’s been the CC forum – I was at one and I think that’s a frequent topic of discussion – the alignment of elections should fall on the same day. SO there’s definite interest in it but I don’t think they all fall on different times.*I know it varies from LA to LA – Edinburgh’s just done it but say Aberdeenshire might be two years hence or something like that – can’t remember all the dates.* |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

No |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

I think that because it’s got the council logo on it, you have to kind of trust that that’s reliable. |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

Not really because we’re not really allowed to.*You’re not allowed to say anything or find out about what’s happening in your area?*The way the chair works – we can raise things but normally the chair asks for everything to go through her. Within AOCB we can raise things – I’ve tried to put things on the agenda and it’s been refused. I’ve tried to raise things through AOCB, I’ve been talked over, it’s not a great experience.*Sorry to hear that.*Not your fault. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

Probably through Facebook – there’s a Facebook group called ‘[this area] matters’ which is one of the areas the CC covers. That’s where the social network, that’s where a lot of the things that are issues – could be hypodermic needles, could be dog-fouling, parking on the pavements, that’s where you normally find neighbours talking about that stuff.*Are there any printed sources or do you hear anything through word of mouth?*Word of mouth yeah – I’m on the parent council for the local school so sometimes I hear that there’s cross-cutting issues. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

D’you know that way that a lot of the stuff – it’s word of mouth but it’s between, it’s very much through the office-bearers. It’s them and their friends – I try to avoid them unless I have to. But we don’t as a CC have a Facebook page – they avoid the social media, if you want to put it like that.*I can see you’ve got a website, which I’m guessing is based on Wordpress*.That’s right, yeah.*I really like the colours – it’s very attractive with the top illustration*The website’s not bad, but the information – there’s not much there. *Having looked at every CC website in 2012 and 2014, yours looks at first glance as though it does what I’d want it to do, but that’s just my opinion.*I don’t disagree but over the last two years I’ve had to chip away even to get them to get minutes to me to get minutes on, make sure we’re open and transparent. It’s a major issue for local people. It’s still a wee work in progress. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

It depends on the source – if it’s coming through a post on social media, we’ve got people in the community that are well connected, so they’re posting stuff on Facebook – they’ve normally got everything from where it’s happening, what time it’s happening and if there’s any cost. Sometimes people sharing information know how to share information, rather than there’s a [inaudible] at the church and they think it’s a Wednesday .*So you judge it by the person who’s posting it?*The person who’s posting it and how reliable previous information they’ve shared. |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

The website, and for me, I share it with friends and on some local pages. Like I said there’s a Facebook page call [this area] matters, so I share that information there. And the parent council, which has a Facebook page |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

I find the information offline – that comes mainly through attending the CC and receiving papers. And the information online that can be shared from people and two people – there’s more of a network of interest, so if something’s going on in the church then unless you’re speaking to the person from the church at the time at the CC, then you wouldn’t know about that, whereas online you can get that posted and share that, second- or third-hand as well. *Thinking about you sharing information, or sending out information that you’ve received, if I’ve understood correctly, you can re-share online information, but verbal or printed information, you can best do that face-to-face?*Yeah, sometimes, aye. I can share information with people that I do don’t know online, and I can share it with my networks offline – I can only share information with people that I do know – I would tell them it.*Say you’ve put something up the website, and someone’s put a comment beneath that, have you ever directly contacted such a person?*I think we’ve only had one instance of that and we responded [inaudible] quite quick, we responded through the website. The secretary of the CC, that’s what he decided should happen. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

I don’t think I’ve come across anything like that. |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

It’s important in terms of understanding that these messages are getting out there, and people are reading them and doing something with them or responding to them, rather than nothing’s happening about them.*Would it matter if no-one responded?*It would and it wouldn’t – very few people read the website but once again the website’s only one way of communicating. Websites may be a bit passé if you know what I mean.*If you put something on Facebook, would it matter if you did or didn’t get a response?*No, I think at this kind of level of engagement with people, we’re providing information.*Thinking about the audience for your website, who do you imagine they are*?I think for the website it’s people who are 25 to 45, that are basically literate and who know how to use the web effectively.*Do you have any evidence of that?*We don’t have any evidence – we don’t collect it. |

## Other RQs

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| --- |
| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

Yeah, I think so – I used to be a volunteer trade union representative – we had to do a lot of research in terms of finding information and [something about getting it to the public] – that’s been particularly helpful*Has the organizational culture at your work or in any other organization you’ve been in, or your gender or any other social factor affected your ability and methods of finding information?*I’m a community worker so it very much does – a lot of the approaches I take through the role within the CC |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

It’s through email now where before if we tried to have a project it’s very much face to face meetings but it’s probably a combination of both now. If I come up with an idea then I’ll email the chair or whatever rather than have a meeting where nothing takes place.*I’ve been to a few meetings like that – what I’m trying to get at is the different roles you take or the different ways share out the work.*That’s normally based on knowledge, skills and experience. Once again, my background is working with community groups and being IT-literate etc. So depending on what the task is, then it’ll be allocated based on who the person is and what their skills are.*Are there any social rules or norms that might affect who does what?*Yeah – the chair , she decides –it’s very autocratic. The chair decides and most of the time everyone falls in line in terms of what they get to do.*So she’s setting both the goals and the way those goals are achieved?*Very much so – it’s not agreed, it’s ‘you do this, you do that’. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

The computers at the public library are available. I’ve not had help apart from using the resources which are good. They’re open at a variety of times, the resource is good but I know that there’s staff on hand to help people do google searches etc and the staff are helpful so it’s a good resource in terms of having the computers there, having tht free resource open at night etc*Have you had any training yourself from librarians?*No – there was an offer to the CC to provide training around IT, using Microsoft Office applications etc but they didn’t take it up. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

None |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

Not for the CC, I don’t think. In terms of the website, in terms of Facebook and sharing information, I’m quite comfortable with that kind of thing, but other members, they could do a bit of work there but I don’t think there is the want on their side to do more. I think it’s quite generational. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

I think in terms of planning, there’s been examples where I’ve shared information about local meetings which would build social capital in terms of meetings being well attended. So some of those people who were neighbours but others weren’t and hadn’t met, so in terms of social networks that was definitely something that was a positive. |
| 1. Anything else?

No, d’you know that way that people who in terms of engagement, there should be some kind of standard but they should recognize that people require it in a range of formats - websites are only one stage towards that. We should recognise the digital formats – that should be embedded within those process, rather than the old school way of turning up at a meeting, reading an agenda you’ve never seen before. |

## Demographics questions

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| --- |
| 1. How old are you?

[40-49] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Male |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Honours degree |
| 1. How long ago was this?

5 years  |

# CCllr interview 07

## Introduction questions

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| --- |
| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes, absolutely |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Secretary |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

Since April, so 8 months (both) |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Rural  |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

We see it as being acting as a voice for the community – on various matters to assess what the community opinion is, what the community’s feeling about certain matters, for example, planning or things of that type. It’s our role to transmit that opinion or feeling that the community has to the relevant bodies?*Do you have any role in transmitting information from the council to your community?*Yes we do because we get sent, for example, planning notices, things like maybe alteration to traffic flow or there was a build-out on a zebra crossing letting people know there’s going to be traffic lights up for a while, that kind of thing. |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

I think that we’re fairly successful. The reason for saying that is we’re fairly adept at using digital means to transmit information, so we’ve got our own Facebook page, we’ve got our website, we have a Twitter account and that’s fine, we’re quite good engaging people who already use that digital technology. However, what we’re very conscious of is that the community aren’t all digitally literate, so we also have traditional means – we have two noticeboards, we have two information folders, we have minutes published every month in the local newsletter. Well they call it a newsletter but it’s quite a substantial magazine. We’re very conscious that we can hit the digitally-adept readership quite well, but we’ve also got a higher than normal age-profile. There’s quite a lot of retired people here, so we’ve got to be mindful of that.*I’ve just brought up your website and I love that there’s a clear planning section*We always get a huge uplift in the numbers attending the monthly meeting when there’s a planning issue. |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Yes I do – I find myself referring to it a reasonable amount. We were sent a reasonable number of documents when we were constituted as a CC. I’ve made reference to those quite a lot. They were sent to us by the corporate and democratic services unit of the council. I refer to them quite a lot.*Are there other ways of thinking ‘how can I inform myself about my duties and rights?*Yes – we visited all the CCs round about, so we say quite a lot, most specifically what their function was, how they handled the different offices, so I suppose you could say we tried to observe the way other people conducted their duties, and from that try to extract best practice.*I’m assuming then – this isn’t part of the research questions, just out of my nosiness – that you’re a fairly recently formed CC.*Yes – we had a situation round about Christmas time where they were down to the minimum number of CCllrs, and if they fell below that minimum they were going to be dissolved. SO we actually ended up having a brand-new CC. We had to hold elections because there were more 8 applications for the 8 places, so we had an election and we’re all brand new.*Again, out of nosiness, how was the election turn-out*It was pretty high, actually. I think we had an electorate of something like 1900, and I think our turnout was over 60%.[[7]](#footnote-7) I’ll have to check that – I hope I’m not giving you wrong information. We were quite surprised – we did a lot of engineering, we got a Facebook page up, we produced some leaflets, we did quite a lot personally, we asked people to vote for us. There was a reasonable buzz, I would say. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

[see above for sources]*How useful were these sources?*They were undoubtedly useful. Because we were brand-new, we needed all the guidance we could get, so to be pointed in the right direction was terrific. One particularly useful document we found was called something like ‘best practice guidelines’ and that was written in a user-friendly way, and I got the impression it was written by someone who had been a CCllr and could really talk about the things that are relevant. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

[see above] |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

No – I’ve never come across that situation. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

Usually when we’re looking, it’s because a situation has arisen that we need information about, and if the information is readily applicable to that situation then we would say ‘yup, that’s been useful’. Occasionally you do find a bit of information but it doesn’t quite give you the answer that you were looking for, therefore we would say that’s less useful.*So it’s fairly pragmatic?*I would say so – if it answers the question I would deem it to be useful, and as I say, you don’t sit down with a cup of coffee and read through these documents, you tend to use them on an as-needs basis – what do I need to find out to address a particular situation? |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

Yes, very much so. Although there’s only 8 of us in the CC, within that we have sub-teams if you like. They’re on the lookout for, the planning sub-team will track development plans from the council website so they get alerted if there is a change in a development. There’s a roads sub-group, and stuff like that, so we’re pretty clear about what we need to know. On the Facebook page, people will maybe make a comment, and we’ll pick up on that and mention it at the next meeting, perhaps.*So you’ve thought how to allocate tasks?*Yes, we’re split into sub-groups. We quickly realized that to have a situation where everybody gets the same emails regarding a particular topic isn’t great because then having 8 people inputting into a situation becomes like the tower of Babel, so we fairly quickly formed sub-groups.*Can you go a little deeper into how you find information about local issues and developments?*Let’s say there’s the automatic updating from the planning department so we get things flagged up to us, we are reasonably well known in the community, so sometimes somebody will stop you in the street with an anecdotal question or an anecdote about something that’s happened. Our elected councilors, who sit with us at the monthly meetings, they will often email us about an issue, so we find out that way. People will write on our Facebook page with a question or they’ll draw our attention to something. And the website also, you can contact us, make representation through the website. We rely pretty much on the community to raise things with us, so we try to be as accessible as possible. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

[see above for sources used]I think we were all pretty au fait with them anyway. It’s a small place so I think from time to time we would hear a rumour about houses being built somewhere, be a bit nosy about an extension. Most of us kind of knew about the planning portal anyway. We didn’t necessarily know about the tracking where you can be updated about the progress of a development or proposed development, so things like that were useful – kind of knew about it anyway. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

I can’t think of anything. What I would say is that if we’re told something anecdotally we would avoid taking that at face value. We would check out the facts first. There were a couple of lessons learned early on where we just took someone’s word about something and they’d got the facts wrong but you only do that once. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

First of all the source – what’s the provenance, the source of it? Has it got veracity, can we have faith in it? I would say also utility really – is it useful information? The clearer it is, the more likely it is to be useful and the more likely we are to say ‘it’s been worthwhile searching that out’. |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

The principal ways of sharing are putting it on the Facebook page, putting it on our website but, as I mentioned before, we are very conscious that not everyone has access to digital sources like that so we have two noticeboards in the village. We also have an information folder which is updated every month with the agenda and the minutes at the church office. There’s also an information folder at the in the big community campus, in the library. Also the newsletter has a very good readership. It has quality and size – it’s an A4, quite thick magazine – we get the monthly minutes and anything that’s relevant we get in there.*Can you say which works the best, or is that a piece of string question?*I think - we don’t really know about the noticeboards – we don’t have much feedback from there. We don’t have a mechanism to ask ‘how did you find out this information?’ So the noticeboards, I don’t know how well they work but I do know that the one at the local shop – you’ll always see someone looking at it, so we know it gets used. In terms of response, I would say that Facebook has the biggest response because I think people find it very easy to use Facebook – it’s quite easy to tap away at keys rather than write a letter for example. The website is relatively recent – it’s only a couple of months old and I think our Facebook visits vastly outstrip our website visits for example.We’ve had two major planning issues going on [here] a big housing development and also the local football team want to build a pavilion on some park land, so that has generated a huge amount of interest. That has boosted those figures somewhat. It’s good that people are using the website to find out. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

Good question! We have - we’re aware that if you look at online for example, so if we wanted to get information out to the community as a result of coming along to the meeting and seeing ‘this is the representation we’ve made to the council’. If that’s what we wanted to do, it’s very easy to put it on Facebook and the website. The thing about using the noticeboard is they really only get updated once a month with minutes and agendas so the opportunity to put something in good old-fashion format, offline, is difficult because where do you put it? We also try and encourage people to come to the meetings to find out about things. We’ve had issues for example where people have expected the minutes for a 1½ hour meeting to be a verbatim account. It’s just not possible so we encourage people to come along. The idea of informing someone offline is something that we’re very conscious of. For online, it’s Facebook and the website, for offline information that’s happening throughout the month is pretty difficult non-digitally. I’m not sure that we do actually. Word of mouth, but not deliberately – we don’t set out to promulgate information by word of mouth. And I think that one of the things that we’re interested, that we’ve had reinforced recently, is to amongst ourselves make sure that we’re all clear about the distinction between having personal views on a subject and CC views on the subject. It cropped up with one planning issue where we got quite heated during the meeting and some councilors were blurring the opinion between their own opinion and that of the CC. That’s where the documents I mentioned earlier are useful because we wrote a set of ground-rules for ourselves to make sure that we were conducting ourselves properly. Those ground-rules were mutually agreed, mutually created. We found that necessary.*If you’ve had a bit of knowledge come in digitally, have you ever taken that to people who aren’t on Facebook?*Yes, because we summarise comments that are made on Facebook and the website, and we will take those to the monthly meeting, and they are minuted at the monthly meeting. Things which are of note, so maybe someone’s complaining about the dog-mess question, so we’ll maybe get a couple of statements from Facebook that will illustrate the point that we’re trying to make. In that way it’s disseminated to non-digital people because they happen to be at the meeting. It then goes into the minutes and there is a non-digital form of the minutes as well, so we do disseminate information that way. *Have you ever made contact with people who have posted on Facebook by other means?*Yes – for example, someone had read the draft minutes, we’d indicated that members of the public helped to patch potholes, and one of the owners of a business which is on that road emailed and said ‘it’s not members of the public, it’s us’, so I know who they were so I phoned them up and got clarification and the minutes were adjusted the next time round to reflect that. So that’s as a result of Facebook. I think it’s just an email actually – I know who they were and I was able to phone them, explain and apologise and get it sorted out. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

[see above also]Maybe planning for example? A couple of example – this new development, the original planning was for 50 houses but it then looked like they were going to build 80, so that created a huge amount of interest because people say the infrastructure won’t stand it, the road wasn’t built for this number of vehicles, blah blah blah blah. So that created a huge amount of interest, but not conflict because people were saying ‘we don’t want 80’ – they were very much of one mind. One thing that’s very contentious is the football team want to build a pavilion [a local] park and that has proved to be quite contentious, and there’s been strong views on either side, and we had quite a rowdy public meeting regarding that, so that’s an example of creating a contentious situation. Those two happened to be planning things. Then there’s whose going to acquire the Christmas tree to be put in the village centre. I’m really glad that the CC addresses such world-changing events like that and that created quite a lot of friction between ourselves and another community. That was down to people communicating by email and Facebook, and not lifting the phone and talking to someone. That’s conflict and it’s to do with where we find information.*Have any of these conflicts changed the way you approach information-gathering, handling, sharing?*Yes, very much so. We have established a few sets of ground-rules in which we’ve actually adjusted the priorities of how we communicate with each other. So we’ve now said in the first instance, try and talk face to face. If you can’t do that, phone or text. If you can’t do that, Facetime, and right at the bottom of the list is send an email to all the other CClrs. So we’ve increased the priority of face to face and one to one interactions as a result of something gojng on Facebook which wasn’t appropriate and wasn’t based on fact. One of the CCllrs just made a mistake and put something up that created a huge backlash. |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

I would say that we do measure the response because we do look at, for example, the number of comments that are made on Facebook or if the website hits go up. We get our stats form Gmail so we do measure that. How important is it? I think we’re probably more concerned with getting it out there than even just the acknowledgement that we’ve done it. I think our focus is on pushing it out. I think that getting a response is interesting because, again getting back to this housing development, there’s a huge amount of traffic on Facebook about it. People are talking about it, and yet there are only 37 comments on the council planning portal. So you could say in terms of getting a response, we’ve done an awful lot of work about this issue and it seems that 37 responses isn’t an awful lot. So you have to wonder ‘is it just us who’s getting upset about this?’ because the rest of the community don’t seem to be that bothered. Only 37 of them can be bothered putting in a comment on the planning portal. We said ‘oh gosh, is the people getting most upset about this the CC?, not the community?’*Does that say something about how easy it is to put comments on the planning portal?*I suppose there is that – to input the comment directly on the website underneath that particular application you have to register, but you can email a comment or write into them. The comments that are shown directly under the application are visible straight away. Any other comments made by email or letter have to be ratified first so they might appear a day or two later. So I would argue that if someone’s on the website anyway and reading what’s going on, they would find it very easy to make a comment. The question of how many people are not internet savvy and don’t make a comment, that’s a good question – I don’t know. Is it because they would have to write a letter because they can’t email? The amount of traffic that’s generated on the website and social media - I’m surprised that so few people went to the portal and recorded a comment. [Agrees with suggestion that people maybe like to have moan.]Certainly, people form the local community, so [this village] more than [nearby town]., but they have their own CC., so I think it’s people in the community, typically it’s the typical internet-using web-savvy demographic. I’m taking a guess here but I don’t think there’s that many under-25s read it because we’ve had very little – when someone responds on Facebook you generally know who they are. It tends to be people with families and older people.*So you know some of the people who read it because they respond and you can identify them or find out something about them?*Yes, probably, I don’t know if they’re 18 to 20 but we get the same people responding most of the time.*What these questions are interested in – they were put in this survey by one of my colleagues - is they might read the Facebook or website but not actually comment or respond that way themselves.*It’s quite difficult to say – we know that when issues come up, people are obviously reading it only on Facebook we get a spike in our Facebook visits because they’re reading and responding, and you get some quite long threads – maybe 10 to 12 people commenting back and forward. How many read it and then don’t respond, I have no idea. |

## Other RQs

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| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

Let me think - yes, I think they probably do. As an example, because my wife and I have two children aged 6 and 9, I’m well motivated to look for information regarding better traffic-calming for example – the last thing I’d want is for them to be hurt or someone else’ children to be hurt. I work for myself – I have my own company – therefore the nature of my work is such that I’m quite good at researching, so that has an impact on my finding information about the CC. What else would have an impact – probably experience. If you write a hasty comment on Facebook, not take it at face value, saying that’s just someone’s knee-jerk reaction, don’t take it to heart, be mature about it.*So it’s coming through maturing and being a parent?*Yes*Have the organizational cultures at any previous work, or your gender or any other social factors affected your abilities or methods of information- handling?*I would say the concepts of, for example, the idea of us working together as a team – that’s come from organisations I worked with who had a good team culture. I would want to see the CC working as a team – I know what it looks like when this doesn’t happen. When we kicked off, it was quite useful to think of storming, norming and performing[[8]](#footnote-8), you know Gibb’s work – you can stall at a certain level, then you don’t progress. From a diagnostic point of view that’s quite useful, and that comes directly from organisations I’ve worked with and some of the work I do.*[Help from unions?]*We haven’t had any help from unions – what we did get was the opportunity to go to an evening’s training on planning, and that was run by the planning department at the council. They came to the [local community] campus and put on a three-hour input all about planning, how to treat planning applications and stuff. That was very useful – it was partly about accessing information but it was mostly improving our knowledge about planning regulations. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

We’ve evolved processes because we sometimes put our foot in in and realized that we needed to have a process around this, so for example, a simple thing – as secretary, I’m responsible for the agenda and for the minutes. In the beginning, the person who was putting them onto Facebook put minutes up without me releasing the final version, or the agenda before it had been finalized, so we evolved a process where the only person who does that is me. Quite a lot of the process revolves around using the website and Facebook because they themselves have generated awkward or difficult situations, and we’ve said ‘oh crikey, we need a procedure for this because we’ve made a mistake’.*You and your colleagues have worked out the goals and the means of achieving them?*Yes – we know what we want to achieve, for example, timeliness of draft minutes going out or the agenda, and that’s as per the procedures that are written down in the guidelines. Amongst ourselves we worked out ‘you run that subcommittee’ so if I get asked something about that I will defer to you. That’s a simple process, so not everyone’s doing everything all the time, and if we tread on each other’s toes then at the next election we’ll get a no*So you’re setting your own norms and rules and dividing labour?*We’ve written down, because we had a big bust-up recently – we went round the table and we all agreed, and then swiftly broke about two of them in the next [inaudible]. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

I certainly use a public library but I haven’t gone to them specifically for this. I’ve researched online and I’ve found out what I’ve needed to find out online. The interaction that I have with the public library is that the CC is updating the information folder that we lodge in the local library. So rather than us getting information from them, they get stuff from us. But that’s not to say that the library [isn’t] excellent – it’s not that at all.*You haven’t had a need to say ‘hey library, train me in information skills?’*No because we’re all of us pretty good at that – we’re reasonable at that anyway.*So there’s no extra support you’d like from the library in this sort of area?*Not really, because I don’t think – maybe it’s our unconscious incompetence - we don’t know what we don’t know. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

They have been good – we know the person to talk to [names CCLO] – we know to phone her up if we’ve got a question that isn’t answered by reading through the documentation that we’ve already received. There are two members of staff that we know we can lift the phone and ask them a question, so they’ve been helpful in that way, they’ve sent us those documents. As it turned out, they quite rightly resisted our desire to have more than 8 CCllrs. Other CCllrs have a much smaller electorate than us but have more CCllrs, and we were very keen to get more CCllrs, but the advice was sage, it was ‘no, wait a year before you start adding to your numbers’, and that was good advice. We resisted it at the time – we didn’t like it but they were right. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

[see also 25]I’m not aware of any – one of us is pretty good on the Data Protection Act, so we’re able to keep ourselves right with that. I’m really not aware of any – I think that anything we’ve needed to know we’ve been able to find out, but again it could be unconscious incompetence.  |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

Citizenship, for example, we were able to - it’s rather prosaic – get some action on dog-mess in the village. We were able to get some signs put up – we got the council to put up some laminated signs saying that they were being spied on, while the dog was doing its business. We actively support a charity called [name of charity] and we work with them supporting their work. One of them is coming to our next meeting in December. So that’s people who are a lot less well off than others. We got a gate erected in the park which stops kids running directly onto the road, so that’s a solid example. We organized a bit of victim support – it’s very, very rare but a lady got mugged [in this village] – unheard of. Someone suggested on Facebook that we could donate to replace the woman’s money that got taken from her handbag – she got three times more money than had been taken. That shows good citizenship and hopefully that’s made the elderly lady realize that she’s well-supported in the community.*It’s great to hear but just for the research, did information skills play any part in those?*Yes, because we had the skill to publicise that event on Facebook – the theft. We looked up some legislation in order to be sure of our ground to get the gate installed, so we had to research information for that. We’re researching a lot of information regarding the big housing development because it could be that there’s an old forest very near the development which we think may stop it being the size they want it to be. We’ve found a lot of information to know our rights there. |
| 1. Anything else?

Yes – there’s two things. I think we’ve realized that having a reliance on just using the web to research information has its limitations. For example, going back to the pavilion in the park again, it’s very interesting because the park was given over in trust and the question was ‘are the trustees allowed to let the pavilion be built?’ Now the terms of the trust aren’t available online. What we eventually had to do was go down to the bank and withdraw this huge thick manuscript which detailed the terms of the trust. So what we learnt from that is local information that’s in peoples’ heads is very important, rather than just assuming that it’s going to be archived on the web. And in retrospect we should have gone to the library and said ‘this is what we’re trying to find out – can you help us?’ And I think the other regarding information, and again it’s a cautionary experience – it’s so easy to have information pushed at you from social media for example, and is it just information or is it just data? The chances are it’s not going to be unimpeachable – ‘information’ is encoded by something. Does that answer the question?*Don’t know but it makes me wonder if you’re an information scientist yourself?*No but I’m very interested |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[50-59] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Male |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Post-graduate diploma |
| 1. How long ago was this?

26 years  |

# CCllr interview 08

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Sure. Yes, that’s fine. |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

I’m the chair of the current CC. |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

I’ve been on the CC for three years and in this position for two.  |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

I was Vice Chair for the first year. |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No, this is my first. |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Rural. |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

I would say that we are trying to effect positive change, trying to find the gap within the Council that they’re [inaudible], but we’re very proactive. The council with ever decreasing levels of service, and a seemingly relentless ability to keep taking their eye off the ball. We’re just trying to build back up our community. Our last CC wasn’t particularly active so we’ve come at, I suppose, a very vital time for our community and we are trying to join up other local communities as well as it makes the whole area stronger. *And do you have a particular role within that yourself?*I wouldn’t say that I have a particular role. How I would like to structure our CC is that we have subgroups, so that we can effect more change, quicker. So we don’t always concentrate on one effort or two efforts – we have many different groups and focuses going on at the same time.  |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

I think we’re great. I think we’re really excellent. I don’t know if we could do much more, to be honest. We’ve always been very open and our first chair was very definite about the need for transparency, and it was something that we have done from the very start. My first encounter with the previous CC was not an enjoyable one, so we have tried to change that as much as possible to make our iteration of the CC very open, easy to find, very transparent. There’s lots of notice given about where we will be, the location for our meetings and the agenda. We have also restructured how the agenda runs – previously the matters from the public would have to wait for the end, till all our business was done. I felt that was very rude, seeing as how we were there to serve the public, so if they had come along to our meetings to raise an issue, they shouldn’t have to wait until the end. So we have structured that to be very high on our list, so once we get past all the admin stuff at the start, theirs is the first issue of business, not the last.*OK. I don’t believe I’ve ever seen that done, so slightly tipping into idea mode, that’s a really interesting way of doing things.*We feel it works quite well, in that the public then have the opportunity to stay if they would like to, to hear the rest of the meeting, but you know, people have got other things to do and we’re probably not their first port of social call so [laughs] you know if they want to go and get other things done. And it’s the same with what we do with police and fire departments also – they are the first people that we speak to, we’re very mindful that they are working, so when they come along, if they field a representative, theirs is the first issue of business. And then again, they don’t have to stay for the rest of the meeting either – they can just come, report, answer questions and then get on if they want to. And then we deal with the public. And then we deal with our stuff.  |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

I’ve never really felt the need to have to phone up or what have you, because it seems very obvious and very straightforward. I think it’s very easily defined and it’s just exactly what we would expect, so there’s not really much of a conscious requirement to have to change what you’re doing or your behaviour or your focus, because it is exactly what you would expect. And I think that’s what makes it fairly easy to attract people to the role. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

Well, we have a code of conduct and whatnot from the council. I guess this is fairly standard for all councils. Again, going back to our previous chair, he used to serve in a CC up in [inaudible], and he sourced a handbook, if you like, I think it was from somewhere up in Aberdeen. Anyway, it was somewhere else. So we’ve adopted that. We’ve had these handbooks printed up and we give these, it’s like a condensed version of your roles and responsibilities as well as the official things as well. So the code of conduct, the scheme of establishment, all that sort of stuff, it’s all condensed into this handbook so it’s a very handy reference guide. You don’t have to read through pages and pages of stuff, you can just flick through to the right section, so if there is anything that you are querying, then you’ve got this book that, you know, we sign in and sign out when you come on the CC in our area. And it’s actually quite handy but to be honest, it’s usually only referenced when there is a procedural matter – for example, next month we have three new members coming on board, so they will be co-opted on, so we just need to see what the procedure is, what the paper trail needs to be – does it need to be on the agenda or can we just log them at the start and have it recorded in the minutes. Is that OK? What’s the official procedure for this? That handbook is quite handy for that because it means you don’t have go and wade through all the paperwork or subsequently contact your person at the council in the Democratic Services Department. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

Very little. Surprisingly little, actually. I would have thought that there would have been more, I think. But I’m not sure if that level of communication was endemic (sic) of how [the LA] feel about CCs or if this is the normal level, if this low level of communication is normal. While we went through the set-up meeting and the establishment and the ‘who is going to be the officer bearer’ sort of thing, there was surprisingly little, and even surprisingly little follow up on that to see how we were doing, and is everything OK and are you understanding your role. We’re quite an important body and if we get it wrong then that’s quite important. If we’re going to do the best job that we can do then you would hope that CCs would get quite strong support from the start, particularly when the Democratic Services Department don’t actually have that much to do when there’s not elections on. I don’t mean that to sound like, you know, they’re a waste of [inaudible], but their primary role, I think, while there’s lots of overseeing of councilors and CCllrs, that job can be made easier for themselves if they would put more controls in place but they are reluctant to even do that. It seems that they have a heavier workload than they should have. *Just to understand a bit more, did you come on at a series of council-wide elections?*We came on not at the usual time. I think we were established in, was it March? We came on at a slightly different time so… because the time between us starting and then having to go to a vote was a certain number of weeks, so I guess when that happened it was called a little bit early for some people. So it was kind of odd, because our AGM doesn’t sync up quite with other voting times. I would have thought we would have had more support, and more… just an annual contact from there on out from the council, to say ‘how are things going’? You know, that’s not necessarily a long conversation. You know, they have a department, so it’s not like it’s just one person following up on all the CCs in [this LA]. Even with an e-mail, you know, asking how it’s going.*Saying if there are no problems, we’ll leave you in peace, if there are, we can help?*Well, yes, just to touch base, just to let people know that there is support, that they are supported, and that they are part of a wider network of CCs and support. There’s actually no CC meetings for CCllrs, you know, chairs or vice chairs or nominated designates to go and communicate with other CCs. It’s very separate, which I find a bit odd. But it does go to council needs quite well, because then if we are kept separate, and left to our own volition to reach out, it means that our voice is slightly quieter. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

That I avoid looking at? I don’t think so, no. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

[laughs] I think if it makes sense, then it’s probably on the right track. If it’s not asking you to deviate too much from your own actual expectations of what you felt the role would be. If it’s not asking you to keep anything particularly quiet or, I don’t know, anything unreasonable, it all seems pretty fair.*So if it hangs together and is fair?*Yes, and quite logical.  |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

Yes. *Can you describe that a little please?*Well, we have actually quite a strong network of communication within the town now. We have our own area magazine and we have our own Facebook page and website, so we have quite easy contact with communities and groups to let us know about things that are going on and things that are coming up, you know, events that are going to be happening. We talked a bit earlier about us having subgroups. What I have tried to do is to have as much contact with other local groups as possible, so I’ve encouraged people on our CC, at least one of them to be involved in one other group outside the CC as well – whether it’s hillwalking, whether it’s flowers, that sort of stuff, whether it’s the illuminations committee that’s put up the Christmas lights, whether it’s a [name] event – that’s a local thing – so we try to have a finger in a lot of local pies. And we also have somebody who’s part of our local community office, as well. We have an office here called the One Voice, and that’s our community office, community centre. And they are actually a wonderful group of volunteers who coordinate a lot of stuff, including the magazine, and so there’s quite a lot of good and open communication and dialogue, and lots of e-mails that get pinged around quite regularly to keep everybody up to date with stuff. And as an administrator of the Facebook page, when people send us stuff, if it’s appropriate, we put it forward on our Facebook page for the general public, so we’re actually kept quite well informed about what’s going on. Two out of three of our local elected councilors are actually good at keeping in contact – the other one not so much. But two of them are quite good.  |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

*You’ve said you’ve got contacts or overlap with other local groups.*Yes. *Are there any other sources that you have for finding information about local issues and developments?*As far as local issues go, if people have anything to say, they’re actually not backwards about coming forwards in our neck of the woods. [laughs] They’re very good at speaking up, or telling somebody who will speak up for them. I think because of the way we have tried, our particular CC, we have tried to show people that we are open to dialogue and then action, so it’s not just a case of come and tell us if you want, it’s a case of come to us and we’ll see what we can do, so we’ve been actually very proactive in a lot of cases and I think we are slowly but steadily building up a reputation for being a group of people that you can go to and it will effect change. So I think in that respect… for example, in the summer months, we have a farmers’ market here, situated in our town centre, so for six months of the year I’ve arranged with the market organizer that we share a stall there, so our trade off is that we’ll come and help set up and strip down the stall and we get the stall for free. So this is a perfect location and opportunity, once a month, for us to be actually, visibly seen in the public, in the town centre, and engage with them. We don’t just have one or two people manning it, we have as many people manning it as possible. We have hi vis jackets that say on the back ‘Community Councillor’. [laughs] Folk know who we are. We have big chalk boards up, big white boards that we month-to-month change the issues and ask open-ended questions. We have comments forms, we have a map of the town, so if people want to talk about stuff they can show us exactly what they’re talking about, where it is – so lots of good, two-way communication is pretty vital, so we try and do as much of that as we can, so this is a perfect opportunity for us to do that during the summer months. *So you’re getting information by word of mouth?*Yes.*Do you consult anything like [the council] planning portal?*Yes, we’re on that. We have two guys, our CCllrs are designated to look after and scrutinize the planning applications, so they will go to them to see if there is anything that is worthy of note or comment. And if so they will ping that round the group, and because we are involved in that quite a lot of stuff individually in the town, we are able to get quite good feedback from that. We also have communications boxes or comment boxes through the town. We’ve got maybe half a dozen of those that I’ve managed to arrange from the council. So we have one of those in the Tescos, in the tourist information centre, in a couple of other supermarkets, in the library. They get checked every month to see what things people want to talk about, if they’ve got an issue. *So you’ve got lots of ways of getting information in?*Yes. So you can either get us through Facebook, website, the comment boxes, or you can come in and see us – I work full time, I have a business in the town, so people have never been shy about coming in and speaking to me about any issue that they have.  |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

[Repeat requested – repeats] None.  |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

Generally, how many people are talking about it. So, if you hear something, and we ping it round the group on a group e-mail then what do people think about that, have they got any knowledge about it, what is their opinion? Usually, everybody is very good about replying to that. The level of e-mail communication is actually quite high [laughs] within the group. It’s easy enough to also contact some of the… like the One Voice group, or other groups that might have information about that, and there’s a few key people in the town that for various different things you can go to them and ask their opinion, too. And, as I say, two of the councillors are actually very involved with a lot of the stuff, so they can also be included in that group e-mail, and they can come back to me with stuff. Usually they will know about stuff, or in [name of LA councilor] case, the [inaudible] services councillor, she is usually quite active and knows a lot about what is going on so one way or another you will find out if it’s an issue or how big an issue it is or if it’s a long-standing issue, if you’ve maybe come late to the party, has this been rumbling on for a while, and why is that? You can see just how long an issue has been rumbling on for and what the problem is, why it’s not been resolved.  |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

Well, we have a regular standing space reserved in the [local] magazine that goes out quarterly, and we have an extremely good relationship with the local reporter, so our twice-weekly newspaper that goes out, we’re usually able to get any number of articles put in that – she’s very good at covering events, and usually always comes to our CC meetings or sends a replacement, if she’s on holiday. I don’t know if there’s many more ways we could get information out there, but we’re always open to try something new. I think we’re actually maybe on Twitter as well – one of the girls, the girl that did the website, she used to be on the [inaudible – presumably CC?] and had to step back but she’s what we call an associate member, so she’s still like a friend of the [inaudible – presumably CC?], so she helps update things like the website or the Twitter feed. *While we’re talking, I’ll have a nose round for that.*Well, I say Twitter, but I don’t know because I don’t tweet [laughs]. This is something else that we were trying to get the council to agree to, was for us to be able to tweet during CC things, so that if somebody wanted to ask something they could bring it up then and we could reply to them. So if we’ve got the councillors there, the elected councillors, and they want an answer to something or want bring something up, it’s the perfect opportunity but for whatever reason they have not made it along, then this would be a good thing to have, and I think [the LA] are thinking about allowing that sort of stuff to happen so that’s more progress.  |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

*If you had a piece of information which you wanted to get out to your community, would you ever choose to do it through the printed mechanisms only or through the online mechanisms only, and if so, why would you do that?*OK. No, I think we generally try and share it as widely as possible through all mediums at our disposal. So we are very much aware that we have a much older population as well, so this is what makes our relationship with the press officer so important. So for a lot of these older residents, they can still pick up the newspaper and that has traditionally been their source of primary information so, we still stick with that quite heavily as well.*So you still put everything out through every channel you can find?*Yes, pretty much. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

Well, I don’t know. *Have you ever had anything that…?*The biggest conflict seems to be from the council, to be honest, their resistance to wanting to do things in our area. We generally feel that there’s somewhat of a cloud over [this area] and the council are quite reticent to help move that cloud. There are lots of development opportunities within our town, but trying to win approval from the council to push those things forward can sometimes be very difficult and quite unreasonable, so when we have an opportunity to do something in the town that would be hugely beneficial, almost a no-brainer in some cases, and then the council refuse that in favour of perhaps residential development, you know this perpetual need, which is like an albatross round the town’s neck, for housing and I think the [council]’s focus is very one-eyed. It doesn’t seem to have the two-eyed focus it needs, because with housing comes recreation and entertainment, so you’ve got to have that balance. Once you’ve got people in an area, what are you going to do with them?*They need facilities, infrastructure, or…?*Exactly, yes. We have a building in town that we were looking to transform into a visitor attraction centre with a cinema, … what else were we going to put in there…, there was going to be a café, some small conference facilities or wedding facilities, a museum, all kinds of stuff, a child play area – there was going to be a lot of stuff going on in this and it would actually have been a huge help and asset to the town, but not just for the centre, the area, because there is nothing like that here, and we actually have quite a strong history of stuff, in particular printing and jam-making, so this kind of stuff is slowly being eroded and forgotten about because of government policy, so we’re very focused on, well, we’ve started to become much more focused on town heritage. This would have been absolutely an opportunity to do that. Well, the council thought differently and that we shouldn’t have this building, so they asked a developer to put in luxury housing – you know, that’s not going to help our town. So that was a huge conflict within our town because so many people were supportive of it, and yet the one or two elected members, not our members, not our councillors, but [LA] elected members wouldn’t pass it through. And it’s particularly annoying because three of them live in our town, and one of them is the deputy leader of the council, so for them not to be able to see how this would transform the area is almost inconceivable, you know, and the other one is a provost, so these are quite heavy hitters with quite a voice so for them not to be on the town’s side in which they live is, you know, that’s a big risk.  |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

It’s not. It’s OK. *So it doesn’t matter if no-one responds?*No, if it’s just information that we’re putting out there, that’s fine, we can see how many people it has reached, we can see how many people have shared the information or sometimes, just like a typical Facebook page, sometimes it’s just to keep people updated – letting people know that the Christmas lights are going up or that Santa’s coming to the town or something, you know. But quite often we’re letting people know about other events or groups, and coffee mornings or events that are happening, so, you know, I must say that a lot of these events get a really, really good turnout so I would like to think that we are helping attract those numbers, but you can never know till the event happens. But it all seems to be very positive. *Who do you imagine reads the material you put online?*I don’t know – just everybody, anybody. I would like to think that a lot of local people do. If anybody further afield does, then that’s fine. I can’t imagine any other CCs necessarily do, otherwise I would hope that they would follow suit and keep their pages updated. *You may have seen some research I did in 2012 and 2014 about CC online presences and, there’s quite a few who don’t do it at all and quite a few who don’t do it well, so people like yourselves – obviously this is two years on – but the average standard of online presence two years ago was not very good in my findings, so you look pretty advanced.*Well, thank you. I think we’ve made a really conscious effort to really do that, I think because of the mix of ages that are on our CC as well, not everybody is retired, or quite a few are just newly retired, so in that respect it’s really helpful. You know we still have quite a few working people on ours, well within the working age as well, so it’s quite important that we reach everybody. But yes, when I first contacted the previous CC, even just to find out where they were, it was impossible – their stuff was months out of date online and you had to have word of mouth to find out where they were, which at that time was in the back of the fire station. [laughs] So it’s quite important that we tell people where we are.*Well if you want people to come to your meetings, they’ve got to know where they are.*Exactly. *Do you have any actual knowledge or facts and figures about your online audiences?*No. We probably do, but I’m not that focused on it to be honest. People, I think, in this day and age would expect you to have a Facebook page, if they want to get hold of you they can, or either one of the two, I guess it depends on your age, you’ll either expect a website or a Facebook page, so we have both so that you can easily get hold of us, you can easily find out what we are doing through either medium. I think we have a Facebook feed on the website as well so stuff that gets posted there comes up on the website as well, so it’s all quite connected. *I’m guessing that your website is based on Wordpress, and it’s very easy to make Wordpress auto tweet or auto Facebook.*Yes. |

## Other RQs

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| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

Yes, but I think that being part of the CC and having more access to the Council’s resources has actually helped the other way as well. I think because once you start getting involved in groups and things, like the sports side or for funding, once you get on their mailing lists, and they start sending you e-mails through about funding or about sports events or whatever’s going on, then that that’s actually a bit of a two-way street - that’s actually really helpful, it helps me in stuff that’s not CC and stuff that is CC, but in turn it also allows me to ping those e-mails forward to other groups, which is really helpful.*What was behind my initial question was information practices such as knowing how and where to look for information and how to process it. Have you learned…did anything say from school or whatever, help you, give you good information finding training, for want of a better word?*I guess so, although looking around the people we have on the CC, with them in mind, I think it’s just… I think that particular thing is very personality based, so I think if you were looking at a person who wants to find out the information, and you’ll keep going until you get the answer, or get an answer, then I think that’s probably very… it’s more of a personal trait. I think I’m very like that anyway. I’m very much a… I don’t particularly like negativity, in trying to resolve a problem or an issue or a scenario then I would much rather find a way to figure it out. And if it can’t be figured out then that’s fine, it doesn’t always mean that it’s going to be resolved, but just give me a good reason for why not. Maybe all those things that you listed in the past make that kind of person me, maybe that is from that. *Digging a little deeper into this sort of area, have any organizational cultures at your work or elsewhere, your gender or any other social factors affected your abilities and methods of information finding, processing, sharing?*Probably, yes. I think you get influenced by quite a lot of different aspects, don’t you.*Indeed. Are there any particular ones that you think might have affected you?*I guess just being on the other side of the CC fence, from not being part of it, and seeing what change they can effect, makes you want to find out, or use the resources more – because there clearly are channels for everything, and so it’s just a case of using them. So while, for example, the CC don’t necessarily have any power, we can apply pressure and we can ask things, so it’s really important that you fire those questions at the right person. No matter how much [the LA] like to change the structure of their council to make up these wonderfully inventive names for particular department heads or people’s job titles, you still have to find the right person.*Understood. There’s all sorts of stuff about knowledge networks and people who are really in power, and all that stuff. A lot of social science which goes a little bit beyond me, but never mind.*[laughs] Well, what we do with that is, we have done a couple of open days where the community can meet the council, so we have invited various different groups – not just council-based either, but people from things like planning or waste or loads of different departments, and they came and people could come and talk to them about stuff. So we had the local development plan that’s going on in the Tayside area, it’s a huge plan, and subsequently the local development plan phase 2, so we had… we rented the town hall actually, so there must have been easily three figures, triple figures worth of people who attended, which is fantastic.*And you got senior [LA] officials along there to explain?*We did. We got one or two, and we got a few of the people who would then be high enough up in the departments to take the comments back as well.  |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not)

(i.e. social context)I think we have an air of openness about what we do. There are very few cloak and daggers in our wardrobe. We tend to be very open, we share information and resources regularly, and I think that attracts information from other people – when they see that you are sharing as well, they remember that they got information from you and perhaps you would like this as well, so in that respect it’s fairly easy to find yourself on a list.*Do you and your colleagues set the goals of any information finding and sharing activities and do you and your colleagues also decide how to achieve these goals?*I don’t know if we set any goals for finding the information, other than if there’s a question that needs to be answered, looking to find where the information should come from but yes, once that information has been found, then we’re very good at sharing that information or the answer to the problem, so it’s not just a case of one or two people know. Again what we do at the CC meetings is we have updates from the subgroups, so that everybody knows what is going on so the minutes can be very up-to-date, so if somebody were at home reading through our minutes then they could follow a trail of information about a particular subject until it comes to its natural conclusion. So if anybody had a particular issue with wanting to find out about, for example, the [name of road], which is a road along the riverside that had been closed due to a landslip, from the very start of that, say three or four years ago, since we picked up the thing two years ago or three years ago, then they would be able to see the trail of what we have done, who we have spoken to, what we have achieved along the way in a fairly consistent, if not monthly then every other month, update within the minutes.  |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

You know what, I haven’t used the libraries to find out any information. *Is there any extra help from libraries or support that you would like?*I’m not entirely sure. I know that we use the library to get information out to people, to post information, and it’s a good source of… a location that the community use, because our library is actually quite well used – but personally, I haven’t used it to find out much information. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

Learning how to find information – none. In finding information, I think probably, there’s probably two very good ports of call, and the first would be the switchboard at the council and the other would be the elected members. I have tried to get the council to put together a phone tree, you know, to try and say who is responsible for what – not just giving their job titles, because they change so often, but because jobs change so often, they can’t put together one of these, so this is a problem because that shows you just how inconsistent the delivery of service is from the council. If you don’t have somebody in position for long enough to be able to put a phone tree together then they are not going to be very effective at their job.*Because they are going to be thinking, ‘how do I do this?’*[laughs] Exactly. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

There’s bound to be some, but at the moment, I’m not aware. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

Yes, I think a good example of that would be the Common Good resources – what areas, what buildings, what land have all been designated for the community, and knowing what you can do to make sure that buildings you would like to have for the community stay within that realm and don’t just get sold off to developers. So this [inaudible] Bill that’s coming through from government is actually quite instrumental in being able to and knowing about being able to tag buildings is very important. We had an issue recently with another service that was looking to close and they were going to close our public toilets. Our public toilets are actually very, very well used, and the problem with that is when they close them, they actually change the route of tourist buses – and this has happened in other places further north, where public toilets are closed so the coach drivers can’t then service the passengers, so passengers can’t be serviced in the town that they are going to because there is no public toilet. So ours service about 1,000 a week, which is a huge number of people, so to close that would have been monumental. So this is when, again, the tagging of buildings came to the fore so it’s reminded us that we need to do this. |
| 1. Anything else?

No, I think you’ve been very thorough. It would be lovely to see the council take on board some of the information that you gather. I wonder if they will.*We can’t say [this CC] said, because that would identify you, but certainly it’s nice to hear of someone actually using the Community Empowerment Act to do things – that’s my personal ideological point of view – but you do sound very proactive and it’s lovely to hear about that.*Well, thank you, and thanks for all your questions. |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[40-49] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White Scottish |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

MA |
| 1. How long ago was this?

20 years |

# CCllr interview 09

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Sure yes |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Web side of things, Facebook, that sort of thing |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

3 years [website all that time ] that was really why I joined |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Vey urban |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

We feel that we exist to try to improve the local community, by raising issues that they can do something about, try to engage people in the community – which is proving quite difficult.*Your part within that would be?*Just awareness-raising, really, of our existence. |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

I feel that [pause] the digital side of things, we’re not bad really. We’ve got a presence on Twitter, on Facebook, a website, we have an email address publicized. I don’t know that it’s received that well because we don’t get a lot of contacts from people. |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Yes*Could you go into that a little, please?*I’ve read up on the council website about advice about what our role should be when we’re making decisions. We try to be aware of what we should be bearing in mind when we’re making decisions. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

I go to the council website.*How did you learn of that source*?I searched for it on the council website. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

I don’t remember being given very much at all.*So the question ‘how useful was it?’, if you weren’t given anything…*I don’t actually remember being given anything – I may be misremembering – but I’m the kind of person who will seek out information. So I wanted to put on our website information for the public to see ‘this is what we do, and what we’re allowed to do’, so I had to go and find that information to put it on the website. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

I would only go to official sources. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

Well I would only go to something like the Scottish Government site or the council site. I have looked at other CCs to see what they say as well, but I wouldn’t go anywhere else. |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

Yes, but it’s difficult because I really have to seek out information rather than - we don’t seem to have people letting us know information about what’s happening. So if it’s drawn to our attention we publicise it. If people get in touch with us we’ll circulate it. We’ve started a newsletter and we’ll put in it events, or if we’ve had a couple of issues about planning, we’ll publicise them when we’re made aware of them, but there doesn’t seem to be, if people don’t know we exist they can’t let us know. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

We’ve tried to make it clear on our various digital things that we’re receptive to hearing about people’s issues, and we do have some people, there are councilors who come occasionally to meetings to tell us about, mainly to do with planning, that’s just word of mouth.*I can see on your website that you get the weekly list of planning applications, and then you also have a link to ‘how to comment’ and the TellMeScotland link, which is useful. Do you use the council planning portal or anything like that?*Yes, and we have a planning officer – she looks at that regularly, and if there are nay issues coming up we will ask her at a meeting. I think there’s three weeks to respond to a planning application, so the meeting falls at a certain time we’re not able to respond but she does check it weekly.*I can also see that you’re the canal area partnership, so do you get in information that way?*I’ve only actually been at one meeting so far.*And you’ve got someone who represents the CC on the licensing board, so I guess those are other ways of getting information in.*Yes, yep, and we also have, the council puts out a weekly summary to all CCs about all issues that are going on in [this city], things that they want us to publicise – certain campaigns, like the police or whatever, and we’ll either talk about them in the meetings or if appropriate we’ll put something on the website about it, if it affects our area. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

*Has avoiding [sources other than official ones] had any effect?*What I was really referring to was official information, more informal information we’ll get back through people contacting us through Facebook and me looking up organisations that I know are active in the area, I’ll look up their website to get information. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

We get weekly feedback from Facebook about the number of hits and all that kind of thing. I mean someone mentioned there’s a possible case of poisoned meat being left in a park, and we go from 50 hits a week to 4000 a week. We also find when we had very disruptive roadworks about a year and a half ago and that raised our profile quite a lot – we almost piggybacked on that because it was something that people were really concerned about. If there’s something people have a problem with, they will look at our Facebook or whatever and share our posts and whatnot.*So from that you can judge whether you’re publicising the right things?*Yes, yep. The attendance at the meetings doesn’t really change. Sometimes we get a few members of the public but mostly the only feedback we get is from Facebook or Twitter. |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

[digitally through the website, Facebook and Twitter]*Are there any other means that you share information, any offline means?*We’re trying to get a noticeboard, and this has been an ongoing issues since before I joined the CC. I don’t know why it’s never happened but we don’t have a noticeboard. We’re halfway through getting that done – we’ve been in touch with the council and we’re discussing possible sites, we’re very hopeful that it’ll happen in the next few months.*Do you do anything like newsltters that you can put in local shops and schools or whatever?*We haven’t done that – we started up a newsletter just a few months ago, a digital one – it’s quite basic, it wouldn’t even fill an A4 sheet. We don’t really have the human resources to produce a proper newsletter, I don’t think. It would be a good thing to do. We’ve got reasonable links with other associations, like the [local] traders’ association, and we’d like to do more with them but the first thing is just getting this noticeboard so we can raise our profile a wee bit. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

At the moment we don’t really have much choice – as much as can go online does. We’ve done leafleting, litter-picks 3 or 4 times a year and we’ve publicized that and we’ve leafleted the local streets, and we’ve had problems with noise and we produced a leaflet for that and we put it through the doors of the affected area and we were telling people how to complain about noise and who to contact if there was antisocial behavior. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

I don’t think so – we’ve not really done anything controversial. We’ve had a couple of comments disagreeing with us on Facebook, but nothing rude or a disagreement. We’ve tried to respond saying ‘come to a meeting, express your views’ but we’ve not had any problems with it so far. |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

I think it’s important in the sense that the more people respond, the more people respond – that encourages other people to respond. We’ve found it very difficult eliciting these responses – I’ve tried to encourage other CC members who are on Facebook to respond to our posts and share our posts but it doesn’t really happen very often and I’m not actually on Facebook in a personal capacity. *So would it matter if no-one responded to a particular piece of information you put online?*We sometimes nobody does but that doesn’t mean to say they haven’t seen it or read it. Obviously it’s better if people do respond because then you know at least somebody has read it and it does matter what you’ve written.*Who do you imagine reading the material you put online?*More public-spirited members of the community, people with more time on their hands. I think a lot of people don’t know we exist – we’ve got about 200 in our Facebook so it’s quite a small proportion of the actual community. I don’t think it’s very many people really.*Do you have any facts and figures, any numbers about your online audience?*Just the number of likes and the number of followers |

## Other RQs

|  |
| --- |
| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

Yes, they do. The sort of work I do – I do a lot of online work and that’s made it easier for me to run the website – that was something I’d done before – and doing other roles.*So that’s about your current and previous occupations?*Yes, yep*How might organizational cultures, at work or elsewhere, or your gender or other social factors have affect your abilities and methods to find information*.Well originally a long time I trained as a librarian so I’m quite clued up about that kind of thing. All my working life it’s been there in the background.*Have any trade unions or professional bodies helped you develop information skills?*I’m a member of the society of freelance editors and proofreaders, so I suppose that’s helped my online skills definitely.  |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not)

*(i.e. social context)*Not very well because most people on the CC aren’t very digitally engaged, I would say, so it’s mostly me finding stuff and sharing it with them, rather than any kind of mutually sharing. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

There’s no library within our CC area. I may have used the city library website – I can’t honestly say – but I haven’t actually used a physical library.*Just thinking about public libraries that are within your area of the city, would there be any extra support you would like from them?*I don’t think so personally because I’m good at finding information myself. I think for the other people ina similar role who didn’t have my background I think it would be very useful to get training in how to run a website, that kind of thing. If you haven’t done that through your work, that’s the kind of thing that I would expect people to be able to find out from a library.*Do you know the national CC website?*I have used it but not recently. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

None really, apart from using the information they have put on their website. They’ve not been proactive at all about training. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

I think my major gap is probably, because I don’t use social media very much personally, I’m not very comfortable with it – I find it quite difficult interacting with people. I’m very aware of how what you say might be misinterpreted or getting drawn into arguments, and I think that probably makes me less communicative than I could be. So I’d say that’s definitely a gap. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

I suppose we’ve [inaudible] controversial planning proposal, and we helped share information about that – we put it on our website and Facebook, and we publicized a public meeting about it |
| 1. Anything else?

One thing that springs to mind is that I’m aware that I’ve got expertise in this area, and I think that’s great for us, but not every CC has that, and I think it’s extremely difficult for CCs who don’t have someone who is au fait with how to run a website – I think that’s a major difficulty. |

## Demographics questions

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| --- |
| 1. How old are you?

[50-59] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White Scottish/British  |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Postgraduate diploma |
| 1. How long ago was this?

26 years |

# CCllr interview 10

## Introduction questions

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| --- |
| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Chairperson |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

About 4 or 5 years maybe |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

More or less. Not long after I started there was voting and I was voted as chair |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No. I’m the chair of our CC forum which is the CCs in [this LA] |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

n/a |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

It’s rural – we’re next to an airport but we’re in the country |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

Beginning to get more of a say in what’s going on. [inaudible] wasting our time but communications are starting to be two-way now. Sometimes we’ve managed to turn around some decision-making |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

We’re very successful because we have a communications officer who does Facebook and makes sure anything from the other groups in the community is shared. I’d say 4 [marks out of 5.] |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Yes*Could you go into that a little, please?*We know that we need to read what’s going on with the meetings that take place, the meetings of the environmental group, the education group or resources, so we always try to read the agenda and see what’s in it. The problem is we get it just before the meeting so it’s difficult especially if you work. You’re not there to be able to say what we think of things.*Those groups – are they local groups or …*[name of LA] council groups. When councilors sit, we go through the agenda and see what’s going on and take that to our community for some response. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

We have an officer – part of her role is to give us information but in terms of reading it goes out of my head, you know the constitution and everything. It’s a bit of a tome it doesn’t really say much. There’s things you would like to do but you can’t do because of the way it’s been written.*How did you learn of that source?*Basically when I joined the CC they already had it, the person who was already there provided it. I didn’t know that when I was just a member. Unfortunately the CC was not doing very much. I got to know through that initially – the secretary sent me that.*How useful was the information [the CCLO] provided?*Well, she just keeps you right in terms of when you’re doing your elections and things, she’ll maybe pass on information between other CCs, she does the minutes for the forum and passes that out to all of the people. She arranges the meetings and accommodation and stuff. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

Not initially, no*Nearby CCs haven’t helped you in any way?*No, but what we’ve done now is we have [the CCLO] has been arranging training, like secretary training, treasurer training, chairperson training, digital age and what we can do like Facebook and social media and stuff like that. She’s ran that each year. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

No, we look anywhere we can for information. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

You’ve got to weigh up. If you’re getting it from the council, sometimes we ask for information under FOISA, we have to do that because sometimes you ask for information but you don’t get it unless you ask for it under FOISA. There’s a timescale in which they have to respond, so we do that. There’s other kind of community development trust who are quite active so we kind of work together with them. They have some expertise on legislation and our rights and things like that – they’re quite helpful and we work together.  |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

Yeah, we talk about, you get planning applications and things through and you have a look at that. If it’s something major that’s going on, we ask for different pieces of information and sometimes they’re difficult to get. You get fobbed off a bit but you just have to keep going. We’ll ask for traffic assessments and building warrants and licensing issues. If we see anything happening in our area we don’t have any knowledge of, we’ll go direct to the council and ask ‘What’s happening here? What’s going on?’ But sometimes it’s done and dusted before you’ve realized it’s happening. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

There is information that comes in – I don’t tend to use the website – is it your guys that run it?*The national CC website? That was created by the Improvement Service but I have had some input into it.*I don’t tend to use it, I think because it’s a struggle when you’re working full-time and you’re trying to do this on top of your own job, and then if you’ve got a CC sitting, you’ve got one or two members that are really active and the others are just there to make up the numbers. It’s difficult when you’re trying to encourage people to come to the meetings. After our AGM we’ve decided to just have a meeting every second month in the hope that it will encourage people to come. So if it’s just 6 meetings, we hope people will join. I don’t know how to attract them – I’m 60 next year – [inaudible] I work in the NHS, I know a wee bit about what happens with public bodies. Other people are just there doing nothing – it’s difficult. They don’t even know why they’re there and don’t know what’s expected of them, no matter how many times you go over it with them. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

You look at your local newspapers as well and see if there’s anything in there, and we do talk to other CCs, but I don’t think there’s anything where I’ve looked and thought it was a bit dodgy. There’s usually some sort of going concern, some background – it’s not just that someone’s put something on YouTube. We don’t tend to do that.*You’re avoiding things that aren’t authoritative in some way?*Yes, aha |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

Well, sometimes you go with your gut and you look at what’s happening and you talk to people who are in the industry or you can get some expertise from somewhere else locally, someone that knows something. If there’s some sort of planning going on, do they know about it, are they involved in it but it is difficult, getting information is difficult. We’ve met with [council leader] because we were unhappy with the level of communication and it had to be two-way. |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

It’s mostly done in minutes placed in specific places but ours is mostly done on Facebook. We have a lot of people who spread that or share that information for us. We get quite a lot of views on our page.*You’ve also got your website, which I’m guessing is based on Wordpress*Yeah, it’s quite old but it’s something we’re going to try to look at this year. We’ve got our communications officer working for us.*Do you use anything like Twitter or community noticeboards or local newsletters?*The girl that does Facebook has started putting some bits and pieces on Twitter. It’s not something that I really use but she’s trying it out to see how it goes.*Do you have any physical noticeboards or put things in local shops or schools?*Just in the library and local places – we’ll send them minutes.*Which of these works the best for sharing information?*Facebook, definitely. And word of mouth, because we’re a small area, about 8000 people here. Word of mouth, we get it around that way as well |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

We share everything online that’s public knowledge anyway. But a lot of people don’t get it because they don’t know where to look, they don’t know where to find the information. It is public knowledge, we’re just making sure it gets out there. Or if it’s any local groups, who are doing an event or running something or who are starting up a new group, we work with whoever’s doing something usually says can you put this information on your Facebook page for us.*Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face?*Not usually. We obviously have our meetings and they’re minuted, but the minutes are there and anything else that we do is usually public knowledge for anybody, we don’t have any secrets. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

Usually the council – we’re in conflict with the council because when you look at some of the decisions they’ve made we don’t know why they’ve made them and when you ask for information behind the decisions, they try and waffle around about it, try and baffle you so you don’t understand what they’re meaning.*If someone’s posted something on your Facebook, have you ever got back to them except by commenting below their comment?*No, well usually, fi we can, we’d do a private message if it’s something that should be kept more private. If it’s something that we think shouldn’t be there then we don’t answer it. We just remove it if it’s something that should be there, if it’s inappropriate. You get people who come on and maybe have a moan, but it’s mostly thanks for something we’ve put on |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

We don’t really need a response, so long as we know someone’s looking at it, it’s not that important that they say ‘thanks for the information’ or whatever, so long as we know people are looking at it. Whether they use it or not is up to them.Well I would say in general people from teenagers to maybe about my age, people who live in [this area], plus people who live outwith [this area] who want to know what we’re doing.The girl who does the page knows the number of hits, she keeps a record of how many views and things. That’s about as much as we do, likes and things. |

## Other RQs

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| --- |
| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

I think from being an employee in the NHS, I realize that information is there but it’s not easy to find, you just have to keep digging sometimes to get it, asking questions.*So it’s your employment that has given you information skills?*It’s given me the confidence to be able to seek out and ask, where some people might be a bit overwhelmed by the fact that you’re talking to the head of the council.*How might organizational cultures at work and elsewhere, your gender or other social factors have affected your abilities and methods of information, gathering, processing and sharing?*Just about everything that’s run in [this area] is run by women - I think it’s just the fact that women have decided that if nothing’s going to happen we better do it by ourself. That’s a kind of cultural thing, women do everything, men do nothing apart from follow the football team.*Have you had any help in learning how to use information from trade unions or other professional bodies?*Not trade unions, no. I’ve not had any involvement with them. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

With great difficulty. We try to, we have a maximum of 20 but we only have 10, we lost two there but we managed to get another two back. We’ve managed to keep going. I’ve tried at times to get people to look at specific topics within the CC, so I won’t have to read absolutely everything that’s coming through and it was like ‘oh, I don’t know, I don’t know if I’ve got time for that.’*So you’re saying that working with others doesn’t really happen?*It does to some, like the community development trust, we’re working together. Or another group, we try and work together but for some reason in CCs, I think it puts people off because people think you’re a councilor and they don’t understand that you’re not a councilor, and that this is a voluntary thing and I also think some people think ‘why would you do that for nothing?’ because it is quite time-consuming trying to help your community.*When you’re working with other people, do you set the goals and methods?*I’ve tried to do that, I’ve tried to say ‘these are the things we should really be looking out for’ and try to make sure things are not being done without any consultation with us, and people will not their heads and say ‘oh that’s right’ but won’t get involved and do things, so you’re looking at maybe one or two out of the whole 10, there’s about 4 of us who actually do things, take on roles and try and keep the CC going, but others just turn up on the day, and some people are they because they’ve got a vested interest in some issues. Sometimes that’s not good either because their opinion is totally different from what everybody else is saying around the table. *I’m sure you’ve got something in your scheme of establishment that says members are there to find the community’s views, and need to pull themselves back.*That doesn’t happen – I’m thinking of a specific person. I’m trying to get advice from the council about that, and I was more or less told there was nothing I could do to get this person off the CC, absolutely nothing. His behavior has been outrageous, shouting across the table really loudly, calling people liars and things, but he’s still there.*I know that the CCLOs are trying to think about how to improve the code of conduct, so I hope that will bear fruit in a reasonably short time.*It doesn’t tell you how to, there’s nothing to say that if someone doesn’t behave at a meeting, unacceptable behavior. I’ve said to him ‘I’ll have to stop this meeting or I’ll have to ask you to leave’ – that didn’t work either, I had to call the meeting to a halt. I can’t exactly get up and throw him out. I think that was what was causing the problem – we were losing members because of the performance from this guy.*If you are thinking of sharing information, leaving aside this unhelpful person, and working with one or two others on the CC, would you set the goals and methods together or one of you decide what we’re going to do and how we’re going to do it?*We don’t have goals – we probably spend all of our time fighting. That’s the truth except when something comes up, we’ll fight back. That was one of the things in [this LA] – they closed all the amenity sites, and it caused an absolute uproar. They closed all of [the tips] and left us [inaudible] and there was an absolute uproar, campaigns on Facebook go thousands and thousands of signatures, and they finally gave up and changed their minds and they’re going back to the way it was before, which cost an absolute fortune. It must have cost them about £100,000 because they got rid of all the compactors. We done that as a CC forum, and directed everybody as to what they could do, and got thousands of signatures, and we met with the head of the council and told him we weren’t happy about not being consulted. *So it was a council-wide effort you led?*Yes, each CC was doing it, getting their own people to put their name against it, and then we gathered those up together. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

No, I don’t use the library. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

No, they can’t even find it themselves. The CCLO went to us ‘this is really easy to find’ and we said ‘it may well be for you because you’re internal – try looking from the outside’ and when she tried to find the thing she said ‘oh right, OK’. They have changed their website recently and it’s better, it’s not great. You try to find something and you’ll get 5,000,000 documents before you find the one you’re looking for. A lot of stuff’s not available, even though they say it is, it’s not. You have to use FOISA to get it.*That’s costly for both sides, I would have thought.*Yes, but if you’re spending your time asking these questions, because they don’t answer the original questions so you start going down that route, then it means you have to get someone to do that, because they’ve got so many days to reply. Sometimes they reply and day they’re still looking into it. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

Oh yeah.*Without wishing to be cheeky in any way, could you describe those a little, please?*I don’t know how the council works, the internal workings of it. That’s a nightmare because you have to speak to about maybe, 10, 15 20 departments because they don’t talk to each other, so what hope have you got of getting anything done. It’s not as if they collaborate [inaudible], you have to do all of the work yourself, and they don’t say ‘if you’re doing this, contact this department’. You’re left to work it out on your own  |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

The only thing would be that we’ve been looking at recently is there’s been new developments in [this area] in the last couple of years, but the traffic situation has been horrendous for us. We didn’t know how to figure out how decisions, how roads should have been constructed or whether the people who are building these things, are they supposed to have agreed to do any highways and build infrastructure or what? And basically we just, form a snippet that someone said when they were talking to me about something else and they mentioned the words ‘traffic assessment’, I thought ‘right’ and I asked for the traffic assessments for all of the builds, all the new builds, and every one of them came back saying ‘ they don’t need to be assessed because there’s not going to be that much traffic’.*That’s interesting – it sounds like they’ve pre-decided the results of the assessment before even doing it.*They didn’t do it, for any of them. Four builds I asked about and they didn’t do any of them.*That’s, shall we say, interesting*.And I’ve been trying for long and weary to find out how that happened because we’ve done traffic monitoring and given them figures about how much traffic is coming through [this area] now because there’s a new sports centre that’s been built and also another few things that have been built that are causing havoc. They’ve now agreed to do something with one part of the road before somebody gets killed. That took a website to get that done, and that’s just one chap at the business who kept on putting his oar in, saying ‘it wasn’t what [this area] wanted, it wasn’t what he wanted’. It definitely was what [this area needed, so we’ve got nowhere with it because we said ‘why was there no traffic assessment? How could this decision be made by one person – it’s been signed off by one person, the housing planning person. How can he sign that off – where’s the discussion, where’s the background papers for that?’ And you don’t get any, they just fob you off.A lot of councils operate differently, so if you went from one area to another to live and joined a CC you might not find things run the same, you’d need to find another way around to the same information. But you don’t get answers and people keep ignoring you. You finally have to involve the head of the council and he’ll say ‘I’ll get somebody to do something about this’. That’s how we got the amenity sites changed because we got him and told him we wanted a meeting. |
| 1. Anything else?

We’ve got skill gaps – when you’ve got someone who says they’ll be the secretary but they don’t really have the skills and don’t really follow anything up, it falls back on me again. They’ll take the minutes but they don’t really know how to process what’s happened so they maybe don’t follow things through, or they write up minutes and you think that’s not what really happened, so you end up having to amend them and send them back. So it’s difficult – the people who are doing things are the people who are working. They are the ones who do the things that need done. |

## Demographics questions

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| --- |
| 1. How old are you?

[50-59] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Diploma |
| 1. How long ago was this?

5 years  |

# CCllr interview 11

## Introduction questions

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| --- |
| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Treasurer |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

15 years |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

Chair 20 years ago to 17 years ago |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Small urban |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

The CC is, we claim, one of the most active in Scotland. I’m a member of the CC executive and the CC planning group. |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

Not as successful as we would like to be. 3 out of 5. We do get good coverage in the local paper, I don’t know how many hits the website gets, but the one big gap is that we would like to, when there is some big event, say a new supermarket or other development – all of these have happened in the last few years – would like to be much better at gauging public opinion. |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Yes.*Could you unpack that a little for me, please?*I’m aware in our constitution that we’re meant to reflect the opinion of the local people to the council and any other statutory bodies, like the health service and the SEPA, Scottish Water, the police and so on. I’m also aware that with the planning we’re a statutory consultee. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

Well, I access what I want on the council website. Our constitution is there, so if I need to check anything on that I can easily do so. I think that’s the main source, the council website.*Do you ever refer to whatever other CCs are doing, or is there an LA association of CCs?*There used to be an [LA] association [of CCs], but it wound up about 3 years ago. Part of the difficulty we faced with regard to it is whereas we consider ourselves a small town, the other CCs are much more rural. There are one or two other towns and we’ve got an electorate of about 11,000. The next closest is [name of town] which is about half that. So their interests are much more rural than ours. The other thing as far as our local area is concerned, we did have in the run up to last Xmas, our December meeting, we invited along representatives from the other CCs in our immediate area and we’re doing the same again this year in just a couple of weeks’ time. We’ll be considering things that are perhaps of mutual concern, where we can help one another, this kind of thing.*How did you learn about the sources you use?*Mainly on the job. The council does have a programme, the last few years, of training for CCs. They have asked us what things interest us most, and certainly I remember going along to one meeting on planning, where the head of planning for [this LA] was there, and that was very helpful, and there was another meeting on the use of social media that I went to. So there are also training things available for new members of CCs, but I’m afraid I can’t be sure about that. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

No – I’m going back 30 years roughly – things have changed since then. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

Not particularly, no |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

Again, I refer to the constitution on the website, the main principles are in that. We do from time to time, there are some issues that come up, there are several of us that have been on a CC for a good few years, and we speak to one another. There’s another CCllr who is a former LA councilor, and we our monthly meetings are usually attended by at least one of our local LA councilors. I’ve known them all for many years – if there are nay doubts or anything, I’m quite happy to lift the phone and speak to them.*So you’re going to the authoritative sources?*Yes, and occasionally we have referred things to the head of legal services in the council if were in doubt. On one occasional, I must be going back at least 10 years, we lodged a petition with the Scottish Parliament over an interpretation that the council was making. We had a hearing at the public petitions committee.*How did that go?*We had a fair hearing – the law wasn’t changed. To put you in the picture, a major site in the town is down by the pier-head, there’s a large area of reclaimed land there, and at the moment, the swimming pool and leisure centre are there – the rest is just a car park. The problem with it is in that stormy weather it can be under water, cars can float away, so the place needs some fairly major money spent on it. This is just about to happen. Over the years there have been two proposals for putting supermarkets on the site, and these have both gone to having a Reporter coming in. The Reporter refusing permission for the supermarket, but what had happened one year in the run up to council elections was the head of legal services for the council advised candidates that if they voiced an opinion in the run-up to the election about what was to happen on this site then if they were subsequently elected they would be debarred from voting when a proposal came up for the site. We in the CC felt this was wrong because it meant that we were having to elect our councilors blind, without knowing what their attitudes were for the most important site in the town centre. So we petitioned the parliament about this – the head of the petitions committee said he’d been involved in drawing up the code of practice for councilors and he’d never dreamt that this would be interpreted in this way. Whether or not there was a subsequent revision to the code of practice I can’t remember, but it certainly seems to be working much more the way we would hope it would work. |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

Yes, I do*Could you unpack that a little for me please?*The most detailed one is the planning committee – I do look at the plans that have been lodged and whether or not our objections from these, I look at that. More generally speaking, we’re aware of what council policy is with regard to various aspects. With housing, at the moment the council has been losing population, and given that Scottish Government policy is to grow population, the grant that they get from central government is for a rising population, so I’m aware of these kind of issues, and also aware of constraints like parking, the ability of the health service to cope, Scottish Water, this kind of thing. The big one that’s going to come up in the next year or so will be development of the pier-head, because the council now does have money to put up a new leisure centre, but it’s what else they will do there, what kind of quality of design we’re in for in particular, because it is a very important site as far as the future of the town is concerned. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

[apart from the LA planning portal] The local paper carries a lot of information. There’s a pretty lively letters to the editor column. Local councilors and other well-known people contribute columns to it. I have to say I’m not into the use of social media at all. I just don’t seem to have time for it quite honestly but I know that there is a Facebook page that the local paper runs, and the CC website does have Facebook links but I’m ashamed to say that I’ve not looked at them.*Do you know if your other CCllrs look at Facebook pages?*Some do. It tends to be – I know there are exceptions to this – perhaps the younger ones. We don’t have enough younger ones, but I know one of the older ones who most certainly does – one about my vintage.*Do you get information from people – word of mouth or emails or anything like that?*I personally don’t but obviously friends will tell me what’s happening. We do get members of the public – not many come along to our meetings and this is something we would dearly like to see more of. I think until CCs get tax-raising powers folk won’t be particularly interested in what we do. |
| 1. Is there anything [apart from social media] you avoid doing or looking at?

Not really. I know that this is a library-based project that you’re doing. I was until January had of the town heritage trust. I was in that post for 19 years – I’m now it’s treasurer as well, and I use the library a lot for heritage trust matters, so it’s not as if I’m averse to using libraries. In fact we’ve got a planning group meeting in the library this afternoon. The advantage being that the library gets hard copies of the plans, so we can access and look at them there if need be, and sometimes it’s better to have hard copy than trying to do it online.  |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

There’s two things, facts and then there’s opinions. The facts I would hope are reasonably easy to get hold of and assess. The opinions are much more difficult. Again, another planning application that came up and resulted in public meetings was a proposal to site a few wind turbines on the hill above the town, and that generated a lot of very vociferous opinion against it. Most of the opinion had nothing to do with planning but nevertheless it was there and it was vociferous. The other thing that was difficult to gauge was just how representative the two sides were of public opinion. Some of my fellow CCllrs argued that most people weren’t really bothered one way or the other. Siting of a supermarket also – this is one where we did have quite a bit of success. We managed to gauge public opinion reasonably well on that just by having people standing in the town centre and asking them questions, or giving them questionnaires to complete, but there’s room for improvement. I know some of the small local CCs have been very successful. The one that covers [name of area], they have a mailing list that covers 80% plus of households but they’re only covering a community of less than 1000 people, whereas we’ve got an electorate of about 11,000 here. |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

I think we rely largely on the local press. Whether or not there’s more goes on the Facebook page I do not know because I’m not involved in Facebook, but the local press does give pretty good coverage of what we’re doing at our meetings. It comes and goes – in the last year or so we’ve been getting reporters along at every single meeting, whereas there was a period where it was a bit more sporadic.*You’ve got the website. There isn’t a CC Facebook page as such, or Twitter account?*I think it does – I could be wrong.*Let’s have a look [searches Google and finds the CC Facebook page]*I think we’re on the third incarnation of the website, and we have set it up in such a way that we’re hoping that we will get people responding. We can put up a questionnaire and hope we’ll get people responding to it, but the problem is personnel – who takes charge of doing this, that and everything with regard to the website? It can be quite time-consuming – you need the knowledge and until just a matter of weeks ago we were quite well down, we had 6 vacancies. Then we had a by-election just about a month ago and got up to our full complement [of 24] but since then someone else has resigned, so it’s always a struggle to get the numbers. As you’ll appreciate, some just come to meetings whereas others will do a lot.*Do you do anything like a newsletter of your own?*No. Our convenor does get a column in the local paper about every 4 or 5 weeks. The paper itself is online |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

Certainly there is the one CCllr who does look at it but whether or not he responds to it, I don’t know, but he does let us know occasionally the kind of opinions that are coming up on issues of particular importance – he’ll send an email around the rest of us, or sometimes at the public meeting he’ll say this is what I’ve read on Facebook or whatever.*[Repeats question]*The column in the local paper is just written by the convenor, so it’s up to him to decide what he wants to put in it. This week’s local paper has got his column in it. Rather than concentrate on any one subject he’s got about 6 different subjects this time. It’s more of a report about what the CC’s doing, but sometimes if it’s more of a major subject, like what’s going to be happening at the pier-head he’ll try and give opinions, or the issues that the CC are facing.*Do you know if anyone’s ever decided to share this information in this way but not that way?*I don’t think there’s ever been a conscious decision to do anything like that. It’s more likely to happen by default. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

There’s always a possibility for conflict to arise. Certainly at the start of any of our monthly meetings we are asked do we have to declare an interest in any particular policy or subject that’s coming up on the agenda. On the planning group there is one planning application that’s come up which I see form looking on the website that a number of neighbours are objecting to. It so happens that I know a number of these people, but they’ve not been one to me or put pressure on me in any way, but nevertheless I feel I will have to declare an interest there, just in case people think I’m biased.*I think you said there were clashes over the use of the pier and supermarket siting*There’s now not going to be a supermarket there. There will be a new leisure centre on the pier and there’s also going to be possibly some retail and/or some restaurant-cafés on it, although not a supermarket, one problem that surveys of town-centre shops has raised is that a lot of them are actually vey small, then we’ve got the supermarket and nothing much in between, so the council may allocate a little bit of space on the pier for two or three units of in-between size. The other big issue is the design. [names and describes an architect who was a resident in this town] He came up with a concept of what it might look like, and this would have been impressive. Whether or not it would have been within current budget levels I don’t know, but within the CC’s we’ve set up an offshoot called Architecture and Design [name of town] which besides having CC representation on it also has a number of retired architects an council planners. We’ve got several major housing developments going through at the moment, and we’re trying to get improvement on the quality of design in them. A large portion of [this town] is covered by a conservation area because of the quality of the architecture, and we keep hoping that some of the modern design that we’ll get might also have good-quality architecture but we’re concerned that that’s [not] going to be the case. Architecture and Design [name of town] is newly established but we’ve had a meeting with the council official who’s going to be very much involved in progressing the pier-head development, so we’ll be keeping very much a watching eye on this, and commenting if we feel that whatever comes up is very bland and nothing like what [aforementioned architect] was proposing.[talk about St James Centre, old Royal High School in Edinburgh, Edinburgh World Heritage status; and origin of interviewee’s town’s layout, and history of town’s growth as a commuter town from 18th century] |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)[The interviewee was asked about the CC’s opinion, because interviewee doesn’t do Facebook.]

We would dearly like to get more [responses on Facebook].*Do you know who reads the material the CC puts online?*No, I’ve never heard anything about that. |

## Other RQs

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| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

Don’t think so.*If I can dig a little deeper, how did you learn to find information, or where did you develop your information-finding skills?*It’s been a gradual process. Going way back when I first joined the CC, just listening to others, observing what was going on, listening to LA councilors, and obviously as the years have gone on I’ve become increasingly computer-literate so I’m able to access that online myself. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

We do have committees for various things. I’m involved with the planning one. We do have another called the town improvement group, which is principally involved with the more day-to-day issues, how things have been carried out – Are street-lights working? Are road-signs legible? In winter, are the pavements being salted? Are bins being collected? How is parking being enforced, all these kind of things, so these are probably the two main groups within the CC. One or two other people look after the website. These are the main divisions but if there’s a special project comes up, then we will ask for volunteers. One of the more prominent buildings in the town centre was the tower of a church. The church itself was demolished but the tower until recently served as the tourist information office. It’s now been put up for sale, and we thought ‘possibly a community purchase here’. To see if we should go ahead we set up a special committee to look into this, to advise the CC as to what action, if any, we should be taking.*If I can dig into that a little deeper, who decides what the aims and methods are for these different groups?*We do have, I think there are some terms of reference in place. In terms of this most recent one, the terms of reference are just to see whether or not we should go ahead with a community purchase, because of the potential repairs that the building’s going to be requiring. Because of difficulties of generating income we recommended against it.*Were you using the powers under the Community Empowerment Act there?*We lodged a notification of interest with the sales agent, and that was a far as we got. We’re actually getting a talk – someone’s coming through from Edinburgh in the next couple of weeks to explain the CEA to us. I’m personally looking forward to that, just to find out what it does and doesn’t cover.*As far as I’m aware, not all provisions have come into force yet – they’re still writing the secondary legislation.*  |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

[See also above]Personally, no I haven’t. I mean I’ve got a good working relationship with the library, and we use it quite a bit for heritage trust work because there’s a good source of local historical information but in terms of CC, other than it’s got the planning applications there, no.*Have you had any help from trade unions or other professional bodies in learning how to find information?*No. We do have one member here, well he’s no longer a member but he does come to meetings occasionally, who is a leading expert on the Scottish planning system. He has put us in touch in the past with Planning Advice Scotland |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

They have run seminars from time to time to help CCllrs. This is really in the last 3 to 4 years. I think they also do now hold some for new CCllrs but I couldn’t swear to it. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

The gaps are probably the ones I’ve mentioned already – it’s difficult just to be sure how accurately we reflect public opinion. That’s probably the main gap we have.*And your personal gaps?*Again public opinion. I would say I’m reasonably well informed on most matters concerning CCs, and to a lesser extent how the [LA] council functions, because obviously how they work impinges to a large extent on what we can do.*I think you also said that you’re not so interested in social media.*No, definitely not – that’s a gap of mine. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

No, not really, I’m not totally clear what you mean.*[Interviewer explains the concepts]*It’s always been our wish to get more young people involved. [This town] being close to [naval base], there’s a fairly substantial naval estate on one of the outskirts of the town. It just so happens that our secretary at the moment ticks both boxes – she is a lot younger than many of us and she’s also the wife of a man serving in the navy. So she brings things in there. The last few meetings also, we’ve had a couple of young people attend, one of whom I know is in the Scottish Youth Parliament. So we obviously want to encourage more links like that. Similarly, again on the periphery of the town, there is a council housing estate which I know figures quite high on indices of social deprivation. We do have one CCllr who represents that area. The residents there have their own residents’ association and so on – these things come and go over the years but they try and make it known that they have needs. [This town] is generally regarded as being an affluent place but there’s certainly pockets of need within the town.[explains where in the town these estates are] |
| 1. Anything else?

[Not asked] |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[70-79] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Male |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White Scottish |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Postgraduate degree |
| 1. How long ago was this?

33 years  |

# CCllr interview 12

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Chair |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

[1 year] Since December last year, but I was on it about 35 years ago |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

n/a |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Rural (an industrial village) |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

To represent the interests of the village, make representations to MPs, MSPs and the council on behalf of the community. Chair’s role is to make sure the democratic process is respected, that it is transparent to the public |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

Quite difficult. I know that for a period, we had no access to the noticeboards in the village. We have a website but the person who has to update it is very busy, therefore it’s not fair to expect him to do it immediately. We have since then managed to put out one single-sided A4 newsletter. Because of the fact that all the other CCllrs are even busier than I am, I put it together and printed it and distributed it with the help of one other person in the community. |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

When I’m not sure of something, I would proactively seek information about it. Do you want specific examples?*That would help, yes.*This would give an example of what the problems could be. I don’t know if we’re like other CCs but we do have a fund which you can read about on the Foundation Scotland website, called the [name of village] Community Fund. That means the situation is there is a panel who actually deal with making awards – the CC is not hands-on in terms of making awards. The funds go to charities in the area. When I came onto the CC I wasn’t totally up to speed with how this was working, and I was in a position that I wanted to seek further information about it, and didn’t have to the hard way. Then about a year ago, Foundation Scotland wanted to update the agreement with us, for reasons that are still not clear to me, and at that point I tried as best as I could as a chair (I’m an experienced chair in other contexts, and have worked in many other organisations supporting volunteers.) Anyway I tried as best as I could to allow each of my colleagues on the CC (I only have 4, well I did then – we now have 5 because we co-opted one). I gave them time to look at this information for FS, which was in the form of revised documents underpinning the agreement with us as the CCll, and they wanted us to look at that and say if we were happy with the changes. I asked each of the other CCllrs if they had any questions or concerns, and then I tried my best to email those questions or concerns anonymously – you know ‘a fellow CCllr has raised with me a question’ – to FS and get responses. That was going on fine until I was really forced by my CC colleagues – two of them in particular – to copy them into all my correspondence. What happened was we got these reply-all things going on, discussions were happening, things were being said, some of which I felt weren’t very accurate and FS were having too much difficulty with all this and asked if I the sole point of contact, at which point one of my CC colleagues said to me that she didn’t think I was the appropriate person to do that. I was quite shocked [inaudible] – I believe I’m quite an open and trustworthy person. I lost confidence to even continue on the CC. I assumed that if this was agreed with by the others, as it has been. Two of the others agreed, and this person got back to me and said ‘I don’t think you are the person to be the sole point of contact, and two people agree with me.’ That put me in a minority of 2, none of it’s been discussed in a meeting, so I was forced to say to my colleagues ‘OK then, would you like to do it?’ because otherwise I felt ‘we can have a row about, it or I can step back gracefully.’ I assumed they would ask me to resign because their confidence in me had decreased and they couldn’t continue to support me as chair. That didn’t happen, then we had a hiatus over the summer because of illness and holidays and no-one being able to turn their mind to the documents. This is still continuing, and I’ve decided to take a grip of the situation, but it is difficult.*I can see that the panel comprises one member of your CC, a representative of [name] Developments and 5 local residents.*I think everything is fairly amicable now but I’ve had to be patient. I was concerned I was being put under undue pressure. Potentially, either people wanted to change the way things work – which is fine, I don’t care so long as it’s done democratically through a CC meeting – or people had a particular view against a project that might come to the panel for funding and might then be referred to the CC if it’s too big an amount for the panel to award, and that is an ongoing slight concern, but I have now assured myself, after a meeting with FS, that in fact they are not proposing any changes in the way in which the funds work, nor are any of the CCllrs apparently from what they’ve all said to me. No changes are planned, and I’m having to maintain the position that if they want to make any changes that’s still OK. We can’t agree in advance not to change things, so it’s quite a difficult position for me to maintain as it has given me a lot of personal anxiety. Now I’m someone who has chaired committees, I’ve been on the local council, I’ve been active in the [name of political party] for about 25 years, and I’ve chaired committees with people like Kenny MacAskill and Alex Salmond on them, and I’ve also had a lot of involvement in the council, in terms of knowing how councils work, so I am not unhappy about the way things have worked out but I see that someone with less experience might have found this all completely difficult. The point about this is that I’ve asked FS to advise me about what declarations of interest should be required in case any funding application comes before the CC, and also to ask what information I might be entitled to from the panel, so that I can be clear what information they think I ought to get, and also how we should be conducting declarations of interest, and whether it’s acceptable for all CCllrs to speak and vote on an issue that’s been recommended to us by the panel. I know how it might have been dealt with by the council, and I’ll have to ask their advice too, I expect, but clearly if I’d not had the experience that I had, both in terms of policy and in terms of the council, I would be struggling to understand what might be my responsibilities as chair. I find myself having to ask my colleagues for information and saying ‘I’m sorry, I need that information confidentially’ because the other individual CCllrs might very well have expressed a view that might suggest that they have very strong views on one side of the other, and I need to be pretty clear in terms of what I expect them to do, and put those proposals to them as a recommendation from FS or the council, so it’s not just me saying ‘you really need to sign this form to say you have an interest’ or ‘you can speak on this issue’ in spite of the fact that [inaudible].  |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

Obviously it’s important to keep referring to the constitution. I don’t believe you should have to have it memorized but I would look at it. We’ve got a treasurer, we’ve not got a secretary – the treasurer and I share that – in terms of duties, what do you mean?*What do you as a CCllr need to do, or are required to do*?Well we’re called to represent the community, required to do things transparently. I read up on the whole thing when I was asked to go onto the CC about a year ago by people who wanted me to go onto it. I thought at least there’s no duties or powers – there are responsibilities to be open and transparent and represent the community, to try to keep the community involved, helping to support bringing the community together. That is quite difficult – I don’t know if you would be able to find out about it by reading up on it.*What did you read when you became a CCllr?*I read the most recent legislation and the constitution, consulted some other documentation that supports the constitution, from the council. But I’m the way of reading legislation because I happen to be a policy officer and involved in politics. *The sources you use, how did you learn about them, and how useful were they?*I must have known, someone must have told me about that there’d been recent legislation, because I’ve not been involved in working in a political-related job since 2007 I haven’t come across it but there has been recent legislation since then. I think somebody must have told me but who it was I’m not entirely sure, or it could have been that I decided to Google for ‘community council Scotland’ - I don’t know.*[discussion of age of legislation, and Marco Biagi’s work on Fairer Scotland]*I found legislation on community engagement. I wasn’t really aware of the legal basis of community councils before that I became an office-bearer but I used to go to CC meetings as a councilor, and I wasn’t aware at that time, and I wasn’t aware at that time that LAs demanded copies of the minutes. I believe that’s a change as a result of new legislation, and when I looked it up on the internet I came across these documents. I’ve been paid to do stuff as a policy officer, but as a CCllr I’m back to being a volunteer and have limited time, and I couldn’t swear blind what legislation caused it, but it’s my understanding that the councils now require a great deal more of CCs in terms of, I couldn’t believe this, [mentions severe, time-consuming personal issue] so I got onto colleagues and said ‘can you take over?’ but fortunately I’d already set up the things I needed to and communicated with the council officially, and set up the forwarding of emails to me, so all I did for several months was to forward emails to other people to deal with, and that was fine. My colleagues are all very capable but very busy. I didn’t know but I started to get emails and eventually phonecalls from the council saying ‘where are the minutes’ and I said ‘you’ll get them when I get them, when we’ve looked at them’ because the person who took them asked me if I would look at them before she distributed them because she was new to the village and a volunteer, and I’m not prepared to take on a job that might involve me having to say ‘I think this is great but I think you need to put this in’, drawing on my other skills which happen to be managing volunteers, so I couldn’t demand this of her, and when I got them I didn’t have time to look at them just now in December, so I wanted to sit down with her in January and do that before I distributed them. Now to me that was managing my role as chair, her role as a volunteer minute-taker and trying not to put too much pressure on myself, and doing it perfectly in advance of the next meeting, but the council were ‘oh no, we need them now’ and I could not believe that actually happens, but it does. I nearly walked away at that point, I can’t go to this woman and say ‘I’m going to send them blind to the council, even if the CCllrs aren’t seeing them’ This intrusion by the council was really quite un-necessary. The person at the council didn’t understand the concept of approving minutes at the next meeting, and another person then phoned me back and we had a conversation about how I wanted to handle the whole process, but they’re still demanding them. The person who’s doing the minutes doesn’t have time to become the full secretary – she’s an academic like yourself, she gets over-busy with marking. The treasurer now does them but has personal difficulties of her own. I cannot ask this volunteer to produce these minutes right now because you think you need them. *[Interviewer says that Edinburgh only requires approved minutes]*I thought it was the same all over Scotland – that’s very useful.*There is a national model document for CCs [mentions 1973 and 1996 Local Government (Scotland) Acts, pointing out that LAs can do different things]*Our council is having a different issue with [another] CC where it appears to me as an observer, having read the newspaper, that the chair of the CC was forced to resign because the council criticized him in writing, and he felt his position was untenable, and he’s a manager of a major business, and he was told he couldn’t manage meetings. This is a huge concern of mine, that your reputation is potentially at risk by the council having a go at you. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

[Not asked but see above and below] |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

Well, I’m not really aware of anything but the legislation and the council constitution and the documents they have to provide, that I would look at because what else would you look at?*Some of my interviewees have said they look at other CCs near them and said ‘OK, how do you do this in practice?’*I would be interested in that because we have a CC forum. I didn’t get involved in it until after the debacle [about the CC chair mentioned in Q11] because I was so alarmed by that, and certainly the chair [of an third CC in this LA] has been very helpful. He assumed that they would be having a meeting of CCs in public to which the public might be invited to ask questions but it wasn’t like that at all because everyone just sat there and chipped in whenever they felt like it and there was sod-all he could do about it. It doesn’t work like you have a cabinet meeting in private, most of the people in the public who come along are former CCllrs and LA councilors, and you just have to let them, and I don’t feel quite so bad that that’s what always happens to me |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

When I don’t like it, I question it. I don’t know whether it’s any good or not, I don’t know how you’d find that out. *Whether it helps you, I suppose*The personal self-confidence which I’ve had to recover after more than half a decade of having been recovered and not having to deal with anything like this. If I recover my self-confidence and rely on what I know to get me through, I’ll get on a lot better. I think it’s more about I got into it too quickly without having realized that it was going to be difficult. |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

It’s a very small village, so we’re very lucky that way. The general view is that a rumour will start off at one end of the village as a feather and by the time it gets to the other end it’s a chicken. People who are on the CC [inaudible] keep close to the ground about what the issues are – all my CCllrs are pretty good at that. In terms of the planning stuff, which is the main thing, we have to keep an eye on from the point of view of the council, what happens is I get the emails from the council, and I have to scrutinize them because the person who takes responsibility for looking at planning applications in details is too busy to trawl through and find ones relevant to our village. There are very few but when they are, they’re very important because they’re to do with large developments of housing, [name of farming business] which is very closely related to the same people as [name of bottled-water company] and [name of distillery] so we have a major application quite frequently. [Bottled water company] has had two since I’ve become chair, this is huge. That stuff I get to scrutinize and then pass on so that we can move on it very quickly because we very nearly got caught out because the council is still sending paper correspondence to the former chair. Although I’d notified them correctly, the planning department hadn’t known this. They know now, I can tell you!*Do you get information about local developments in any other ways?*I’ve just discovered from a person working for [farm company] that forestry developments have to be registered with the Forestry Commission and there is a process for us to comment on it. That was a deep shock – yet more work we have to do for some unknown deadline, but at least in this case the consultant had proactively been in touch with us.*Do you do things like looking at local Facebook pages or other online sources?*No. I believe the CC had at one time set up a Facebook page but it was the subject of trolling so they decided it wasn’t a good idea. I’m very glad because I don’t have to trouble with it. I can’t see what the point would be in us setting up as a potential target for abuse – I don’t know how you would look at what people are saying in the area about [this village] because it’s a tiny village. You wouldn’t know how to find out.*So word of mouth from your community*It has to be – are there communities that have randomly set up Facebook pages that somebody other than the CC has set up?*I’m not the world’s expert on CC Facebook but I do know that some of the people I’ve talked to in this research say that they use it quite successfully because they can listen in to what other people are talking about in their area of a bigger city so there’s quite a high population density, and there’s a lot of people chatting on Facebook about local things, so they’re able to get information from that network. They’re also able to say ‘this is what we as a CC are doing’*I did put this vaguely in front of people and say ‘I think Twitter might be useful because we can say what we thought better’, because Twitter’s more for getting the essential message out, whereas Facebook appears to be quite an alarming thing that no-one should be wasting their time on.*It has its good points and its bad points*We’ve decided not to use it at present as a CC. I don’t know how you would know that you’re speaking to people in your community, or indeed how you would know they’re in your community. You might be able to do it in [this village] if there are enough people who want to do it because you could also speak to each other through Facebook or anything but in a bigger community you would be worried that you’re speaking to yourself.*There are issues around ‘goldfish bowls’ or information bubbles, but as I say some CCs say they make a go of it. It’s something I would like to look into during some other project but all I can say is that some use it, others don’t want to. I’m not forcing any of you.*It’s a bigger issue, isn’t it, how social media reflect back to their views – it’s a very big issue internationally at the moment. In a number of recent campaigns people are using social media and they’re the people that you’re talking to are that very small select group, and then it can be used automatically by people who know how to do it to make that particular point of view spread almost virally in advance of important elections. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

[see above] |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

*I think you’ve told me that there are no information sources that you wouldn’t use apart from social media.*Well if we hear a rumour (unfortunately, most of the rumours are about [bottled water company]) and one of my colleagues happens to take it upon herself to contact [this company] at any time, because it’s a very good business that wants people to contact them at any time about any concerns. So I hoped that it might be helpful, and I’ve suggested to [the company] for the last few months that we’ve been doing this and another of my CC colleagues who is also the chair of the school council – we’ve been meeting regularly with one of the [company] senior people – a PR and community engagement kind of person – and what I had hoped was it would cut out the need for weekly or daily complaints about HGVs coming from w or 3 sources but it can’t be done – people must have the right to complain when they want to complain. But how we decide if information is reliable or not things like contacting the company or the council – do you know that someone is cutting down a tree? Do you know that HGVs are speeding down the street? do you know that this or that road is being dug up? And of course these are partly to find out who’s digging up the road, whether [the company] knows that there are more lorries than usual, so we are asking questions of the people who we think likely to be responsible for the things that people are complaining about like the holes in the road or the vehicles or [laughs] we go to the people who are likely to know. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

[see above] |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

One of the things I wanted to do when I became chair – I thought I’d have the time because I’m retired – but [family woes happened] so it wasn’t until October that I was able to offer to do anything, and we agreed at a meeting at the end of August that I would work with one of the other CCllrs to pull it together ,and as I say I did it with the help of everyone chipping in but as I say I had to do most of it in October. I know that went through the door of every single house in the village. Not all the remote farms and I did send it to businesses, so we got information out there about several things that are happening, and I would like to do it again, and I have got the CC’s agreement to do it again in February or March. It’s just what can be done easily. The difficulties are getting agreement as to what can be said, because I feel would have to take responsibility as the chair and editor, although if anyone else wanted to do it that would be brilliant. *Do people come to your CC meetings?*Not many – most have either been CCllrs before – there are 5 CCllrs, 3 LA councilors, 2 people who have been associated with the CC because they go to represent the community on other bodies. One is the community rail partnership, and the other is a local campaign to reopen the station in [this village] which is pretty well defunct, but they always come, so that gives us a core of 6 with 2 extras and three councilors is 11, and you maybe get 3 or 4 members of the public except two very large meetings were when we had the planning application for [bottled water company]. One of the meetings was about 50 and the other was probably about 30 members of the public, and there was another member of the CC where we had just heard they were going to close the pedestrian level crossing, but the good news is they replaced it with a pedestrian bridge across the railway. Thanks to Network Rail and the Scottish Government – that’s brilliant, that meeting had maybe 12 members of the public. But we hope the word goes out, and we put the minutes on the website, and the minutes are printed in full and go on our own noticeboard. They’re also put into the one shop we still have.*Do you have anything like a local newspaper that you use to get information out.*I haven’t done it yet because there are two – there’s a free-sheet that goes around [name of area] and there’s the [local newspaper] and the [LA-wide newspaper], but I haven’t taken responsibility for seeing that that happens yet because I haven’t time. I don’t know whether they would take it – I think they would give us a wee bit of space, so it would be worth doing but I don’t think it has been in the past, because if it had been I would have been told ‘this is what you have to do’. I’m not trying to change things dramatically.*Of the methods you use to get information out to your community, which works the best?*Word of mouth. I was on the bus the other day and spoke to three people about a project. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

We think that people don’t really use the website. The person on the CC who wanted to do that is too busy [explains why] he said he wants to move it one to someone else, but he says that he was quite please with the number of hits he was getting, but his general view is that the people in the village who could use it as a tool to advertise their own events or advertise, for example, [inaudible] so he got a bit despondent about it. I think actually, given the size of the village, all communications are forwarded to me – the CC has an email address which is forwarded to me. People sometimes say ‘hi CC, can you help me with …?’ and you know then I reply ‘Hi it’s [interviewee]’. But as for getting information out, if we don’t think people are going to look at the website then there is no point. We don’t worry about it too much. We are fanatical about putting things on the noticeboard – that’s fine. The previous CC went an ordered this fabulous new noticeboard and the minutes go there. But I noticed the other day that you can’t read them. They’re in the shop too. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

Here’s an example of what might have been a conflict. We found that the council wanted to put a tree-protection order on a tree. I was very relived to discover that the CC had already decided ‘yes they did’, because we wouldn’t then have to discuss it at a meeting, and of course there might have been conflict about that because at the time the council wouldn’t share with me who owned the tree, who wanted to cut it down or anything else, partly because they didn’t know, partly because they couldn’t because of the usual data-protection stuff. So I wasn’t sure who was going to fight over it, but they didn’t in the end anyway, and I spoke to someone who said it wasn’t an issue, and all the CCllrs chipped in in an email conversation about it. Is that the sort of thing that you want to know?*[yes]*I think the only thing that leads to an argument is when people are a little bit careless about how they express things at meetings, but I don’t have any facts or anything that we’ve uncovered which has caused a problem. |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

I wouldn’t expect to get an online response. What we put on the website is the minutes and information on behalf of other organisations. This is going back before my time on the CC, but at discussions at [CC] meetings I’d gone along to for interest. [inaudible]. That’s the difficult bit, whether people want it or not.*Do you know anything about the website’s online audience, like their ages or demographics?*I don’t but the person who looks after it will know the number of hits – he’s quite pleased about it. One of the things I did when I became chair is ask him to come and have a chat with me and tell me what he thought could be done to help him, because is clearly over-busy. He had quite good evidence of numbers of hits and was quite pleased with it at that time, but sometimes he’s quite despondent because he feels people don’t use it for the whole community. I think it’s a lovely website – I just don’t think the community necessarily wants it or needs it in the way in the way it was envisaged, and that’s because either they have their own websites or they don’t want one.*[interviewer tries to move on to next question]*It’s there as a way of giving information. If someone say ‘I don’t know about the community fund’, I can say ‘you’ll find out on the CC website’. |

## Other RQs

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| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

I’m in the fortunate position of having had access to computers and the internet for as long as that was possible for a private individual because my late husband had a computer business, if you mean those sort of things. I’ve also worked as a policy officer, as a manager of volunteers, a teacher, I have been a councillor and been a party candidate, all these things have given me skills that I bring to this, and family, I dunno, whatever. It must be a total nightmare for anyone who hasn’t been fortunate enough to have these.*By information skills, I mean the ability to gather information, process…*As a policy officer it would be my job to find information, as a politician similarly it’s part of what you would want to do, as a volunteer manager I would want be wanting to find out things I suppose. All the jobs that you do, you know, teachers do research you know, if that’s what you mean. If you mean IT skills…*No, I mean purely information as in facts, figures, opinions, not IT*IT has been the basis on which I’ve had the good fortune to do most of the research I’ve had to do in a professional or voluntary capacity. Before that I can remember being an avid user of [my] university library – I loved it |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

[not asked] |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

As a CCllr not at all.*But you said that at university…*Oh yes, I did a post-graduate course there in the early 1980s*Have you had any help learning information skills from trade unions or any other professional bodies?*About research, I suppose I used to be active in the [a teacher’s trade union] – before I was active in the [political party] I was active in [the teacher’s union] – that’s where I started to become politically active |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

They did offer course for new office bearers, and I will say, having thought through the skills not just I had but the other CCllrs had, I didn’t really think that any of us really needed to go on them. I know that sounds awfully arrogant and it’s not the way you’re meant to do these things but I couldn’t have expected any of them to go, and as it turns out I couldn’t expect myself to go because I just didn’t have the time. They would have been quite good basic training about being a chair, being a secretary, a treasurer and about planning. But as about how to research and find out information about things, I’m not aware they do much about that apart from planning specifically, because that’s a major part of what a CC’s meant to do. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

Between us, the CCllrs, we ought to be able to do a pretty powerful piece of work if we had time, because between us we have a fabulous set of skills. We all would recognize that there would be gaps in our own skills. I do not wish to take on any greater amount of work myself, and therefore even if I identified gaps, I would just go ‘help I can’t find time!’ I would really love it if all my CC colleagues had a lot more time so that we could avoid some of the problems we’ve had about who is researching or going through documents to find out about them. And also if we could have more time so that we could potentially go on course or find out things that might be of interest to us. I have to find out how to feed back to the equality commission about the planting, possibly quite quickly. You know, what CCs are expected to do as volunteers is outrageous – can’t do it! |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

If I’d wanted to be a community education worker I would have been one. I’ve been pushed, possibly by FS, to use my time, my skills to facilitate opportunities for my colleagues to build on their knowledge and skills for example to look at documents and to decide if one document is making substantial changes to another or not, without taking up an entire year. I think FS is seeing as a piece of community learning which would be of great value to people. Really it would have been nice if all of us had lots more time to discuss why these documents are or are not making a change to anything. Quite honestly, people do not have time to polish things, and I just think to some extent I’m getting forced to go ‘oh this is great because my colleagues are getting such a lot of learning about it’ but in fact it’s not great. On the other hand we’re now about to get some money to develop a funding application for cycling routes between here and the nearest town. Part of that is community learning in a different sense, about engaging the whole community and allowing them to fill in surveys and comment on what they think would help them to cycle more. Now that is a Scottish Government funded climate challenge fund where the money’s come from. That’s using a new methodology for engaging with the community, the name of which I’ve forgotten. And again I’m thinking that is a good way for coming to view what the community want to put forward but it’s not spending a lot of time in trying to give them better skills. Maybe that’s not my job, I feel. |
| 1. Anything else?

[not asked] |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[60-69] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White Scottish |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

MSc |
| 1. How long ago was this?

15 years |

# CCllr interview 13

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Convenor |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

2 years (in this role a little bit less than a year) |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

Ordinary member |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

NA |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Very rural |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

I took over role from someone who had been in the role for about a decade, who had worked very hard and done a lot of the work himself. It’s early days but what I try to do is foster collaboration and try to ensure that we have a healthily active CC. I’m a relative newcomer to the area so I don’t know a lot of people, which is a bit of a handicap in some respects |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

Not great – we’re a little bit dark ages. Not sure that I’m really in a position to know but I’m going to say ‘2’. |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Yes I do*Could you unpack that a little for me please?*Again, I took on the responsibility a little unwillingly – I didn’t feel quite ready but I do have confidence in my ability to identify the appropriate skills. That includes the ability to search out, find and pay attention to work and resources that are going on elsewhere. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

I pay attention to a number of websites, links or organisations, whatever they might be called. As far as I can ascertain we’re in the forefront of the development of CCs, local community activism, local democracy etc etc.*Do you use any sources from the council?*There are resources from the council – I’m finding them particularly helpful [and] informative up to a point.*How did you learn about the sources you use?*Well, there is a contact with in the council who is responsible for communicating with. I’m not sure – let me see if I can find her title… she’s the area governance officer.*Do you contact [names of CCLOs]?*Correct |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

We were given an induction package.*Was that printed or did they invite you along to a training session?*There are training sessions that are publicized from time to time, but there was no specific session that I was invited to. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

I’m aware that there is a section of the council website and I think early on in the piece I had a look at it and found it not very informative. I think that work may have been done to develop it but I haven’t seen the need or the urgency to do so. |

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| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

[Not asked but see above] |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

I do*Can I ask you to unpack that a little, please?*What’s been really important over the last year has been there’s been questions about regeneration in the area, there have been questions about loss of rural population, aging population and either how to stem that or make a difference. So that has arisen in the course of meetings. I think you could call it a developers’ club. A couple of other bodies that have arisen out of wind-farm applications and consultation processes. So those have been ways and meetings and events and meetings that have provided me with some information, and we’re developing collaborations with some of those bodies, and between some of those bodies, which to some extent I have been instrumental in fostering.*So you’re reaching out to these other bodies and getting things from them. Do you get information from digital or printed means?*Well again I refer back to when I spoke about different bodies, that they be active in developing the role of CCs, or offering resources to CCs, etc. I kind of refer to those |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

*How did you learn of those other sources?*I pay attention to whatever, other than mainstream media, other bodies campaigning in 2013 onwards, or Scottish Independence and so on and so forth, and other more leftfield publications online etc etc, blogs and other websites.*Do you pay attention to the local printed press?*There is a local newspaper which is getting better but it’s been a little frustrating – I certainly try to pay attention to that, and of course local noticeboards in the local co-op etc etc[Discussion of how this CC fits into the LA localities.] I will say that this council has a reputation for not being very good. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

I have tried to seek out what I think is most useful and less work. There’s rather a confusion of local planning groups, or community planning groups or whatever, so as far as I’m concerned they’re a lot of kind of – meetings are un-necessary and I haven’t learned as much as I’d have liked from some of those activities. However, my habit is to see if I can find something that will develop over time, and stick with it. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

Well I do try to concentrate on the village itself, and so if I feel something is not likely to be relevant to people in [the village] as far as I know then I will make a conscious effort to let it go. |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

In the first instance I have been trying to foster a good communications channel between the CC and the community trust. Those two bodies are working well together, but a good way to communicate with the wider community would probably be via Facebook *[the CC does have a Facebook page.]* That came to be a popular information service, so to speak but I’ve not done so, I do not engage with Facebook.*I see that the CC has a website, and I’m the 5574th visitor this year.*The website – my preference is for developing the website rather than the Facebook page. I don’t know why – it’s much more – reflects my age as much as anything but we don’t have the resources. That has not been something that we’ve been able to do. *I think you’ve also said you have a noticeboard. Are there any other channels for getting the information that you find out to your community.*We held a village meeting that was a joint meeting of the community trust and the CC. We have regular CC meetings which are, but this was a specific meeting to address a development within the village. I went around a number – there aren’t many ships but I went around those that were, and asked questions and got facts.*Which of the channels that you use to get information out works the best?*As much as anything, the well-known flyers in shop windows and noticeboards. I daresay our Facebook page as well but I can’t really speak to that. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

I wouldn’t say chosen. Faut de mieux perhaps but I wouldn’t say chosen. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

Well, yes, there was potential for conflict in relation to that village meeting that I wrote a report for in the local press, but it was either resolved or went away, failed to develop into anything bigger. |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

[not asked] |

## Other RQs

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| --- |
| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

I guess that’s the case. I’m the chair of another charitable organization, and had prior to that been almost an academic, and those roles have given me tools I believe.*Would any organizational cultures, at work or elsewhere, or your gender or any other social factors have affected your abilities and methods to find information?*Just those that I’ve mentioned – academic slash charitable sector, I’m chair of a board of trustees. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

The other people hold the memory and the history. That can be useful to balance out information gained from elsewhere, that’s the best way I can put it.*Do you have different roles in the sharing of information with your community?*That’s a difficult one. To some extent is the best I think I can say there. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

No[ne] |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

Apart from an initial conversation at taking up the role as convenor, I think the answer to that is ‘no’. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

I’m not aware of any. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

[Not asked] |
| 1. Anything else?

I don’t think I can identify anything specifically as a direct answer to your question, but I haven’t felt there’s been success in getting action from that activity that I have done.[[9]](#footnote-9) |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[70-79] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White Scottish, travelled and returned |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Masters degree |
| 1. How long ago was this?

20 years  |

# CCllr interview 14

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

I am the minutes secretary |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

From about June. I was co-opted on in May, but took up the post in June because basically no-one else wanted to do it. |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

[Just ordinary member – see above] |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

[n/a] |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

[same answer as other interviewee from this CC] I t was actually classed as a rural area – it got European status for that funding for education because we were moved from [one LA] to [another]. I think it would have been within the last 2 or 3 years. We’re kind of on the fringes of [this LA].  |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

From a formal point of view we’re meant to represent the voices of people within the community, and support community initiatives from groups within the community. That’s the formal aspect of it – what it say on the tin but I don’t really think that that happens. |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

It would depend on what we’re feeding back. We’ve got a website but it’s not well-used. We have a {name of town] page but I know that’s nothing to do with the CC, that’s quite well used.*Is that a Facebook page?*I think it is – it’s a closed group – I’ve never been on it. That’s something that we’re looking into. As far as if you run anything, there’s been initiatives from most of the retailers – they’ll give feedback to the retailers, so if we were to do something involving a group within the community [inaudible], but as far as feeding back on a wider scale, I think we’re needing to utilize social media more.  |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

No. I mean I think I could probably do with understanding a lot more. I probably sat at meetings once a month for 5 months before I was co-opted on. I’ve learnt a lot in that time, but when you get onto things like planning and town improvement, I actually think that’s a huge area, each one within itself, to learn. I think that if issues are raised, like some people have said to me, for example, you have no lollipop person at the top of the road, I took that to the last CC meeting and there’s no Cllrs there. I find that I don’t really think there’s a clear-cut procedure as to where to go as a CCllr, like plugging into the bigger council. It tends to be that we discuss things without them [inaudible. At the monthly meetings if things come up and cllrs are there they’ll answer things, but what I’m trying to say is if there’s an issue raised with you there’s a whole big pile of documents and agendas and issues going on behind that. You can’t know it all, I can’t really understand all the ins and outs of the council and why they make decisions and what’s going on.*Have you had to bury yourself in the scheme of establishment or model constitution or anything like that that the council provides?*Yeah, I mean so we’ve just had elections recently, and they sent out a kind of wee booklet with all of the things, the responsibilities of a CCllr within the remit of the council, so to speak, and what goes on. But what’s not really provided is where to go to. I suppose you could just go on the website and find out but I think the council provide a brief of the role, your dos and your don’ts, but what they don’t provide is where you go to find information, and I think sometimes it seems to me that the CC is very limited in what it can actually do.*I’ve heard that said before. I’ve heard one of the Edinburgh cllrs say that CCs have ‘soft’ power – CCs don’t have any legislative or service-providing duties, but can influence things.*Yeah, you can influence things in planning or getting involved. We’ve just had a big project to revitalize the town and the CCllrs, the ones that are involved in planning go involved in that, so I do think that we can influence certain things.*Have you ever made contact with CCllrs outside [this CC area] and asked ‘how do you do it?’*Not really, although next Thursday apparently they meet with the CCllrs from [2 neighbouring CCs] but it’s not like a meeting meeting, it’s a meeting up and having a chat.*According to my information scientist colleagues, there’s a lot of learning and information-swapping that can happen in very social ways. They talk about tacit knowledge – they don’t say ‘you do this, this, this’, they actually show you.*I think it’s kinda, I’ve not been in for that long, I don’t know, I don’t think they’re in touch – the CC do their own thing. I come from an education background and for me you would tend to be looking for good practice, like ‘who is doing things well?’ And I’m pretty sure that the problems we’re facing must be some of the problems that many CCs are facing, and therefore it’s trying to find ways of who’s actually finding ways forward in particular areas, and looking for who’s doing things well.*You may find things on the national CC website.*I didn’t even know such a thing existed.*{reads out URL of national website, then emails interviewee a link to it*]I mean it’s possible I’ve been on it, is it the community empowerment act?*The CEA, that’s got its own…*I‘ve been on and had a wee look at that but I wasn’t sure if that’s [inaudible]*The national website was commissioned by the same unit of the SG - it’s the community empowerment unit, and they commissioned a body called the Improvement Service, so they created this website.*I’ll check that out. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

*You said that you got these things form the council when you became a CCllr. Did you think they were useful?*I didn’t get anything to do with the CEA. All I got was ‘this is your responsibilities for the, you know, the kinda contract sort of thing, in a non-contract way. The empowerment thing I found out from a friend who gave me the research that they’d done, which I passed on, but the rest of the time I’ve been fishing myself. We were talking at the last one about social media and it’s actually one of the older people who’s been a cllr and is now a CCllr is saying about social media and we are looking into ways of kinda modernising. I don’t think the council help you with things like that, and I’ve been in touch with [name of researcher] who’s doing a PhD who is looking at the media within communities, and she’s coming out to speak to us in February. She’s in [charge?] of a really interesting site – I think it’s called the Democratic Society.*Yes, they’re a pressure and research group, looking at how can democracy in general be improved, how can it be made to work better. I know the Scotland coordinator of that body – he’s a good bloke.*I do think that some of the stuff they were doing is quite fresh, which I found, I think the CC’s not fresh, some of it’s very staid.*There aren’t any demographics but it seems that CCllrs tend to be older and more conservative with a small ‘c’.*I’m very limited with my time and some of the people that are involved with planning are people who are retired, so they can give their time. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

[see above] |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

[not asked] |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?How do you work out if the stuff given you by the council is any good?

No I don’t, I mean you’re kind of there to represent the people – the very formula like, contractual talk, and not really a lot about I think a more friendly approach as to what you actually do, I mean maybe to be given a list, although you can find it on the website, contacts of people who deal with different issues within the council, different remits within the council. I’ve found CCllrs who’ve been there are quite good at passing information on, and likewise I think because I’m newer, anything I get, I pass on, like [researcher], I’ve not passed it on yet because I only got it on Friday. I would say we pass information between us – at the meetings cllrs are there and they pass information on but I think in the pack that was sent out, I can’t actually remember, I only got the pack last month when the elections took place, they sent it out before and sent one out after, but it’s more like a rule-book rather than ‘this is how to go about it’, or examples. I didn’t find it very user-friendly. It’s more just like contractual.*Do you know [name of CCLO] within the council?*All I know is I send her minutes and agendas, and all I ever get is an email acknowledgement that she’s received them – I have no idea. That’s interesting the time that I’ve been there, I’m meeting the executive group as well but again that’s never been explained – they obviously just assumed that you know but you don’t actually know.[break in recording] |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

[recording resumes]*You said that when you don’t know something, you ask questions. Who do you ask them of?*Well it’s usually the executive committee which is myself, the minutes secretary, the secretary, the convenor, the vice-convenor, the treasurer’s often not there, and I think that sometimes what happens is there’s meetings that take place for other people, so something comes out and I’m like ‘what’s that’ and I’ll just ask the convenor ‘how does this come about?’. There’s maybe been like issues to do with the area committee has been a recent thing that’s come up over something and again I’ve not understood the history to be able to contextualize what it they’re actually talking about if you know what I mean, so I come in in the middle of an issue, and that’s quite frustrating because you kinda, to me, because I would sooner know exactly the lay of the land as to how this is arisen, particularly if you’re ending up getting involved in something. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

*Do you get information from printed, or digital sources?*At our monthly meetings, a lot of things are [strange???] and if anyone comes along like the treasure comes across any funding or somebody comes across an article that’s maybe of interest, that is sent out to everyone to read, and likewise I’ll send out the thing about [researcher], I sent out the empowerment act. I think we’re quite good at sharing that way. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

Like the CC working with people?*Thinking of information channels such as word of mouth, local press…?*Yeah, we use the local press and there’s always some from the local press at the meetings.*But are there any channels for getting information that you don’t touch, that you say ‘I don’t want to hear from that’?*No, I’m not aware of that. There may well be kinda like, just talking without maybe understanding the full thing, there may be certain people where if there’s been a past history, or if there’s been a like or dislikes, or maybe certain things are favoured over pursuing other channels, but I don’t really think that the way, they’re not necessarily fair in how we do things.*So if you think something’s not fair or not right, you’ll give that a body-swerve.*Yeah, I think that there’s certain things that they favour over other things, but they’re not necessarily, I’ve not been in long enough to know if there’s things they give a body-swerve to.*I was talking about you, yourself.*No, there’s nothing that I would body-swerve. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

[not asked] |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

Well, we’ve only really got the website – it’s pretty bad because we don’t keep it up to date and it’s just really staid-looking, and they’ve also got this [town] community page but it’s not run by the CC. There’s also the paper, and there may be a Facebook page. I myself am not good at using social media. I think as a teacher I’ve just avoided it. Now I’m finding it would probably actually be quite good.*I can see just now there is the CC Facebook page.*There’s the website but the website page looks awful I think. I don’t think it’s very contemporary and it’s quite often not kept that up-to-date. It doesn’t change if you know what I mean. They’ll may have what’s on and the next CC. To me a website needs lots of new stuff to get people interested. Again that requires time, that requires somebody to be writing.*It looks as though it was designed by a commercial company and there are many ways that you can do things yourself.*I think we paid quite a lot of money a while back, you know, and I think that since we’ve been having discussions at the meetings on the marketing, not the kind of visuals of [town] but where we want it to go, and t the retailers, I think people are beginning to realize that really we maybe need to kinda revamp how we promote even the CC.*Do you do anything like flyers or newsletters?*No, they don’t, and I think, I do publications as well, I work for Interface Scotland, and we’ve done like flyers if there’s maybe, they’ve done things if they’re doing something for the retailers, like going into [inaudible] in the area, but they don’t really do a community newsletter, and I think they should be promoting more what we’re doing to the public, instead of I it being very in-house, people finding out what has actually been done by the CCllrs |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

I don’t know. I mean the only kinda offline sharing is word-of-mouth at the meetings or if the [local newspaper] decides to write an article on something or sometimes the convenor writes a letter or something, that would be the only kind of offline way that people would know about it.*Do you know if the CC shares information only online or only face-to-face?*Yeah, I’m pretty sure it does. I think that a lot of the things they did with the retailers were only done on paper. I don’t really think that anything like that has gone online that I’m aware of, and I also think that there’s probably information that doesn’t reach the general public, like to do with planning for example. I think that’s something that happens within the group that does that. They report to the main group but I don’t think it really goes much further than that and I don’t think a lot of people will maybe realize what some people on the CC are actually doing.*Ideally your LA should be sending out a fortnightly or weekly list of planning applications to the CC. CCs are statutory consultees on spatial planning – buildings, roads, blah blah blah, so hopefully your CC is getting those and considering them.*Yeah, I mean things are always in the [town newspaper], I mean, I’m not because I’m not involved in the planning group but they will share at the meetings anything that has come in.*How many people are there on your CC?*Because of the election that’s just token place, there’s now 20 so we’re full. Up until that point there was 14 but they held an election just last month because I was only co-opted on as well, so was one other, so they held an election, a contested election, because it went over, I think it’s the first time that’s ever happened. I think this what they wanted, they wanted a forced contested election, and I think there was people put up who personally I don’t really think should have been but they wanted to make up the numbers to make 7, but the majority of people who went on were quite diverse, which was great because some people think that [this town] is a very wealthy town which it is but we hve some horrendous areas in this town as well, hugely deprived but someone got on from there and another women who is involved in green matters, which is brilliant but they’re still one or two cronies and I don’t know how we break it other than just their profile. The thing that was quite interesting was it was a postal vote and I think it was something like 25 % which is quite high. It was 25% of the voters that voted, which is quite encouraging because I think maybe it’s raising awareness. I mean you’re talking too about the CC – CCllrs can only do so much. It’s also about the community knowing that the CC are [inaudible] people as well. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

[not asked] |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

I don’t know because I’ve not really bothered too much with it. I think it would be good personally but I’ve not really got involved with it because it’s been somebody else’s remit, and if somebody’s just come on you don’t want to say too much with people who have, it’s their remit to look at the website but as I say you can share with the things we’ve started to talk about – people are now looking at this and I personally think that it should be of note and of priority that you’re creating dialogue of some kind online, and that it’s not just something that people are reading and going again. To me it should be about stimulating dialogue, and I don’t really know – this community page, this [town] page is quite busy with things but again that’s not run by the CC. |

## Other RQs

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| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

I think as a teacher, if you need to find information about anything, you know, any topic that you’re covering [something about uni???] you’re not shy about assessing the information that you get as well, or bullet-pointing it to information that is then useable.*So it’s your professional background?*My professional background, yes, would make me experienced in doing that.*Do you think your gender, or any other social factors will have affected your abilities and methods of information-finding, processing and sharing?*Gender issues?*The fact that you’re female – it’s been found in other research that women tend to approach information tasks one way, men in other ways.*Well I would say that from a female point of view, I don’t know if this is kinda the field, I don’t know whether this would be from a gender point of view or from a professional point of view as a teacher that you tend not to keep information to yourself but that you share it with anyone that can take up and run with it. Whether that’s a female or a professional aspect I don’t know. What I quite often find in certain situations is that men can hang onto information, and that sometimes information can be in subgroups. Now I don’t know whether, I know females that operate on that principle as well, information becomes power, and therefore there’s sometimes a need to not inform, so that you have the knowledge and you have the power, and I think in my experience in life that can quite often be a male trait.*Have you had any support from trade unions or other professional bodies to help develop your information skills?*As a CCllr?*About you in general*Yeah, I mean obviously I’ve been involved in the [a teachers’ union], I’m a member of [that union], so I know that the [union] at the moment is one of many things is like bullying, female intimidation in the workplace, so I would say that I’ve always been aware of equality issues and how you speak, what you can say, how you can treat other people, and sometimes you’re a wee bit shocked at that within the CC. Again I think from a union base you’re more equality-orientated and more kind of aware of employment rights and how you work with colleagues, and I think that some people don’t get that |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

*Do you ever work with other CCllrs to find, process and share information?*Not that I’m aware of but it’s something that I’ve been thinking that we should do, for like social media and websites, I’ve been on and looked at different things, how you could do things differently. We’ve just done that, the Democratic Society website, that was quite interesting because they had some CC sites on it, people who had been involved. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

I don’t use the library at all. I wouldn’t even think to use the library in [this town]. I would just think to go straight online. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

I don’t really think, there’s been no direct contact with the council on how you find information. All they’ve done is send out the kinda packs. They presume you can just go online and you will find the departments you want. Actually if you go on the council website it’s not the friendlies to navigate either, you know trying to find things, but there’s been nothing direct about that that, you know directly. We sometimes have people from the council come to our meetings to talk about different aspects and that’s the only time we kinda get to put a name and a face to a particular group. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

[not asked] |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

[wry laugh] I suppose in the planning aspect … on things about quality of life and you know like looking to the future as well as to the kind of environment that we create for people now and for the people that come after us and the decisions we might make. We’ve looked into things like affordable housing within a lot of the planning. So things like that. I think what’s not looked at is the political aspect of things or class aspect of things. It’s maybe looking at opportunities of people in the town. It tends to be there’s a real focus on businesses and things and nothing at the food-bank, so from an equality point of view We’ve done stuff with women in business and that’s not really got anywhere, there just wasn’t people involved, and there’s been issues on that. Again, I’ve not actually been directly involved in it but it’s sometimes like finding the time because women have other remits, like getting back to kids, and trying to find the time that suits everybody – it’s just very, very difficult.*[mentions that Napier is trying to tackle these issues]*I think there’s a huge imbalance in society and no matter what, I’ve been a working mother and women do much more than me, juggle much more, and trying to take the lead on responsibilities like trying to source after-school care, child-minder, I think it’s women that tend to shoulder the responsibility of that. It’s not all the time because I also know people who have been house-husbands, although I hate that term, and you know like my husband and I both are fair, but even then I would have thought that when it came to things like childcare I tended to be me that took the lead in it.  |
| 1. Anything else?

Well just from this interview it’s made me realize that somebody that’s been going along for about 9 months, and the last 6 months getting much more involved, but to me, and again this could be from a professional point of view, I’m still finding it hard to contextualize things. Like it’s snippets of information, or again there’s like lots of wee areas and you’re coming in to it, like say for planning and you hear all these things about planning and what’s going on and affordable housing and this, that and the next thing, but I find it really difficult to contextualize that deeper level and how that fits within the council, and what’s actually going on in the wider world unless I go in and find these things out myself, which I have done, kind of looking in but I feel I have been skimming the surface of a lot of things. I think it would have been good if there was like the only way to do it is to get involved more in the planning aspect of things, but it would be good if councils, when you become a CCllr or again put it on the website. They do have things on their website about the planning but it’s not really going into the more philosophical aspects of it and why are you doing this, and again even basic things like when somebody asked about the lollypop person at the top of the road which is now a traffic –crossing person or whatever it is, like where do I go for that information? How does that fit in? Which department in the council deals with that because there’s just so many departments within the council so sometimes it’s difficult to know. I could go on the web-page but the trouble is I’m working full-time as well – it’s the time limit of the, but I don’t know whether that kind of information needs to be more on our website, explaining the CC’s approach to things so that even when you come on the CC and even the people living in the community then get the reasoning behind why the CCllrs are doing what they’re doing. |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[50-59] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White Scottish |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Honours degree |
| 1. How long ago was this?

20 years  |

# CCllr interview 15

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes, I’m happy to take part |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Just a member |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

4 years, maybe – all of that time |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

Various terms on [inaudible] CC, I joined about 1990 and got voted off about 1994. I came back on 1998 and dropped off about 2000 |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

Ordinary member |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Small urban – there’s bit of farmland to the north of the village but the village is really built up. The central core of the village has been there for 100s of years but there’s a whole lot of new houses in the last 10 or so years. The CC area covers the village and goes maybe a mile north of the village. On the other side it goes quite a bit south |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

The roles seems to be to discuss matters that affect the village, immediate things like our big problem at the moment is dog-fouling, but before that we had a big campaign because the main road into the village was very bad and connected to the village so we spent about 10 years trying to get that road upgraded and it got done by the local council who finally got a bit of money together and they improved the road and put in a proper pavement |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

Not too bad because our chair also does a local column for the [LA-wide] newspaper. If anything big comes to the CC like a planning application it goes into the newspaper. That’s sharing not only locally but across the whole LA. Also we’ve got a Facebook page. If you’ve got a Facebook page, you want to put on it something that’s interesting, not boring. Not the planning applications because most public aren’t interested |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Er, not sure. I would think that if we do it we do it unconsciously. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

The local council does, the association of [LA] CCs organizes training for CCllrs and more particularly council clerks. *Who organizes that?*It’s Voluntary Action [LA]. The role has changed hands 3 or 4 times already – the current holder is a lady by the name of [gives name].*You mentioned the association of CCs – do you get any information from them or support from them?*Yeah we do*How did you learn of these sources?*By email. When you join the CC you automatically start getting stuff that comes from the association. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

I think that was about 1990 so I’m not very sure but possibly I got some guidance from the council.*Do you remember it being useful?*Yeah |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

Don’t think so, no |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

I dunno. I suppose if you got something you’d discuss it with other CCllrs. |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

Yeah I suppose so, yeah*Could you unpack that a little for me please?*If you hear about something that’s going to affect the CC by email or the mailing list you take it to the meeting and speak about it at the meeting. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

Various routes. To a certain extent keeping my ear to the ground or if I meet people in the shop or whatever, hear what they have to say. Facebook of course is a good one these days. The local paper has a lot of stories. I look at the council website periodically for things like planning because they put in a lot of planning. Planning applications go online so you can keep track of them.*Does the CC get a fortnightly list of planning applications?*I think so. I think the way that it works has changed because about anything big we get, I’m not very sure, we get an email about anything with something like 14 days to respond. So if there’s something fairly big like someone’s wanting to build a house that’ll get sent out or something minor, and it’s just best to keep an eye on the council website.*In Edinburgh I know from experience that 3 weeks isn’t enough*.Yeah something might have come and gone by the time of the meeting, so it’s not a satisfactory system.*[Mentions that St A planning CCllrs used to meet fortnightly]* |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

I’ve been looking at the paper and say to the CC there’s a big problem with parking on the main street and someone set up a Facebook page to campaign about getting the street made one-way and generally other things. Basically about a few regulars who stay in a certain street because they have problems with bad car-parking but I never bother getting involved in that because these guys, people start spouting off and if I have to respond and they get back to me it ends up [???] in a pointless argument |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

I suppose it’s sort of consciously or unconsciously look at its service. Let’s say the story is someone’s wanting to start a nightclub in a disused building. You’d find out where it came from, the other the general background to it |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

The main one is the chair does a weekly column in the local paper, and among that anything that the CC has done or not will be in that column. There’s also the Facebook page which is generally informal, meetings.*I think you mentioned word of mouth, as you meet people*Yeah.*Do you have anything like a CC noticeboard?*Well we did have one but it was courtesy of a local business and it was in one of their windows. They decide to use the room as a store. The result is that the it’s taken us half an hour to shift everything to get to the noticeboard so that fell by the wayside*Do you ever do anything like newsletters or flyers?*No, I don’t think there’s been anything like that.*Which of the sources you do use works the best?* I think it’s the local paper because it’s got the best circulation of any newspaper in Britain. Everyone buys a copy. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

I think [inaudible] newspaper.[inaudible]. I’m one of the people who can update the Facebook page. Occasionally I say something about [inaudible] that should go on the CC Facebook page but beyond that I don’t do very much.*Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper?*I don’t really know. We never send out anything on paper that I’ve been aware of.*Have you ever put something in the newspaper that you haven’t put on Facebook?*Yeah, in the newspaper you can put far more detail than on Facebook. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

Don’t think so, not that I recall |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

It’s quite good when you see a comment or like, because its’ a waste of time if that doesn’t happen.*Would it matter if no-one responded to a particular post on Facebook?*{inaudible] I wouldn’t worry – it might not matter to people but if people never responded that would be annoying.*Who do you imagine reads your Facebook page?*I think quite a lot of people because we’ve had comments from people with no connection with the village but there’s something they find interesting.*Do you look at the facts and figures of your Facebook audience?*I suppose I do but I don’t really pay a lot of attention to it. |

## Other RQs

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| --- |
| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

I suppose so yeah*Could you describe that a little?*I’m somebody who’s just interested in looking for something interesting or of significance. Thinking about it, because I used to work for the local council, I probably understand how the council works.*Has anything like a trade union or a professional body helped you develop information skills?*I can’t think of anything in particular, no. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

We just have regular meetings and generally the clerk will [inaudible] she’s got the responsibility because she is paid. We’re volunteers but she’s paid to do things on her behalf. So generally we ask her to look for information. Having clerks makes the CC much more effective. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

Well, just from my own skills, nothing in particular from anyone else |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

Don’t think so – the only thing I can remember is about planning issues – I think we’ve had training about that but I can’t remember anything else |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

Don’t know. The thing about the CC is it’s an unknown unknown – we don’t know what we should know. I’m not aware of anything that I don’t know that I should know. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

There’s nothing that really comes to mind |
| 1. Anything else?

Not that I can think of. Of course I’m sure something will spring to mind as soon as I put the phone down. If I think of anything can I email you with it?*That would be lovely, thank you* |

## Demographics questions

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| --- |
| 1. How old are you?

[60-69] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Male |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

Scottish |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Professional  |
| 1. How long ago was this?

13 years |

# CCllr interview 16

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes, no problem |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

I tend to take charge of communications, like the local paper and there’s a CC Facebook page, and we’re just about to launch a website as well. |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

Just under 2 years. I was provisionally taken on as the editor of the newsletter and when I came on the CC I realized there was no communication at all, no Twitter, no website so we’ve gradually got that built up. |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Small urban – it’s mostly a village |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

We act as a conduit between the community and the city council. We certainly take a huge interest in the planning applications and make sure that the planning applications are scrutinized properly and any appropriate comments are made back. We also are a voice for the community when issues need to be raised because that would be [inaudible] broadband for the area, trying to gather opinion and talk to the MP and so on, and the councilors, we’re trying to improve broadband in the area. I know it’s been a huge issue in the area, and the flooding, pulling together all the different threads, pushing the cllrs and SEPA to get plans made to make sure they provide the right information to the right people, things like that. |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

Pretty good because the newsletter itself is very comprehensive. It contains information on virtually every community group in the area, and contains a lot of information from cllrs and [inaudible] and that goes to every household in the neighbourhood 4 times a year, so that’s pretty good, so marks out of 5 I would say at least 4. |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Yes I probably do because I do go to the website quite a lot to find out what the role of CC is.*Is that the council website?*There is an area on the council website but I think there’s also a dedicated CC website. I’m not sure whether it comes under the auspices of the SG or not.[confirmation that this is <http://www.communitycouncils.scot>]  |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

I just google everything. I’m an IT professional so I just google everything. I don’t use paper sources. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

Nothing. I was given a handover on the editing part of the newsletter – that was very comprehensive. In terms of the CC itself I was given absolutely nothing. I just began attending meetings and picked things up as I went along. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

Don’t think so, no |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

You don’t I guess. You read what’s there and assume it’s correct. |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

As a CC yes we do. Not all of it is going to reach me because I’m not part of planning, which is a big part of what we do. The planning officers generally do that. The answer to your question generally is yes – we make an effort to find out what we need to know and what’s going on in the community. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

I know for sure that the planning side of things is all done through the council – they have a website where it’s all available. They’ve just switched to a new system which is not working as well as the old system, but the information is still thee. Other information – it’s from various sources I guess. Facebook is proving to be a very good tool for us over the last couple of years. We have our own Facebook page but also I’m linked in and I know a lot of the other councilors do and there’s other Facebook pages around the area, for example the village hall community association has one, and there’s also an official one [inaudible] there’s a lot of good sharing there. There’s a Facebook page for the CC that borders us across the river, a lot of sharing of information back and forward – very, very useful. It’s very easy to keep up to date and very easy to spread information very widely, very quickly.*Do you get information about local issues and developments from anywhere else, like the local newspaper or word of mouth?*I don’t read the paper a lot but Twitter, I get a lot from Twitter. There are two local newspapers and the radio station each have a website and a Facebook page as well, various online sources all interlinked*And you found out about those by googling and your professional expertise?*I suppose more at the moment it’s because you read something on one Twitter feed and that puts you in touch with another Twitter, that’s kind of an organic thing there. Someone will retweet something and you’ll say ‘that looks interesting’ so you’ll follow that one, then you’ll find out other ones that people retweet. It’s not an exact science, looking for things on Twitter – you tend to come across them and then you follow that thread I’ll follow politicians and I’ll follow our council Twitter feeds and I’ll follow people that are on the CC next to us, and between all those you get information shared and going around, things that are happening and you find out things. Usually you find out things in the Twitter feed and then two days later my husband reads it out to me from the local paper [laughs] |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

Not really – I read the paper as well. I just look at everything really |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

You tend to assume that if it comes from an official source then it would be correct. I know that that’s not always true but that would be your first assumption. So if it’s from a council website, if it’s from your local MP or local councilor, if it’s from the local paper, you would hope they’ve put some research into it. I know that’s not always the case but your assumption initially would be that it’s true unless proven otherwise. But if it’s just from an individual you would maybe take it with a pinch of salt |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

Pretty much what I’ve said really. Facebook and the 4 times a year newsletter are the two biggest ones we use at the moment.*If I’ve understood correctly, I think you said Facebook is the one that works the best.*It works differently. I think what we’re finding is that Facebook reaches a different audience from the newsletter. The newsletter will be read by people over a certain age, I don’t know what that age is yet, but people under a certain age not all of them will read the newsletter. But Facebook will be used mostly by people under a certain age. Obviously there will be a crossover between those two sets of people, so the beauty of Facebook is we do feel it is reaching a different audience from the newsletter, even though these people live in a household where the newsletter is delivered, younger people will tend to read things on their phones and will not pick up a newsletter so the two things complement each other very well, as well as the fact that the newsletter goes out 4 times a year so it can’t possibly be up to date all the time. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

I’m not sure that I need to really. I want to get the information out to people in as many different ways as possible, and if you read it three times doesn’t matter. I don’t think. If there’s an opportunity to disseminate you get it out there.*So there’s never been a case where you or the CC has chosen to share information only on paper or only face to face?*I wouldn’t say so. You just would do it in a different way perhaps. Also if things are not timely, like for the newsletter you wouldn’t put them. A lot of the Facebook posts are about the roadworks or road closures here – those change all the time and we wouldn’t put a big list of those in the newsletter, but we would put those on a daily basis on Facebook.*So it’s about the immediacy, or the timeliness?*Timeliness of information would determine where it went.*Have you ever made contact with commenters directly, rather than putting a comment below their comment?*Yes we have done that, we’ve actually, we have a couple of times actually sought information from people, just asked for comments on topics that we wanted opinions on, and some of the people we have contacted directly.*What makes the difference that you contacted them directly?*Sometimes you’re asking for photographs and things you want them to send you about incidents, like problem junctions that you want to get action on. Sometimes they’ve put them on Facebook but sometimes we’ve asked them to send us a picture directly. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

In what sense? Between the CC and the community?*[meaning any conflict between anyone]*The only thing I can think of is to do with flood prevention where we have had some problems with the river that’s the dividing line between [this LA and the adjacent one]and you would think that any flood prevention measures they would talk to one another. There’s been a recent problem where [adjacent] council put into place some flood prevention measures that was seen to be having a bad effect on our side of the river. Now you would have assumed that would have been discussed before it was done, and the two CCs have then been involved in pulling the two sides together to get them sorted out, and the two CCs have been fairly good at doing that but the actual councils don’t seem to talk to one another at all. SEPA should look after the river as a whole but it doesn’t really happen in the way you would expect. |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

Not desperately. I know that a lot of people just like to read things online, particularly when it’s a public page like that. Some people do send us a private message through Facebook, and I did think quite carefully when I set up the Facebook page what kind of privacy settings and so on to have on it, and I took the opinion that I would let it be as open as possible unless I needed to do otherwise. I haven’t made any restrictions or moderated any comments or anything like and so far there have been no abusive comments or things that have needed to be deleted or altered or warnings given – there’s been nothing like that, people have been very well behaved. I decided to let it go to begin with and if I needed to control it as I went along I would do that, and so far we haven’t had to do that, people have been very polite.*It sounds like the Scouting principle of it you treat people like adults they’ll act like one*Well that was the hope [laughs]*Who do you imagine your online audience is?*I think the online audience is probably in their 30s and 40s. I’ve not proof of that – it’s just my feeling. I don’t think there’s many people who are much older than that. I can see that from some of the people I do know, I can see that they’re sharing, I can see who they’re sharing with, and that’s their friends and their friendship groups, people of about the same age. Younger people tend not to be too concerned with their community to be following it, older people are not so into Facebook, so that’s my feel, that’s it’s people in their 30s and 40s |

## Other RQs

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| --- |
| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

I am involved in other things in the community here. I’m quite involved in the local church for example. I think it’s quite good on our CC that we have a mix of people who are involved in different things throughout the community. I’m not sure if that answers your question or not.*What I’m trying to get at is whether other experiences you’ve had have helped you become a more efficient information finder, processor or sharer*Well mainly just my professional job, I suppose. I have always worked in IT so it’s quite easy to find information on the internet. I’ve been accustomed to use it from day one really. And also in terms of disseminating information, that’s my forte as well.*Do you think that organizational cultures at work or elsewhere, or your gender or any other social factors have affected your ability or methods of finding or dealing with information?* I wouldn’t say so. It’s difficult to analyse the way you do things, you just do them.*Have you had any help or training in information processing from trade unions or any other professional bodies?*Not from trade unions, no, but I’ve always worked in IT, I graduated with a degree in computer science and maths way back in the day and I’ve always worked as an IT professional. Not trade unions as such but I’ve always had in-house training from the companies I’ve worked for. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

Everybody really looks after their own information. People who are responsible for the planning will be responsible for that. I mean, that is an area we don’t necessarily include that as much as we could. It’s on my list of things to do, to get more information on that, not so much for getting information out, but information gathering. People just look after their own stuff, I mean.*And then they send it on to you, saying ‘please publish this’?*Sort of. For the Facebook page I tend to get emails forwarded from our secretary. I’ll give you and example because it’s the easiest way to explain it. We get all these traffic notices of where the road-works and the traffic are going to be. They come through from the council to our secretary, and she’ll forward them out to the rest of us and I’ll pick them up and copy and paste them onto Facebook is how it happens. With the planning side of things, my aim is to have the planning officer of the CC have access to a page on our website – it’s not fully functional yet – for him to be able to update it. It’s going to be like a blog for him to put appropriate things on there using blog software. I’ve got a website that’s just got a few gaps – I’m planning to put it live in the next couple of weeks, built with Wordpress.*Is it yourself or someone else who says ‘this is what we’re trying to achieve, this is what the goals are’?*With me and one other on the CC who discussed what the roles of the website are going to be, that was then taken to the CC meeting and agreed there, that’s what would be on it, but it’s not set in stone. We hoped it would develop beyond what we’re doing at the moment. It’s not quite live yet. We want it to include biographies, which is taking months. I’ve written about 10 words myself… once I get that it’s all be going live. We’re hoping it will be a CC website, not a community website, because there are other websites in our community which have been around for a long time run by volunteers, but a little bit of annoyance, shall we say, one of the community websites who seemed to think that we were trying to steal his thunder, and a ridiculous situation really – he was trying to tell us that we couldn’t have a CC website because he already had one. We say ‘you don’t, you’ve got your own personal website all about the community, not the same thing.’ So sometimes you have to tread on eggshells the best you can. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

Not me personally no.*Is there any support from libraries that you would like?*I can’t think of anything that I would need, to be honest. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

They do seem [inaudible]. There’s a very good liaison officer at the council who’s been very good, and is very good at providing information on technicalities that we need, and how the CC should be run, the obligations that we have. She’s very good at providing all that. I haven’t had an awful lot to do with her myself but the people on the CC do involve her a lot. There are lots of CC forums, there’s also a city forum. There’s various city groups in the city that meet on a regular basis to discuss and share information between CCs. Again, I’ve not been involved in any of that personally because I have my hands full with all the other stuff I have to do. I know there’s training for the planning officers just this morning |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

No I wouldn’t think so, I think I’m pretty OK on that. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

I’m not sure I understand the question.*[gives fictitious example of using information skills to find out about subsidence that caused an accident, then using that to prod the council]*I’m sure that happens all the time, finding things out and then prodding the council. I think the most recent example is our chairperson on the CC, he’s very very good on looking after all the roads and paths around the village, and there’s a particular path that goes along the river-bank here that has suffered a lot of erosion and there’s a sewage pipe that comes out. At one point it was in danger of giving way, so he has been fighting that little battle to get. The problem with the information was that no-one seemed to know who was responsible for the river-bank. The people who own the fishing rights didn’t own the river-bank. The people who owned the property next to the river, they thought it was the council but the council said they didn’t own the river-bank, and eventually it was discovered through searching – we got a lawyer to search the title-deeds – that the council does own the river-bank. The council has now fixed the sewage pipe. |
| 1. Anything else?

I’m a bit of an information junky, so when you wanted to interview me I was worried slightly that I’d give you a slightly false view, so I thought you might want to interview someone else on the CC as well, because I’m probably the most IT literate on the council. I am a bit of an information junky in that I follow and read and devour news and stuff constantly. I can’t speak for the rest of the CC as to how they get information – they probably lift the phone and ask someone.  |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[50-59] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

Scottish  |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

Degree |
| 1. How long ago was this?

34 years  |

# CCllr interview 17

## Introduction questions

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| --- |
| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes, I am definitely |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Chair |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

2 years and 10 months on CC, chair 2 months |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

I did secretary for a month |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

NA |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Small urban |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

A listening post for the town’s issues, and to feed their issues back to the appropriate body, including the council, the NHS or Transport Scotland, even private businesses or Royal Mail*Do you have a role in getting information from those bodies to your community?*I feel it’s actually a bit of a problem even getting information from the council who you’d expect should be one of our closest allies, I suppose. For instance, at the November CC meeting we were asked to get some information on a planning issue in the town so I immediately emailed the council, asking for just the legal side of a planning development that’s going on. I’ve had no response so I’m about to put a formal complaint in. I got a response saying it would be passed to the relevant officer, so then when it came to the December meeting I wasn’t able to reply to the member of the public. So that to me is a major flaw between CCs and the LA. |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

I would say, if it was a scale of 1 to 5, 4½. |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Usually we are reminded of our duties and rights, or responsibilities, by the ward members or members of the public. It is also worth noting that CCs are voluntary, the code of conduct is voluntary, they don’t have to abide by it. No-one holds us to account, that’s quite important to know, whereas the elected members, the councilors, they are held to account through the public ombudsman. In terms of getting that information, yes it is available. It’s available on the council website, although we’re always told we’re not responsible to the council. It’s a very odd situation – the code of conduct and the constitution all come from the Local Government (Scotland) Act – this is disseminated to each LA, and each CC is expected to abide by it, by these documents which you can find on their website, or ask Democratic Service for them, but at the same time they don’t have any jurisdiction over us. So a CC could in theory throw all this stuff in the bin and say ‘tough, we’re doing it our way.’*They could cut off your grant, I suppose*They could do that, but they probably wouldn’t because that might become a legal matter.*[Edinburgh CCs have to sign constitution and standing orders.]*I think we should be held to account. I’ve seen bad CCllrs and good CCllrs, so if you’ve got office-bearers who are just control freaks or they just don’t like you, then you’re in a bit of trouble there if there’s no-one holding them to account |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

I haven’t ever experienced an issue where I’ve had to. If it’s code of conduct or constitution or standing orders then I’ve got them all. Or the liaison officer – there’s never been any situation where I’ve had to struggle to find anything. I think it’s all quite basic, in terms of rules, but in terms of accessing information to guide your agenda that can be quite difficult because there’s no, I can’t go to the CCLO and say ‘OK, I’ve got this planning issue on the agenda next month. Please provide me with the information that I need. The CCLO is only there to administrative, well to make sure that you’re co-opting people, that none of that’s going wrong.*Do you ever get any advice or support from any neighbouring CCs?*We are a member of a district forum which I think is 8 other CCCs around about us. I haven’t actually been to one of their meetings yet, although we do have one in January. They meet quarterly, and again one of the problems is that the last set of office bearers, they didn’t provide us with the minutes of these meetings, so it was all very secretive. That again is a problem for me, why didn’t we get to know what they’re talking about? I think they also discussed how to get rid of some CCllrs who they didn’t like. I think they went to the SG and asked how to get rid of some CCllrs who they didn’t like. They wouldn’t have put in those words obviously. I didn’t know what they were up to, so I’m going to meet them in January, so I’m sure they’ll be a lot more open than they used to be. [Interviewee names the CCs in the forum] |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

I when I wanted to join the CC contacted the CC, and I met with the secretary and she told me they were happy for me to join, and then I think she spoke to a few people and they sais ‘oh, you don’t want him on board’. Then I met her again, and she said ‘Oh I don’t think it’s as easy as this. You should come along to a few meetings and then we’ll get the measure of you.’ So I thought ‘no, that’s not what I’m going to do’, so I contacted the council and they said ‘oh no, all you have to do is sign a form and get it proposed and seconded, and you’ll be on at the next meeting.’ So that’s what I did, and so I recommend that people go to their LA rather than speak to the CC, because if they don’t like you or think that they might not like you, that you may be a trouble-maker, then they will try to get you off before you’re even on. I think if you want to join and if you’ve got concerns about your CC and you want to join or just to be a part of it and see what they’re up to, I would always go to your LA. Although for me, as a chairman now, that wouldn’t be a concern to me because you might get people who don’t like you, but that’s just life and you just have to work with that. If you’ve got a troublemaker who’s just there for the sake of making trouble, they’re not constructive or they’re not doing anything, they should have to be held to account with the possibility that that they can be gone. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

{Asks for and is given explanatory example] No I couldn’t think of anything like that. What I would say is that there are things that we have to look at are quite complicated, the national planning framework, the national development plan, they can be quite complicated documents. Even some planning applications, if you’re not used to looking at them. You wouldn’t avoid looking at them but some of them can be, you just don’t want to look at them because they can boggle your mind. But I would say that the council do offer regular training on planning matters and guidelines so I think we’re quite well served in that regard. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

I don’t think it is very good because it’s voluntary, we’re not beholden to it. I don’t think we’ve ever all sat own and discussed our code of conduct. In fact, if you ask most CCllrs about their code of conduct, they probably wouldn’t know what it is. They wouldn’t maybe know the constitution so they wouldn’t find it very relevant. Most people probably know that they don’t have to abide by it much anyway |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| --- |
| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

Yes, all the time before meetings and running up to meetings, I’m always thinking about that because you have to pre-empt the questions that people are going to ask. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

Well in [this town] we have a Facebook group which is not run by us, it’s just run by a member of the public, and it’s got about 2½ thousand members, and that is out of 7000 population, so that’s quite a useful source of information about what’s going on in the town and also what people think about issues. The local newspaper, obviously, and websites and the council planning area on their website.*Do you get weekly or fortnightly list of planning applications?*Yes we do get the list, and we just pick off the ones which are relevant, the major ones. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

Again, probably Facebook for peoples’ opinions, and anything from the horse’s mouth, but I would avoid relaying on Facebook as the gospel. And the newspapers as well, because they’re not always accurate.*Do you get any information in from word of mouth?*Word of mouth – just people in the street. I don’t know, I suppose, hum, in a small town like this you can even ask, if it’s a development for a major hotel, we can phone up the hotel or phone up and ask ‘what is the situation?’ Planning, they might reply. You could also ask local councilors or email members of the planning committee. I like to get things in writing, email or … |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

Usually if it’s given to you by a professional person I reply on that. As I say, newspapers aren’t always reliable. If it’s something that’s been decided at committee level by the LA I do find it quite difficult to get their minutes, you get them on the council’s website but they take about 3 or 4 weeks to appear on the website. So say for instance yesterday, the [name of hotel], which is a huge hotel in [this town], they want to build a £100,000,000 development. Well that was thrown out before it even got going by the council, so yesterday the chief executive went to the council to ask if they could resubmit their application. So this is a major development, £100,000,000, 200 jobs. Well I think as chair of the CC I should be able to know how that went. Well I do know how it went because I bought the [local newspaper] this morning, however, I don’t know other than that how I would find out, because they wouldn’t give me minutes. If I phoned up the council, they probably wouldn’t want to tell me. I could phone up the hotel and ask to speak to the chief executive but I wouldn’t want to do that – that’s quite informal. So if I want information fast, important information, where people are gong to ask me questions on things, and if I want to disseminate information to the CCllrs then they’re having to rely on the [local newspaper] so I’m going to take a picture of that report and then email it to the CCLrs so they know what the decision was. So that’s relying on the [local newspaper]’s spin – I find that very difficult and I don’t know how, we don’t have a very good relationship with our three ward councilors so I don’t want to ask them. I could probably email the committee member who is on the planning committee, but they might not want to tell me too much. Today I’ll probably put the photo of the [local newspaper] onto the Facebook page but you have to be careful – I would usually do that maybe tomorrow because I don’t want the [local newspaper] telling me I’ve broken their copyright.*[Interviewer suggests putting a link to the article on the local newspaper’s website, if they have one]*Yeah, I could probably do that, and bring more traffic to their website, so that would probably be OK. |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

I think that Facebook is the best method, especially a group. I don’t just mean our own page, but if you’ve got maybe a third of the population on a Facebook group which is very active, a very fast-flowing group I think that’s the best way to respond to people’s queries, it’s the best way to stop false stories going around as well, because the gossip, you know we had a supermarket application which went through last week. There was a lot of confusion over this because there were two different sites and two different developers, and everyone was getting confused between one and the other. So it’s one way for people who know what’s going on, informed people like me, and they can see it’s me that’s posting this response, so that’s probably true I find Facebook probably one of the best. I’ve used Facebook for 3 years from a selfish point of view to boost my own profile, and it’s very effective. I don’t’ use Twitter because it’s hard to keep track of two different things, I tend to focus on Facebook. Things can get lost on Twitter. Other methods – we’ve got the old-fashioned printing off minutes and putting copies in a folder in the public library, and anyone who asks can see them.*Do you have anything like a noticeboard or put anything in the local press?*We do have a noticeboard in the mains square but I would only use that to put up posters or maybe an agenda. I actually don’t do an agenda on there. It’s probably more laziness but I just use Facebook just to abide by our standing orders where you have to publicise a meeting or an agenda. I just put it on Facebook or in the library. And maybe the newspaper, they have a diary so I’ll maybe give them the date of the meeting with just the big issues on the agenda. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

Well obviously if you share information online, you have to know that what you’re saying is accurate and it’s not going to cause any offence, well just walk a fine line. Say the Facebook page, well last night the secretary asked me if she could become an admin, so I said I’ll make you an admin so you can monitor what people put on the page, but I don’t want you to post anything because I think that can cause conflict and confusion. I think you should just have one person putting up information on the page. Now that can come across a bit like a dictator but I know that in the past I think wherever if you’re sharing information, especially online, and people can look at it and forward it, then if anything goes wrong then that will come back to the chair. So in terms of the Facebook page that’s a whole different ballgame than putting something on a noticeboard which you can just take down. So that’s why I like to control the Facebook page. And I also control, I’ve got more time than others so if I think something’s relevant, and I like to keep the information fast-flowing. I don’t think an actually website, they’re outdated I think. Obviously a company, you have different links but we’re not really linking to anything, so as long as our phone number or email is there, people can message the page as well, so I just think, well I get criticized from the ward members because if I do a survey, I use SurveyMonkey and I just put it on the page, so a third of the people are then able to see the survey. One Sunday a couple of weeks ago I did a survey on the post-office relocation, so that could have potentially been seen by 3000 people over all the pages I put it on, so at the next CC meeting I was criticized – this was only a 24 hour survey because SurveyMonkey gives you 24 hour free feedback – it doesn’t give you any more than that, you have to pay, so I just use the free 24 hour thing. So I got 60 responses on a Sunday, that was 24 hours but really it was 10 hours because that was the time people are awake. So in 10 hours I got 60 responses and I was criticized at the next CC meeting by a cllr who said that I hadn’t done enough to try to reach enough people, because she doesn’t use Facebook*Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face?*No, not in my expereince. Well one thing, the CC sent a letter, you know if we’re asked to respond to a planning application, we’re asked to send a letter in. I wouldn’t share that on Facebook. I don’t know why but I just wouldn’t. I don’t think you have an obligation to. SO this retail development thing that happened last week, we sent a letter. It wasn’t actually accepted by the cllrs or the committee that were taking it, but we did send them a letter. And when the newspaper found out, they wanted to know what it said. Now it could have been seen as controversial, because it could come across that we were backing one developer over another, but there were a lot of different reasons for that, serious reasons like road safety, the fact that if this appeal went ahead it would lead to years of legal wrangling and we’d get nothing, so I wouldn’t share that letter on Facebook because it would come across as if the CC backed one developer over another, and that’s terrible, but I did read it out at the last CC meeting, so I wouldn’t’ hid it and I did give a summary of the letter to the newspaper but it’s just if I’d put that letter, given the fact that the letter wasn’t even accepted by the committee it wasn’t a public document because they felt it wasn’t relevant. And I know that’s one thing I would be wary about because an elected CC, you shouldn’t be 100% open because our councils aren’t 100% open either – there may be some things that are delicate, you have opinions on and you write them to the right people, because of the way the public can spin things and get the wrong end of the stick, I think it’s better that not everything is shared.*If someone’s posted something, have you ever got back to them by other means?*I think if someone posted, I’ve only run it for a while but I noticed that some posts weren’t to. I always try to reply to posts in the same post that they have made, unless it’s delicate. For instance, if someone posted on the page ‘can we see a copy of the letter you sent to the committee?’ I might reply to say that I will send you a scanned copy rather than put it on. I dunno, if I thought about that more I could maybe give you a better answer. It’s about sensitivity, you should always judge on what are the repercussions going to be – you should try to be as open as possible. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

I suppose if it’s one-sided, if it’s inaccurate, if its biased then, that’s why we would always have to check the information. And make sure that any information, you just go to the horse’s mouth and make sure it’s correct. I wouldn’t share anything other wise.*Has there ever been any row or stooshie about anything that you’ve found and publicised?*There was a major row this year – our former secretary sent out some draft minutes which were quite strongly critical of a member of the public, and the guy who was running the Facebook page copied them and put them out on the Facebook page, even though they were draft, and this went out to 3000 people. You can imagine then that the member of the public was livid and this led to quite a lot of resignations. In terms of information sharing, I’m probably more careful than anyone else, and I knew that this was a mistake. There was also a leaked email and that kind of thing. So I what we do now as a CC is that the secretary will prepare draft minutes, she will then email them to all the CCllrs for 48 hours. They’ll have the 2 days to respond if they think anything is wrong or needs amended, so she will then send out amended draft to us again, and then she’ll send a copy to the LA. You should also send a copy to the ward members, although I think that because of our relationship with them she’s decided not to do that, which I’ll back her on that because they’re just not trustworthy people. So those draft minutes go for approval at the next monthly meeting and hopefully they are approved. You’ll now see them on our Facebook page because they’ve been approved. I think the public should only be seeing the approved minutes, and the reason for that is I keep trying to explain to people that although they’re open to the public, they’re actually a meeting for the CCllrs, and I know that the public interact and come along, and that’s what they’re supposed to do, but a chairman doesn’t even have to take questions from them, they’re an audience, it’s the CClrs meeting. Because sometimes you can have members of the public coming along and trying to rule the meeting and they’ll shout if they’re unhappy with something but we don’t have to listen to that. SO when it comes to minutes of the meeting, they’re our minutes which the public are able to see but the public shouldn’t’ be able to comment on draft minutes. We wouldn’t make an amendment if someone [inaudible] we could potentially have 300 members of the public coming to the meeting and all of them shouting about that and all of them minuted, then all of them emailing us when they see a copy of the draft minutes ‘I didn’t say that’ so I let the minutes go out with our approval and then so once they’re out the public can see them and if they’ve got any issues they can come along to the next meeting.[Interviewer outlines how he minutes for his CCs, and that one puts out draft minutes, clearly watermarked as *DRAFT]*We decided to [record meetings] because the secretary works full time and she wasn’t confident enough to take minutes of a full meeting, so I think it’s amore open way of doing things, but it makes people a wee bit more wary of saying defamatory things. I like it, and it helps our minute-taker. |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

I think it’s very important but you can’t help if you don’t – you can’t influence it. If I put something on Facebook about the supermarket development it would probably attract hundreds *[recording beyond this point was lost so the interviewee was asked to email in brief answers]*Responses to anything the CC posts online is very important, as it allows us quick feedback to gauge public opinion and feeling.  Also, in the case of Facebook, if our posts do not attract comments, we can still see many views the post has received, as well as Likes and Shares, and it is therefore easier to see if the issue attracts strong public feeling or not.  In one example, a hospital ward in this town has recently been threatened with closure, and a post on our page about a man gathering a petition has received about 45 Shares, and around 30 Likes, as well as dozens of comment.  Quite unprecedented. |

## Other RQs

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| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

My role as a colleague helps me understand local feeling, as I work for the owner of a small-medium sized business and discussions with her allows me to see issues from a business point of view - eg A large scale housing development might not be good news for the doctor's surgery or townspeople (jobs competition etc) but it is good news for the owner of a garden centre (plant sales for new gardens, etc!).  Also, discussions with other colleagues and customers allow me to garner opinions on issues. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

The best method is determined by the time of day and the importance of the issue.  If I need quick responses from all or some community council members, I can add them into a group private message on Facebook.  All responses are open and each people can contribute.  This is easier as some people might be at work when they receive the message but, because most people have a sneaky look at Facebook during the working day, they are more likely to respond than if the communication was an email.  If I send an email as Chair, and want colleagues to just see the email, but not expect a reply, this can just be done by blind copying each member, and writing Just For Info.  Also, if information is semi-confidential or sensitive and would cause a problem if leaked to a wider audience, out community councillors are advised to write FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ONLY on emails of that nature. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

I haven't really needed to use the library for finding information, but we do use the Library to hold a folder with hard copies of our Minutes, as well as their notice boards to post up Agendas and public info notices.  We also use the library as the location to display our historic Provost Chair, which has an information panel beside it.  Staff are very helpful in allowing us extra time for computer use.  I would only ask that Community Councils are given free use of printer for official documents instead of the 25p charge per sheet of black ink. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

If LA means local authority then I would say that their help would be 6 on a scale of 1-10, as community councils are treated in the same way as members of the public - even if our correspondence is sent on officially headed paper.  This is disappointing, as it would be good to be provided with a list of direct contact details for the ‘go-to’ officer or Councillor who can help with our issue by providing relevant info quickly. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

No.  Although, as above, a list of direct contact details for LA officers/depts would be helpful. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

I have, in the past, encouraged proper community council elections whereby we had 14 candidates for 13 spaces.  I actively encouraged as many people as possible to put their names forward so that it would go to an election. |
| 1. Anything else?

No |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[30-39] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Male |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White British |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

HNC |
| 1. How long ago was this?

10 years |

# CCllr interview 18

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Chair |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

We reconvened in October last year, so it’s really about 14 months. It had been in abeyance [before then] |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

n/a |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Very urban |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

As chair, my role is liaison between officers, chairing meetings and ensuring everyone keeps on track with what is on the agenda, liaising with the secretary to make sure that minutes and agendas go out on time. If I receive and mail, seeing who it needs to go to, and sending it on. Having regular meetings with office-bearers between meetings to move things forward. Liaising with LA officials and council members. We’re actually very fortunate that all three of our councilors come to our meetings, which makes it much easier to liaise with [them] and get business moving and know what they’re doing. We also have member of the local police who comes to most meetings and again that means we maintain that regular contact with the police and keep up to date with things. It’s also about keeping the community involved, well certainly informed so we’ve set up a website and the secretary maintains that so dates of meetings and minutes and agenda go up as well as any other events that are going on in the community area.[discussion of website’s look and feel]We’ve also bought ourselves a stand and we’re hoping to put that up in the library so if there are events we can participate in and it’s also a way of letting people know who we are, where we are etc. People have to know who we are and how they can contact us, and what we can do for them. |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

Sometimes we feel not very successful – if people don’t come to meetings or don’t contact us, it’s easy to believe that no-one knows about us. Maybe it’s simply that there aren’t issues or they’re dealing with them in different ways. We have had people come to meetings with issues or contact either myself or the CCLO. We do know, because the secretary does check how many hits we have on the website, we do know that traffic is increasing. When you come in and you’re new and keen to be moving forward but maybe after 1 year we’re not doing too badly.*So if you were to give yourself marks out of 5 for communicating or sharing information with your community?*I would say 5 on the basis of what we’ve been able to do and certainly what we can do as we know it at this point in time. How well we’re getting it out there is difficult to know but we’re trying as much as can. |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

Yes. The CCLO offered training once the elections had happened. She had various training, for chair, secretary, all the different roles. As chair I thought it was important for me to know about all the roles so I wen to all the training offered because I thought it would enhance my role generally and if we’re between officers someone can step into the breach. She also sent us information generally on CCs and the role of each person. We were going to have some training on whole committee, how we all work together. Again that’s sort of my role possibly to check if the committee wants it and then to arrange it.*Did you get any other information about your duties and rights form any other sources?*Probably not that I can think of. The CCLO was very supportive about coming to meetings. She withdrew from that because she felt we were sufficient enough from that not to need her input but we do know that she’s there at the end of an email or telephone or even will meet up with us if we need. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

[see above] |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

[see above] |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

I know that there’s anything I would avoid looking at. I think it’s about learning to be discerning about any information that you read. There’s things on the website which anyone can google so it’s about being careful about what you read and what you take on board. I would obviously trust anything from [the CCLO]. One of our cllrs before he became a cllr used to be on the CC so he always has helpful advice to pass on from that perspective. As I say, hearsay and that kind of information I might not take on board. There’s other information from other CCs who have been around for a time so that also helps as well, pitfalls to avoid and things like that |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

I’d probably be wary of stuff that’s simply on google. We have looked at a few things and the secretary did look at other CCs, just generally looked at, and if seemed to be a genuine CC information we’d take that on board but something that was a bit more generalistic we would avoid. |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

I would say, on a monthly basis when we meet, in between that one of the members brings something to our attention between meetings or at the actual meeting we suggest [inaudible] that person brings to the meeting in writing. Cllrs, obviously they are limited in what they can say but they can also guide us on information and who someone might be able to contact at the council.*Do you get the weekly or fortnightly lists of planning applications?*Yes, so we’re in a bit of a, we lost our planning officer but we’ve now got a new one, so when we had a planning officer he was very good at going through thing and looking them up. I managed that for a few months and then I passed it on to our new planning officer. In the beginning we did go down and check something out – a constituent had come to a meeting, there was an issue, we went and looked at it, we put something in on their behalf and the actual council had gone and had a look and they’d agreed so it was resolved to everyone’s satisfaction. Were have taken a few issues up, for example we saw that BT was going to close a whole lot of phone-boxes, so we looked at the figures and we saw there was one we thought was quite important and it was being used on an almost daily basis and we thought that was enough to keep it open in an area where there would be a high usage where there was lots of older people and so on, so we put a letter in, so we will take up issues that we think are important. We’ll take into account the demographic of the area as well as possibly numbers affected or [inaudible] and how far this will affect us and how far with other CCs it goes, and what you do with certain things. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

*Are there any other sources of information that you use, like word of mouth or the local newspapers?*There will be word of mouth; there will be things in the newspapers. One of our cllrs sends out a weekly newsletter so that brings us issues. I think word of mouth is a good thing, or there may be someone who lives in the street and knows that their neighbor is on the CC. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

I suppose I’ve not quite encountered about that but again it’s being discerning. We’ve got local newspapers so how much I will take on board and how much I will maybe look and decide how true it is and how much it is looking for a reaction. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

[see above] |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

Mostly via the internet and I suppose the word of mouth thing as well. I mean if I’m speaking with people in the community I’ll tell them at the meeting or what we’re dealing with. Someone might complain about something and we’re actually able to say to them ‘this came up at the meeting, this is what we’ve been doing about it over the past three months’ or something like that. We have thought about other ways, like do we do a mail-drop, do we do this, do we do that, but then you’ve got a cost involved, and as we actually cover quite a large are and so it’s then who’s going to walk around so we actually decided against that one and that’s why we try what sort of things we can tap into a presence. Now we have our meetings at one of the schools in the area so we’re looking at how we can liaise with the school and with the community centre or library, where we fit in with them, how we can, and even liaising with the police. If they know of us, they would potentially refer to us if it came that way. It’s just about being present at events.*Do you put anything in your local newspaper?*We have done that in the past, we had someone from the local newspaper come and see us – he hasn’t been for a little while, but those are roads we have looked into as well. I’ve put a blurb together for the church magazine. We have two main churches in our area and it’s an interesting thing. Most of us see one of the churches as quite a hub, it’s quite central, but then you’ve got another church and it’s a different – one’s protestant and one’s catholic – so it’s trying to not offend one or the other and not offend either, so then there may be people who will think they maybe get a bit put off by it being the church, even though they do so much from a community point of view but they may see the religious aspect rather than anything else. So we try to find that balance between utilizing what is a community hub and what is making it very non-denominational.*Which of the routes works best for getting information out to your community?*At the moment I guess the internet, based on the fact that more people seem to be tapping into it. We did get people coming to meetings we haven’t had as much but issues do seem to be coming our way. I really don’t know which is working best, possibly the internet based on the numbers going through that way. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

Good question. We’re trying to grow more of the face to face, so that’s why we’re trying to get more know within the community. I was actually just discussing that with someone else, why other areas perhaps have more active people on the committees and more active communities, and it was suggested that our areas doesn’t have as many issues as potentially an area next door, and that can then make it harder to get people interested or think that they can bring something to us because of potentially a lack of issues. A lot of the issues that seem to have come up are relating to when the bus company withdrew a particular bus line, so there was agitation about that. A lot relates to speeding on roads and traffic crossings and things so that’s where we’ve liaised with the police and the council, in relation to all of those. Something came up in relation to something that was being built in the area, so it varies. We were looking recently into the issue of food-banks, and we were discussing how we support that because it came from one of the other local communities which does have a food-bank in their area. We can actually use the monies we get which is actually mean to be used for our constituents, can we actually use that money for people not within our area? It’s how do we show that solidarity. One of the cllrs at our meeting said what’s hidden is the number of people in our area who do use the food-bank even though we don’t have one in the area. I found that very interesting – people have pride so you’re not going to see a lot of what, you won’t see the issues which actually are affecting people. They’re not going to come out and say ‘I’ve lost my job, I’m about to lose my home and I don’t know how to feed my family.’ It’s a big thing for someone to admit that if you’re in an area where that’s not the norm.*Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper or only face-to-face?*It depends on the issue and who the person you’re responding to is. It might be a consultation so it is going to be only online for example. It might be someone who you feel you have to write to because it might be the only way you’ll get a response. And face-to-face – we do invite people to our meetings if we fell that, sometimes people ask to come to a meeting to clarify something, especially if it’s a big construction thing planned. The other thing is if we want to clarify something or we want a particular department of the council to understand our perspective, or our perspective s representing our constituents, so that will face-to-face. Then it’s minuted and the minutes are put on the website. If someone had particularly brought the issue up, an individual, that individual is responded to either in writing or the phone or potentially both. |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

Conflicts I suppose if you personally are involved in the issue, in which case you shouldn’t be involved in it. And if you’re not discerning about the information you can pass things on which are not relevant and that sets off a whole chain of things. It’s clarifying things if you’re not sure before sending anything out.*Have you had any examples of conflict or problems in your CC that you could tell me about?*Well I’m trying to think – I don’t think so. It maybe more when councils have been trying at meetings and occasionally an issue will come up that they maybe know background to but in their role they’re not allowed to say things. Cllrs, if they think there is any potential conflict of interest they just don’t say anything. I can’t think of anything else. One potential conflict of interest, although I don’t think it will ever arise, I and one other CCLr we both sit on employment tribunals, so we have to be aware of which public role, if ever we have to speak to the press we have to be aware of which public role and what we could or couldn’t say in that aspect. That’s the only thing I can particularly think of. |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

I don’t think we’ve actually gone that route per se. For example recently when we lost a couple of CCllr and we thought ‘one more and that’s it, we’re no longer a CC’, so the secretary put something on the website, he gave the email address you can reply to. We actually got about 4 replies, so the website we see as being more informative, but at the same time there are contact details if someone wants to come to the CC or raise an issue or join the CC. We remind people that everyone’s welcome anyway. So that’s how we would see that going.Good question but we have no way of knowing. If 10 people a day visit the website, we don’t know if it’s the same person going in 10 times or 10 different people. We’re just hoping that it’s people who are genuinely interested. It might be people with come to these meetings because they’ve got their own agenda. It might be people who go to these sites because it’s something that will add to their own. We’ve got no way of checking that.*[Mentions that Wordpress will give the number of distinct visitors, as well number of visits]* |

## Other RQs

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| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

I suppose every adult role has done that. I’ve been through university and so researched issues there. I’m blessed with that kind of brain but also I had a very good English teacher so I credit her in basic reading and writing and those sort of things. I went to what was then a central school – I don’t think anyone has those any more. So she particularly in first and second year had a very structured way to do things, and I think that helped me with research skills which obviously then helps. I’ve had different jobs which help out. I was also a member of a union, a representative and branch officer for about 12 years, and I chaired a number of committees. I’m also chair of a local branch of [a trade union] so that would also have helped in my chairing skills, and also helped in terms of wanting to do more for others. You couldn’t be as active in a union if you didn’t want to be doing things and righting wrongs and helping out. All of those different roles.I actually did two degrees – the second one was in social work, and I did a major research project for that so that would have helped. I’m thinking of different jobs that I’ve had where I’ve had to find out information, or setting up committees myself to make sure that things happened, like health and safety committee and meetings between management and the union. |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

[laughs wryly] Unfortunately it’s typical of a committee where a few do the bulk of the work. We do put it out to people and occasionally if someone has a particular interest they will come forward. We’ve got a few people there when the CC was around previously, and some were there for a long time. One is a member of the council forum so they’re limited in what they can say. One person has taken on a role and is a member of the local health and social care that’s being set up, so she’s taken that bit on which is really great. The rest of it is we now have got planning in place regarding projects over the coming year. What we now have to do is firm that up and say ‘right, who’s going to do what, when?’ We have a new person on the CC who’s taken on planning so we’re looking for other people who will take on other roles. The secretary is also the treasurer so if he’s not there, whilst I might get a report from him, I’m trying to get someone to take the minutes and that’s like pulling teeth sometimes, so it’s still being worked on.*So is it yourself who sets the information-seeking goals, or are they set by others?*When [office-bearers] meet we might have our ideas in mind but we discuss things in order to facilitate a better discussion at the meeting. We would never feel that it has to be our way, it has to be an agreed way, so things get put the actual meeting and discussed, and that’s how they’re agreed – and minuted. The good thing is that the secretary and myself, he’s very much a belt-and-braces person, but both of us believe you need a good audit trail. |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

I suppose over the course of time at various stages if I’ve needed assistance I’ve asked in a library or maybe where there’s been specific training available. Actually currently I’m not employed by but I work up at the college. I did actually do a stint as an employee of the college so during that time I received all sorts of training and that included training in relation to using the library. They also are very good at putting on training for people like myself who are under contract and a lot of it relates to using the computer in the best way possible for information, as well as making use of the library.*Is there any other support from libraries that you would like?*I don’t think so – the libraries are usually pretty good at what they can do, and I think it’s about going and making use of what is there, and then finding out what else you might want and need from them. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

Very good. As I say, we have cllrs at the meetings so if we’re not sure which way to turn they’ll say ‘you need to go to this department, or you could contact this person’. They’re very good at that. They also have information and then they will email it on to us if it’s relevant to something and they can share, and they do. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

For me personally, yes I can use a computer and I can do certain things but in a lot of ways I think I’m so IT illiterate. So more me personally probably that. I might even get the secretary to give me some IT lessons. I would say on our CC there are some people who are quite au fait with IT, and one who had to be really, really persuaded to get an email address to receive the minutes. |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

For me, again it’s about if you don’t have the IT skills you can’t find more on the subject and it’s about being discerning about what you find and read. It’s also harder to get information out but then you’ve got to know who to get the information to. Even being able to put a poster or anything together you need to know how to, I’ve got all of this, how do I pick out the most important bits of information to get it out to as many people as possible.*Can you think of anything you’ve done, either you or the CC, where you’ve used this information to support people?*Well one thing pops into my head, so I guess I’ll go with that. We spent quite a bit of time devising a policy and procedure for accessing funding, so if someone in the community wanted some money from the CC foe something that would benefit the community – it might have been their street or whatever or the school or something – so we spent quite a bit of time putting that together. Now it’s up on the website, so if people want to now there is a process they need to complete the form and let us know why they want the money, who’s it going to benefit, and we’d go back to the meeting, agree it, agree an amount – or not if we couldn’t agree – and then let the person know, and that would be notified – the secretary could do that, again it’s an audit trail as well as letting people know. We did have someone on the CC, it’s was some flowers and things that would benefit the whole street so we agreed to that, and we’re waiting on a request from the local cricket club, oh and the church, they were having a rebuilding so we sponsored a couple of chairs as part of their seeking extra funds. All of that went in that way. In both cases, it was verbal, it was ‘this is what you need to do, you need to complete this form’, and that’s what happened and I think that was helpful. At the same time, I’m wondering whether completing the forms could be counterproductive if people find it a bit much or can’t use the website to download the forms.*I’m just having a look at your procedure – it seems thorough*.Yes, it’s about making sure, because we’re responsible for public money, it’s been spent appropriately and if anyone has questions, where’s the evidence? We did run it by the CCLO to make sure she was OK with this, and everyone had input into it before it was finalized. |
| 1. Anything else?

Nothing that I can think of. Probably when I put the phone down, I’ll think ‘oh, I should have said this’. We’ve probably got a good skills mix on the CC, and we’ve got the IT skills if necessary. It’s just trying to find a variety of ways that we can reach out to people and, as I say, thinking about the demographics and who’s going to read things when. I can’t really think of anything else.  |

## Demographics questions

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| 1. How old are you?

[60-69] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White other |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

2 degrees and dropped out of postgrad study. I did get a post-grad diploma from a college |
| 1. How long ago was this?

12 years  |

# CCllr interview 19

## This interview was cancelled by the interviewee.

# CCllr interview 20

## Introduction questions

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| 1. Are you still happy to take part in this study?

Yes I am |
| 1. What is your role on your current CC (e.g. chair, secretary, planning, communications, environment)?

Just a member, no specific responsibilities, although I’ve just taken over the role of publicity officer but that’s really recent.  |
| 1. How long have you been on this CC, and in this role?

A year |
| 1. Have you been in other roles on this CC?

No. I do sit as a member of the CC forum in [this LA] because nobody else wanted to go, but it’s not like it’s an official representation role, but I do it because I’m interested. |
| 1. Have you been on other CCs?

No |
| 1. If so, in what role(s)?

N/A |
| 1. Is your CC area very rural, rural, small urban or very urban?

Very urban |
| 1. How would you describe your CC’s role, and your part within that?

I think it’s not a very effective CC, it’s not very active. I’ve been a bit frustrated at the lack of activity.*What would you say your CC should be doing?*For a start they should be communicating with their constituents much more effectively. At the moment they have monthly meetings with the exception of school holidays because the two main office bearers are both married and they’re both teachers, so we don’t meet in January, April, July or August. There hasn’t been much of an attempt to reach out to constituents, so people who know that they meet every month contribute to discussions, so one of the reasons that I said that I’d take on this new role as publicity officer is to set up a Facebook page, which I set up wrongly so I’ve just had help to set that up again, so hopefully that’ll be something that will promote a two-way conversation between the CC and constituents, but at the moment it’s a very poor, very ineffective CC I would say.[discussion of this CC’s logo] |
| 1. Overall, how successful do you feel you and your CC are at sharing information with your community?

At the moment I would say not.*If it was marks out of 5?*I would say 1 |

## RQ1: How do Community Councillors access and understand information on their duties and rights?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to understand your duties and rights as a CCllr?

I read up about it before I applied to be on the CC, and specifically joined the CC forum because I wanted to be better informed, because I don’t feel that I would get that sort of support from within my own CC. So I am aware, I think I’m quite well informed about the roles and responsibilities, but much more from the forum than from my own CC. I have read a load of stuff that’s on the council’s website, about CCs, I’ve read all that.*As an aside, are you aware of the national CC website?*No.*[offers to send link, offer accepted, then implemented]* |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about your duties and rights? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

[See above also] There’s a Facebook page called the Scottish Craik, I think it is, and it tends to be CCllrs who are outside [this LA] and they bounce around ideas. Some of it is a bit of a bitching session, and that is helpful because you can learn by your mistakes.*How did you learn of these sources?*Just by doing searches, web-searches, just by putting in ‘community council support’ that sort of thing. |
| 1. What support/information were you given when you became a CCllr? How useful was it?

I can’t remember because I felt quite informed anyway. I really can’t remember getting anything separately.I think it was [useful] because you have to be aware of, if nothing else, some of the limitations, you have to go into this with your eyes open. It’s not like you’re going to be able to change the world as a CCllr. From that point of view it helped temper my expectations of what I could do. |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at? If so, why? What effects have such avoidances had?

Not that I’m aware of. |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

Because I would go on to validated websites such as the council website, that sort of thing, or the Scottish Government. I got onto the Scottish Parliament website as well. So I would get roles and responsibilities, that sort of thing, from government, whether it’s local or national government websites, and then I would get ideas maybe from sources like social media, like Twitter accounts, or from Facebook for example. |

## RQ2: How do CCllrs keep up to date with local issues and developments of relevance to the communities they serve?

## RQ3: How do CCllrs disseminate information to their communities?

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| 1. Do you consciously think about what information you need to gather about local issues and developments?

I do, and that’s where my concern is with the CC, because I don’t think we do that effectively. |
| 1. How do you go about finding information about these issues and developments? What sources do you use? (How did you learn about them?)

They don’t really. The only mechanism that our CC has, that I’m aware of, is they have the monthly meetings, so if you turn up to a meeting you can voice you’re opinion about things, or you could write in, but I have to say that I often email our CC, so it’s logged as correspondence, and I don’t get n acknowledge of it, so I think it’s really badly run.*[asks about sources again]* They would get information principally from the CCLO, but I know that that’s not always passed on, because I’m on the CC forum then I know that some of the information that the CC is getting is not being passed on even to members, so I get more information from the CC forum than I get passed on from my own CC. For example, there’s a local government initiative for health and social care, and I would be interested in looking into that because my background is I’m a doctor of public health, so it would be sensible for me to be our CC’s representative on that group, and the CC has twice been asked for a representative and I thought that would have obviously been me to go on it, and yet we were never informed of it, so that’s an example of how information is not actually filtering out.*How did you learn of the CCLO’s existence or the other sources that you could use?*Because I have been very active in campaigning against some high-profile planning application in [this city] I’ve now become friends with people on other CCs, so I get a lot of information from them that I don’t get through my own CC.*Do you know if your CC gets the weekly list of planning applications?*If they do, I’m not aware of it, because I’ve never seen it minuted. I know that we’ve got a planning officer who does nothing, so I’ve been attending some of the planning meetings at the CC forum meeting because he doesn’t do anything. So you’re getting the impression here that I’m coming in with a lot of [inaudible] I don’t know how long I’ll stay in it.[call was interrupted, interview was resumed a few hours later[ |
| 1. Is there anything you avoid doing or looking at?

Not especially. The places I get information from are the local press, the local radio, BBC Scotland. That’s where I would get a lot of the heads-up information if I haven’t already heard it through the CC forum. But I’m very unlikely to have heard it from within my own CC.*Do you take any of those sources with a pinch of salt?*All of them, because they are all secondary sources, so because I’ve been heavily involved in campaigning against certain planning developments, then I’ve done an awful lot of research in terms of looking at actual documents that were uploaded onto the council’s own website and look at the actual applications, so that’s where I would get my robust information from. Although I’ve now learnt that that’s not so robust either because you’re not getting all the back information that’s just not published anyway.*So things like word of mouth, someone saying ‘this this this’?*If I heard anything by word of mouth I would just say, I’m like you, I’m an academic, I would ask ‘where did you hear about that?’ and day it was from the local radio, depending on whether it was something I wanted to follow up, I’ve got sources in all the local media, so I would phone up, and I’ve done this, the reporter and then find out where their source is, so always try and go back to the original source. I would never base anything on secondary reporting.[discussion about students relying on Wikipedia, and TurnItIn and plagiarism]  |
| 1. How do you work out if what you find is any good?

[see above] I have to say that the longer, because I have been so involved in campaigning over the last few years, what I came to realize is that some sources are better than others. So, for example, even if I was speaking 3 or 4 reporters at the local paper, there’s one reporter in particular who always checks his facts are absolutely right before he spoke to anybody, so he would never have said ‘I’ve heard such and such. Do you know anything about this?’. He was an excellent reporter but sadly he’s not there any more, so to that extent, with experience comes an element of judging whether information is likely to be correct, but as we know the only way of making sure it is correct is to go back to the primary source, so that’s what I just keep doing. I’ve got an element of trust in certain people and an element of distrust in others.[discussion of how to earn trust]For example there’s a cllr in the city who is his own worst enemy because of what he puts on Twitter – he deliberately tries to incite people. So, although I tried to begin with to give him the benefit of the doubt, I was already prejudiced when I started dealing with him, and now I just feel that my feelings are pretty valid, but I went in there having heard that he just said things to antagonize people, and that’s never a good reputation to have. My husband keeps on saying ‘just don’t go on Twitter’ but I just see him spouting some sort of nonsense that is factually incorrect, so then I go on and because I was campaigning, there are a lot of people who follow me who also follow him, and it’s not that he’s not bright, it’s just that he spouts a lot of things that are factually incorrect. [gives examples]  |
| 1. How do you go about sharing information with your community? (Online/offline)

Until I joined the CC, as far as I was aware, the only way that it communicated was by going along to a monthly meeting. When I then became a CC member, I found out that they do have a newsletter but I’ve never seen a newsletter, so I wasn’t on the mailing list. I don’t know if they still do them – they haven’t said – so that’s why I suggested we set up a Facebook page, and then they said they weren’t particularly interested in Facebook because they didn’t like doing stuff online, and so lots of people they thought would be like them, and there are people who come along to the meeting who don’t even like going online, who’ve got no email address, so there’s such a skewed sample of people, so I had to do a proposal about why we would use Facebook, and the dangers of using Facebook, and all sorts of things before they eventually said it was OK to set up a Facebook page. So I set one up but as I said to you, I didn’t set it up correctly so I’ve set it up again recently, so I do need to go back in and check that it’s set up properly because I’m probably going to go to press with something, because it’s difficult to grow your community from scratch unless you can get some human interest article. So one of the things I’m going to do is see if I can start a very small oral history project in the area so what I’ll do is ask the local press to give us publicity around the local history project, and from that I’ll ask them to put the Facebook address on that, so we can start growing the community. *Does the CC have anything like a noticeboard, or leave flyers in shops and schools etc?*To date, no they haven’t. We were speaking about that because we don’t actually spend the money that we get allocated, so there is quite a heated debate about that because when I arrived they said ‘we’re going to give a gran tot XYZ’ and I said I didn’t think that was CC funding was for, I thought it was for us to go and do outreach work, so that’s one of the things I suggested. What we’ll do is a leaflet and we can promote the Facebook page on that. |
| 1. How do you balance online & offline sharing? Have you ever chosen to share information only on paper/face-to-face? If so, why?

[omitted because question was clearly irrelevant] |
| 1. What issues (conflicts) might (have) come from using the information you find? Does sharing online or offline make a difference?

No, not since I’ve been – in my CC there’s not a lot happening. Put it this way, the most contentious thing was I said I wanted to apply for funding to do some outreach work and they said ‘we’re not really interested in that because we don’t have time because we all work hard, and if you want to do it, you can go off and do it yourself’, and that’s about the most contentious thing we’ve had. [discussion of interviewee’s actions and achievements not being minuted] |
| 1. How important is an online response to your online sharing? Does it matter if no one responds? (Who do you imagine reading the material you put online? How do you know who your online audience is?)

Because we’re just at the start of that, I would say it’s absolutely vital. For Facebook, it’s not just about information-giving, it’s about getting information back so how I would intend to use it would be that we would say ‘we want to try and do a community garden’. It’s not enough just to post it and say ‘this is what we’re planning on doing’. What we need is for people to respond so they would be part of the community, so I would say it’s absolutely vital that we need a response. *Does it matter if no one responds?* Yes*Who do you imagine reading the material you put online?*We don’t have anything online because we don’t even have a website.*[Asks about material on Facebook]*Well the one I set up first, I could see that the first people to go on it were our cllrs, and that’s because they are people who already use Facebook. So what I would envisage is that the local cllrs would also use it as away of gaining information about their constituency. [discussion of how well and quickly these cllrs react to reported issues]  |

## Other RQs

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| --- |
| 1. This question is about your life-roles, such as parent, grandparent, child, friend, colleague, boss, organisation-member, volunteer.Do your other roles in life help you in finding information for your CC work? If so how? What are they?

Yeah, I mean, obviously the PhD and lecturing has helped me, so I did in fact put in a bid at the last minute, it wasn’t successful but at least it was quick, when I found out a bit of money, so the research skills I already had would help. And also because I’m used to lecturing then I would hope that would help with the communication skills that I use within the CC, especially in terms of it being not the most dynamic CC, so I have to use skills of diplomacy as well as communication, because if I had gone straight in and said ‘this is absolute rubbish, this is a disgrace because it’s not really functioning how it should be’ then I’m sure they wouldn’t have allowed me to do anything because everything that I’ve tried to do has been, it’s not been stonewalled in that I’ve not been allowed to do anything but they’ve made it quite difficult.*Do you think your gender or any other social factors have affected your abilities and methods around information-finding, processing and sharing?* No*Have you had any help from trade unions or other professional bodies?*No |
| 1. How do you go about working with others on your CC to find, process and share information? (or if not, why not) (i.e. social context)

I have no communication whatsoever with the chair and the secretary because they do nothing that I can see between meetings. There are some other members – the cllrs I’ve got more communication with, so I will speak to the m between meetings if there’s something that I want to follow up on, and they’ve been really responsive. The other members – there’s one member who said that they will help with Facebook once I get it up and running, and I’m sure they will do, somebody who for the life of me I don’t even understand why they come to meetings because he seems to be a guy who wants to do things. But I think that once I start doing something with this newer Facebook page – I’ll tell you what the problem was – I set up a Facebook page but it was on my own account and then somebody said ‘well when you’re not there, we’ll need to be able to get into your Facebook page to be able to post’ and I thought ‘well I don’t want to do that because I don’t really know these people, I don’t give my passwords to anybody’ so then I said ‘’OK, if you give me your email address I’ll set it up under [the name of the CC]’ and there was a whole kerfuffle about that and they didn’t give me their password and email address so I said ‘right what I’ll do is set up a new gmail account and I’ll use that to set up the Facebook page, which I did, but I didn’t set it up as an association so when I tried to upload things like minutes through Dropbox I couldn’t get it done because obviously it was for a person rather than for an organisation. So then somebody in the CC forum said that they would help me, and he has now set it up as an organisation, and he would be a co-administrator. So what I said was I’m happy to populate it – he set it up.[discussion of Wordpress versus Facebook] |
| 1. What help have you had from libraries in finding information (or learning how to)?

To be fair, I haven’t even tried, I haven’t even gone to a library about this. I feel confident enough that I know where to get information online. |
| 1. What help have you had from LAs in finding information (or learning how to)?

Well, the CCLO I know that I could go to her if I couldn’t find anything, but to be fair I would more than likely just ask someone else in the CC forum, because it’s a forum that’s works exceptionally well. |
| 1. Are you aware of any gaps in your skills & knowledge in information-handling?

Not that I’m aware of. I’m an unconscious incompetent[[10]](#footnote-10) [discussion of Dunning-Kruger etc] |
| 1. Can you give me an example of the importance or use of information skills to support citizenships, civil rights or social capital?

I think it’s absolutely vital, because it ‘s one thing people speaking to each other. I’ll give you an example. Today in the local press, the council have said they might be looking at putting up a 17-storey building in [the main street], and I thought ‘this is just disgraceful in what is a beautiful 200-year-old street. It’s not the right place to put it’. So I put it on Facebook and asked ‘what shall we do about this’ and someone came back and said ‘I don’t know, I don’t understand what can we do?’’ and straightaway I thought ‘OK we need to engage in the pre-application consultation for this, and we know that one of the ways of doing this is to contact the chairman of the CC in which the building will be, and through me being a member of the CC forum I know who that person is, and I can contact him and find out what communication they’ve already had from the pre-application consultation process. So the person who posted to me on Facebook wants to do something but doesn’t know how to do it, but because I’ve been involved the process I know how to do it and more importantly who to speak to to engage in the early part of the process, which is where the public often falls down because we’re often at the very end of the process. |
| 1. Anything else?

It would be more of a suggestion, and that suggestion would be that all CCs should have a Facebook page and a website and a dedicated email address, because the process of setting it up can be quite daunting for people, so somebody like me, I’m quite happy to use Facebook, it’s been the setting p of it that’s been quite difficult. So I know that if there was for example somebody who did it as a project throughout the whole of Scotland who said ‘I will set up a Facebook page, a web page and an email account for every single CC in Scotland’ they can choose to use it or not but it will be there, it will be set up for them, and I think that will be hugely empowering for CCs.[discussion of LAs that provide email addresses and web-space for CCs, and what is provided]I just think that that should be something that is standard, because when I was first thinking of becoming a CCllr and I started speaking around and in the council people were saying ‘I’m sure you can get help with a website’ but I’m saying ‘does somebody know ho I go to because I’ve just done it for my own one and I didn’t know who to go to’ and the information about it wasn’t easily accessible, and that’s why I think that if there was someone who just goes in and systematically says ‘let’s go through all of the CCs, do a spreadsheet of who’s got a Facebook page, who’s got an email address and find out exactly what they’re all doing’ *[Explains that we did this in the 2012 and 2014 surveys, and emails links to the relevant part of our research blog, and says that he would love to contribute to this]*[interviewee says that 80% of complaints about cllrs are against this LA, and tells of some planned actions to reverse this.] |

## Demographics questions

|  |
| --- |
| 1. How old are you?

[50-59] |
| 1. What is your gender?

Female |
| 1. What is your ethnicity/cultural background?

White Scottish  |
| 1. What is your highest level of formal education?

PhD |
| 1. How long ago was this?

11 years |

1. <https://intranet.institute.napier.ac.uk/iidi/grants/grantid/13384128> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. the chair of this CC only chairs meetings, but does not do much between meetings [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. this interview took place the day after the first meeting of a newly elected CC, after LA-wide CC elections. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The autumn 2016 CC elections in this LA were widely publicised, for example, on displays attached to lamp-posts throughout the city. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. There are over 700 followers of this CC’s wordpress.com website. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The CPZs would have been in this CC’s area and the neighbouring CC’s area. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The interviewee later emailed to say turnout was actually 30%. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuckman's\_stages\_of\_group\_development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuckman%27s_stages_of_group_development) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. She may have been trying to answer the previous question. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This is a reference to the four stages of competence: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_stages_of_competence> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)