

Annual Report: Councillor Lisa J Holmes 2015/16

Participation at Council Meetings and Committees:

I have continued in my role as Shadow Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Member of Heavy Woollen Planning Committee, Children's Advisory Board, Children's Trust Board, School Organisation and Planning Advisory Board, CSE Members Panel and District Committee.

I have also recently become a member of the Corporate Parenting Board.

I have always voted at Full Council based on what I believed was best for both the Ward of Liversedge & Gomersal and Kirklees Council as a whole. I will continue to challenge the lack of investment in areas outside Huddersfield and Dewsbury. The inequality of investment is nothing short of a gross injustice for everyone else.

Tenants and Residents Associations and Community Groups:

As in previous years I have attended many meetings to directly support these very important groups in the Liversedge and Gomersal Ward. Members of these groups have found the difficult times a great challenge and unfortunately some groups have not survived. I hope that is something that we will not see more of going forward.

Myself and Cllr Hall, recently formed the Save Gomersal Public Hall Committee. We are working hard with other dedicated members of our group to save this historic and valuable building for the people of Gomersal and surrounding areas.

I have the honour of being the President of the Friends of Red House Museum. As we move into the new municipal year there is great uncertainty around whether this beautiful house and gardens which are steeped in history, will be retained or whether they will be 'disposed' of by Kirklees Council. I will continue to support these very hard-working members of our community in any way I can.

There are still many residents who continue to freely give up their own time and who put in many unpaid voluntary hours in our communities. These wonderful people work so tirelessly, and without them, Kirklees would be a very different place. I would therefore like to thank everyone who volunteers and who makes such a big difference by giving their valuable personal time to others. I think these people are incredible and I really do have no idea how we could manage without them.

Children's Services:

As Shadow Cabinet Member for Children's Services, I continue to work for a good start in life for all our children. Childhood is where a person's path in life is often determined. I believe that it is a right of every child to be cared for and nurtured so that they achieve their personal best, whatever that may be. There are still too many children in Kirklees who don't have the best

possible start because either they or their parents have challenges they are not equipped to deal with. As available funds reduce, the need for early intervention becomes even more crucial. The Council continues to rely more heavily on schools to support children and their families who are in challenging circumstances and I will work to ensure that this is done effectively but without adding unreasonable pressure on schools.

I recently began work in my role as a member of the Corporate Parenting Board. This is a very important group in Kirklees Council which is tasked with improving the life chances of looked after children who often have significant difficulties and challenged compared to those of their peers. We aim to bridge the gap and ensure that being a looked after child, or a child who at any point in their life has been in care, enjoys the same opportunities and successes that all children should enjoy.

Participation on Outside Bodies

I have completed my fourth year as a member of West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service Authority where I serve on the Finance and Audit Committees.

Ward Work

My ward work has continued to increase as has been the case during the whole of my 5 years as a Councillor. I am very proud to say that some residents come back to me to ask for further help following work I have previously completed for them. I am equally proud that residents I have worked for will recommend me to their family, friends and neighbours. I take this as a great compliment and hope that it will continue.

Of course I can't solve every problem which is brought to me. But one thing I promise all my residents is that I will never close a case before I have exhausted every possible option.

The Coming Year

As budgets are cut and available resources decrease within Kirklees, the role of Councillor becomes more difficult. Sadly, in turn, this means that residents will see a significant reduction in many of the services they have received from Kirklees in the past. Yet again I was very disappointed by the budget that was approved in February. Yes there was a reduction in Central Government Funding, but a sensible approach to how the money we do have is spent, and exploring income generation, would have avoided much of the pain we will now all endure in the coming months and years. The truth is that even though the administration knew these cuts were coming, as was the case last when I wrote this report last year, they had done little to prepare for them. This means that yet again the Administration is faced with a 'rush job' to balance the books.

There is still a clear lack of innovation and smart working by the Administration. The approach should have been to turn Kirklees Council into a stronger organisation, one which could compete with the private sector. Instead, the budget was simply a series of axe swinging cuts to

services that could have been saved at a higher level and retention of ones that should have been either reduced or lost completely.

Council budgets should not be politically driven; they should simply serve the residents of the borough in the best way possible. Fairness to all and a council which looks after all areas equally, no matter what political party may represent a Ward.

But, we are where we are and must make the best of the situation, which is exactly how I will face the challenges facing us all in the coming year.

Of course I couldn't write an annual report without at least a mention of the Local Plan. The consultation period has shown Cllrs how strong our communities are and how incredibly unhappy residents are about so many houses and industrial units being built on green fields. In the Liversedge and Gomersal Ward the 3 sites that are causing considerable upset are Cooper Bridge, Halifax Road in Liversedge and Cliffe Lane in Gomersal. Thank you to all the residents who contacted us, came to our meetings and who participated in the consultation.

As a closing note to my Annual Report, I wish to thank everyone who voted for Michelle Grainger-Mead in the recent elections. Cllr David Hall and I are delighted to welcome Michelle to our team and we are already working together on a number of projects.

We are a strong and dedicated team and move into the coming council year with energy and enthusiasm to work hard on behalf of residents in the Liversedge & Gomersal Ward as well as for Kirklees as a whole.