

CLlr Chris Siddall

Report to The Colnes Parish Councils & residents April 2016



Role and positions

I am delighted to be one of the "The Colnes Ward" representatives on Braintree District Council. The Council has a total of 48 elected members, 43 Conservative, 2 Labour, 2 Halstead residents, & 1 Green with one by-election due to take place in Witham on the 5th of May.

From May last year I was asked to take on the roll of Chairman of the "Overview and Scrutiny Committee". This Committee operates independently of the Council Cabinet and senior executives in order to consider decisions made by Braintree District Council. Each year it requests topics from the Council members which are then looked into and reports back to the Council members and Cabinet, not just to allow Members of the Council to be better informed, but also to see how the Council can work better with its partners in delivering services, or how services are to be provided in the future.

The committee during 15/16 have been looking at Health provision for the district, and has had some very interesting presentations from Essex County Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group, GP'S and also from officers from within the Council itself who play a role in this area. We are all very aware of the pressures on our GP surgeries & hospitals, and with the forecasts of an aging population and increased housing in the future it is important that all organizations within this sector work together in order to maintain and provide the best possible services to residents. The Committee will report on its findings soon, but the process to date has already brought organizations together and is acting as a catalyst to change which I believe will bring about improvements and better value for money.

In my role as your Councillor I have played an active role or been involved with the following:-

- Trustee of the 'Earls Colne & Halstead Educational Trust'
- Trustee of the 'Warner Textile Archive and Braintree Museum'
- Non Paid Director of "Warner Textile Archive Trading Limited"
- Director of 'Ignite Business' a non profit making organization, providing business advice and starter premises
- Member of the 'Joint Locality Board' setup between the District Council and Essex County Council
- Member of the LDF (Local Development Framework)
- Chairman of the "Overview and Scrutiny" Committee
- Deputy Leader of the Council

Grant Reduction

The Council's Grant from central Government has been reduced year on year, and this is expected to continue for some years to come. The Council has in effect no money of its own, it is **your** money as a tax payer that we spend and I am delighted that we are continuing to improve services, in particular maintain front line services, and at the same time reduce waste and bureaucracy wherever possible, obtaining better value for money in all areas of the Council's activities.

The Council continues to invest on what matters to people throughout the district, clean streets, putting money into projects such as the 'Green Heart of Essex' which has been a huge success in removing fly-tipping problems quickly and efficiently, also cracking down on those mindless offenders which thoughtlessly litter our beautiful towns and villages. Residents in The Colnes continue to do a great job recycling materials which has enabled the Council to increase its income significantly from these waste materials, this means these mainly plastics products no longer go to landfill, it directly helps to keep Council tax low and the cost of rubbish disposal low, well done to all residents. However, looking forward a recent drop in the value of recycled materials may put added pressures on BDC's budget in the future.

Local Issues

I very much enjoy living in Earls Colne and work just 5 minutes away with my office based in Coggeshall, this enables me to be available for residents during the day time. I have worked hard and successfully for local residents on planning matters and with local businesses in all sorts of areas.

Local Plan (Previously "Local Development Framework")

As a member of the previous committee to the "Local Plan Committee" (the LDF committee) the Council is working hard to help set out how our Villages and the Braintree District will take shape in the future. Without doubt there is a need for more housing, in particular affordable housing for our children and grandchildren, but we need to make sure it is built in the right place and that residents are consulted and can input as to where it is most appropriate. The Plan should be completed this year.

PEOPLE

Our Priorities are to:

- **Keep our District clean and tidy**
- **Protect our environment**
- **Provide green space for everyone to enjoy**

To support this in 2015/16 we have:

Continued to support an anti-litter campaign across Essex and participated in campaigns that reduce waste resulting in an 83% reduction in litter across the district and a 41% reduction across Essex.

Awarded 'Local Authority of the year' at the Keep Britain tidy awards for the council's innovative approach for creating a cleaner and greener district.

Installed additional solar panels on Witham Leisure centre and new solar panels on the Discovery Centre and Unit 9, Lakes Road.

Worked with Essex County Council to open a new adventure skyline visitor attraction at Great Notley Country Park

Expanded our recycling waste service in flats to an additional 300 sites

PLACE

Our Priorities are to:

- **Support vulnerable people in our community**
- **Promote safe and healthy living**
- **Encourage flourishing communities**

To support this in 2015/16 we have:

Introduced a home inspection and handyman service to help frail residents as part of our action to reduce hip fractures in the district

Worked with the Health and Wellbeing Panel to reduce obesity levels across the District by delivering local activities to enable residents to eat well and increase activity levels.

Delivered the second stage start of the Friends Life Women's Tour and follow up festival to encourage cycling and other physical activities.

Refurbished three play areas at Rosebay Close, Witham, John Ray Park in Braintree and Tabor Field in Braintree
Successfully supported community groups to deliver local projects through the Mi Community fund by awarding 21 grants

PROSPERITY

Our Priorities are to:

- **Increase job prospects and support business**
- **Promote and improve our town centres**
- **Secure appropriate infrastructure and housing growth**

To support this in 2015/16 we have:

Promoted inward investment through a dedicated website and increased marketing activities.

Invested £500,000 in a business loan scheme to help the District's businesses expand and grow to create new jobs and support enterprise in town and rural areas.

Completed the extension to Springwood Drive Enterprise Centre

Delivered two Area Business Forums providing business support to local businesses

Delivered 60 affordable homes across the district and exceeded the four year target set in 2012 to provide 400 affordable homes.

PERFORMANCE

Our Priorities are to:

- **Provide value for money**
- **Deliver excellent customer service**
- **Improve access to our services for all**

To support this in 2015/16 we have:

Carried out a review of all public sector land and property within the district to identify underutilised assets, opportunities for sharing or disposing of assets and the potential for developing sites for additional housing
Redesigned our website to be more responsive improving access on a range of devices for our customers
Increased our long term investments to £12million and increased the amount that can be placed in individual pooled funds to £5million.

Identified opportunities to develop income for the Authority under our Better at Business Commercialisation Programme

PARTNERSHIP

To support this in 2015/16 we have:

Worked with the Leaders of all the Greater Essex Authorities on a devolution proposal to explore how devolved powers could benefit residents

Continued to lobby for improvements to the A120, A12 and rail link ensuring co-ordination with the Local Plan proposals

Worked with health partners to launch a social prescribing model for residents connecting them to non-medical sources of support and activities taking place across the district

Established a business rates pooling arrangement with nine Essex Authorities which will result in additional resources being available to the Council

Continued to explore the opportunity of a shared building control service between eight Authorities.