

COUNCILLOR MRS GABRIELLE SPRAY

REPORT FOR PEBMARSH PARISH COUNCIL 2016

Braintree District Council – Achievements 2015/16

There are five key priorities for your District Council to focus on and these come under the headings of: **Place, People, Prosperity, Performance and Partnership**. Within these groups are a number of aims and I will select just some of these in this report and detail how we have supported those aims.

A top priority is, and has been for several years now, **Keeping our District clean and tidy and Protecting our Environment**. To help achieve this we support an anti-litter campaign across Essex and participate in campaigns that reduce waste. The result is an 83% reduction in litter across the District and a 41% reduction across Essex. That's a pretty impressive result and one reason why BDC won the award for '**Local Authority of the Year**' at the Keep Britain Tidy awards for our innovative approach to creating a cleaner and greener place to live. We beat off competition from much larger local authorities who might have expected to win. The team who work for BDC collecting the waste, dealing with fly tipping and ensuring safe disposal of refuse are a very hard working and dedicated bunch who thoroughly deserve the recognition of this award.

Another priority is to **Support vulnerable people in our community, Promote safe and healthy living and to Encourage flourishing communities**. We have introduced a home inspection and handyman service to help frail residents as part of our action to provide support to older residents and reduce hip fractures across the district. One of the not-so-good statistics about our District is that we have the highest obesity levels in the county and this particularly affects our young people. Not something to be proud of is it? So, we are working with the Health and Wellbeing Panel to reduce obesity levels by delivering local activities to enable residents to adopt a more healthy diet and increase activity levels. We are encouraging cycling which, since GB's successes at the 2012 Olympics and the Tour de France, has become a very popular activity. We have refurbished play areas across the District.

Finally, to encourage local groups to come together and deliver community projects, the Mi Community fund has awarded 21 grants and has been widely regarded as a really successful scheme over the last five years. I have been

delighted to chair Mi Community during this time and am pleased to say that another funding scheme for local projects will launch in the autumn. Details to follow.

MY ACTIVITIES

I'll turn now to what I've been up to during the last year as one of your District Councillors.

My busiest Committee continues to be Planning and I expect to remain on it during the coming year. The members of this Committee are braced for it to become even more challenging over the next twelve months as applications for housing come before us. You will all, no doubt, be aware that central government has increased the housing target for this district: between 12,000 and 15,000 new homes required by 2033 i.e. in excess of 700 new builds per annum. The majority of these homes will be built around the three major towns, Halstead, Braintree and Witham, but the rural areas must take their share ***where appropriate sites are identified***. This process is at the stage where the Local Plan sub Committee is considering potential sites now and up to the end of May. In June a meeting of Full Council will consider the preferred options with a public consultation taking place in June and July. There will be a chance then for revisions to be made before the draft plan goes to the Planning Inspector for consideration.

I know that these housing targets are causing divided opinion and anxiety in places but please be assured that your Parish Council and District Councillors do have your best interests at heart. We do need new homes in and around the villages in order to provide suitable housing for families, both young and old, and there are gains to be had from developers by way of recreational space which is much needed. However, I am aware that this remains a difficult subject and I am prepared to listen to all sides of the arguments for and against.

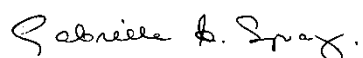
As previously mentioned, I chaired the final year of the Mi Community scheme and look forward to being involved in the new funding scheme which will start later this year.

I continue to be involved with the Member Development Working Group which produced a new Induction and Training programme for all newly elected

and existing District Councillors – widely regarded as being an improvement on the training provided in previous years. I am also still part of the Developing Democracy Group which examines the way the Council is run.

The Earls Colne Airfield Liaison Group, which I chair, continues to meet twice a year and deals with any concerns or issues between residents and the operation of the Flying Club and also the Air Ambulance.

I have very much enjoyed the last twelve months as one of your representatives on the District Council. As you know this was the first year for Chris and me that Pebmarsh became part of our ward and, personally, I have enjoyed attending the Parish Council meetings. I look forward to getting to know to you all better over the next year. Not all problems are easily solved and I can't please all of the people all of the time but I am up for the challenge for another year!



Gabrielle Spray