

COUNCILLOR MRS GABRIELLE SPRAY

REPORT FOR PEBMARSH PARISH COUNCIL 2019

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL – ACHIEVEMENTS 2018/19

Despite another challenging year for all Councils around the country, Braintree District Council has continued to perform well and to support residents in our towns and villages.

Our budget from Central Government is being reduced to zero in 2019/20 so we need to act prudently if we are to maintain the essential services our residents rely on. To this end we have made more than £8.6 million in savings and efficiencies since 2010. We have invested carefully in properties which are seeing a good return and are already generating income.

A snapshot of our services:

- 12.58 million refuse and recycling collections
- Removed 565 fly tips
- 200,000 individual emptyings of litter and dog bins
- 39,151 Community Transport journeys
- Prevented more than 200 households from becoming homeless
- Investigated 281 noise nuisance complaints
- Helped 120 people adapt their homes thanks to disabled facilities grants
- Granted planning permission for over 1200 dwellings supporting the delivery of much needed housing across the district

We have award winning parks and play areas. The Livewell campaign to help people, and especially children, stay healthy and happy is a great success and has been copied by other councils across East Anglia.

We achieved the Customer Service Excellence Standard for the fourth consecutive year demonstrating a high standard of customer service which is recognised as an exemplar in 13 areas.

****82% of our residents are satisfied with their place to live****

MY ACTIVITIES

I have had a particularly busy year acting as Cabinet Deputy for Planning and Housing to Cllr Mrs Bowers-Flint and in my role as Vice Chair of the Planning Committee.

With regards to **Housing**, I have regular briefing meetings with Council Officers from the Housing team. We try to ensure that people are able to move within the District to homes which suit their needs whether that be for family or work reasons or both. In 2018 the government required all Councils to adopt the new Homelessness Strategy, and whilst this is intended to help prevent people losing their homes, it has proved to be very challenging to introduce. Braintree Council's Housing team continues to do an excellent job of implementing this new policy. We pride ourselves in this District in not having to place families in bed and breakfast accommodation but providing good, short term housing until a more permanent solution can be found.

I continue to enjoy my role in **Planning**, both as Cabinet Deputy for that portfolio and on the Planning Committee. However, to say that it has been a difficult year for Planning Officers and members of the Committee is probably an understatement! The government continues to set targets for housing numbers which have changed several times in 2018. We are required to have a 5 year land supply; currently BDC's land supply stands at 5.4 years but this is expected to drop later this year when the target changes again. The Planning Committee, therefore, faces some difficult decisions when asked to determine housing applications from developers which are not always welcomed by residents. There have to be solid planning

reasons to refuse an application if we are to avoid being challenged at an appeal.

The draft Local Plan has not yet been adopted as the Inspector awaits further information he requires for Section 1 – the proposed Garden Communities. We expect the examination to resume later this summer with a decision, hopefully, later this year. The examination of Section 2, which deals with the development sites and planning policies particular to Braintree District, will commence in 2020.

I have supported a number of excellent projects via the Councillors' Community Grant Scheme including £400 for the Pebmarsh VETS (Village Emergency Telephone System), £500 to Earls Colne Tennis Club to improve facilities and £200 to the Carers First organisation to enable carers to have a much needed day trip to London.

My thanks to the Parish Council for all the work they carry out during the year. I endeavour to support them and the residents and hope to continue doing so over the coming twelve months.

Gabrielle Spray

The Colnes Ward