

WATTON ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

TUESDAY 18th APRIL 2017

REPORT FROM KEITH GILBERT, BRECKLAND COUNCILLOR

This is a report on the work I have been doing as a member of Breckland Council during the past year.

I am now in my 24th year as a member of Breckland Council, where I am an opposition member and the only Independent member. As an opposition member it is not my job to tell you how wonderful Breckland Council is, so I'll leave that to Claire and Michael.

Until I was re-elected 2 years ago I had very little contact with the licensing work of Breckland. However I am now a member of the Licensing Committees and have found it very interesting and rewarding.

Breckland Council are responsible for licensing activities such as taxi drivers and alcohol supply and licensed premises.

As part of this work I have sat on several panels, of three members, to decide such issues as whether or not to grant someone a taxi license or even ban them from working as a taxi driver in Breckland. We also decide on matters such as opening hours for licensed premises.

We recently had a visit from Norfolk County Council Trading Standards regarding smuggled and fake cigarettes and tobacco products, following a case in Thetford where a large amount of such products was found. In such cases Breckland can revoke a premises license.

Scrap metal dealers also come under Breckland's licensing regime, and we recently had a visit from the police officer who deals with such matters.

These matters are some of the work which Breckland does and goes almost unseen by the public.

The majority of what Breckland does is supported by all members, but as an independent opposition member it is my job to speak up when I disagree and to ask the awkward questions, which I do.

The latest question I asked, and which affects the town now and maybe even more in the future, was about street lights. This followed an email I received from a constituent about the removal of 6 street lights from one road on Lovell Gardens. I then had an email from a Breckland officer saying that there was no money in the budget to replace them.

Watton residents are charged an extra "special expenses" charge to pay for street lights. A total of £18,914 last year, and £14,186 this year. This amounted to £7.97 last year and £5.77 this year on a band D property.

Breckland want the towns to take over the responsibility and cost of their street lights, something which the Town Council are not in favour of. Maybe this is a topic to be discussed with Watton residents as part of our proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

KEITH GILBERT

BRECKLAND COUNCIL MEMBER FOR WATTON