

## District Councillor's Report for the Town Meeting

Well, what a year we have had. We have had to find new ways of working. I have not attended a face to face Breckland meeting for over a year. They have all been via Zoom or Teams. The vast majority of Breckland staff have been working from home, and they have all done a magnificent job. It could not have been easy for them to adjust to a new way of working so quickly, and they have really risen to the challenge. I would like to put on record my appreciation of their hard work and professionalism during these strange times.

Here is a short report of the work I have been doing as one of your District Councillors.

My job, as an Independent member, and a member of the opposition, is to hold Breckland Council to account, but also to give support where I think it is in the best interest of Watton and Breckland residents. As the only Independent member in the last Council that was not the easiest job, but it has been made easier now with the election of four Independent members at the last election. We are all Independent, but we do talk to each other and share ideas.

I am once again a member of the Planning Committee, an area of work I am particularly interested in. As such I no longer make public comment on planning applications, because to do so might indicate that I have pre-determined an application if it is determined by the Planning Committee.

Two other issues I have been involved with are littering and fly tipping, and houses in multiple occupation, HMO's.

Litter and fly tipping are a particularly big bug bear of mine. I find it very hard to work out why someone finds it easy to carry cans of beer when they are full, but then find they are too heavy to carry when they are empty and find it necessary to throw them away rather than dispose of them properly. I have been working with a Breckland officer on this issue and he is due to give a report on the matter to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission next week.

I have been given addresses of HMO's and have passed these on to Breckland's Housing Department. This department has recently undergone a re-organisation, and hopefully they will be better able to tackle this problematic issue.

If you see any fly tipping incidents, or have knowledge of any possibly un-authorized HMO's, you can report them via the Breckland web site. There is a "Report It" red button at the top of the front page where you can leave details. Any problem please get in touch with me and I can report it on your behalf.

Another issue, which comes up every year at budget time, is the issue of Watton residents paying extra council tax to cover the cost of street lighting. It came about several years ago as so called "double taxation." We are not talking about the main road lighting, that is a County Council responsibility, we are talking about footway lighting on other roads.

The argument is that why should people who live in villages with no street lighting pay for street lighting in towns. By the same argument, why should people who live in towns pay for things specifically in villages? After all, if people in villages come into town to visit friends they take advantage of our street lights.

That is why I was not able to support the setting of the Council Tax, with includes a "special expenses" element.

I have also taken up issues for individuals or groups of constituents which of course remain confidential.

If anyone has an issue they would like me to look into or help with, please get in touch. My contact details are email, [keith.gilbert@breckland.gov.uk](mailto:keith.gilbert@breckland.gov.uk) and phone 01953 880172 and 07730 375986.

Keith Gilbert, Breckland Council member for Watton