

Annual Report: Cllr. Andrew Cooper 2011/12

Introduction

The backdrop to this year was ever reducing funding available for improving and maintaining local services and facilities. This gives a special responsibility to Councillors to find new sources of funding and try to keep 'the show on the road' for local people.

One set of cuts was to feed in tariffs for solar energy. We had a real race on our hands to get the funding agreed and panels installed on Newsome South Methodist Church and I played my part in helping secure funding. The Church which is also a well used community venue now has an additional significant secure source of funding for the next 25 years.

I assisted Springwood residents in their successful campaign to stop charges for permit parking . These householders were on some of the lowest incomes in Huddersfield and it was effectively a tax on people on the lowest incomes. We'll never know the full story behind the climbdown by the Cabinet but the lack of an equalities impact assessment for this proposal (which I pointed out) may have had something to do with it.

I opposed the siting of the new proposed cemetery at Stirley Hill. It is a highly unsuitable location for a cemetery being on a windswept bleak part of land near Castle Hill on a road which has poor sightlines and is not well served by Public Transport. We need additional space for burials in Kirklees but this is not the place. This proposal was turned down by Kirklees Planning Committee.

I continued to 'blog ' regularly and I regularly get around 700 hits on my blog every month (sometimes more). It scored highly in the Total Politics Blog Awards in the 'Green' and Councillor' categories. It has more political content than this report and more jokes! In 2011 I did 78 blog postings about Kirklees, Newsome Ward and energy issues and whatever took my fancy. Find it at www.greeningkirklees.blogspot.com I also use twitter and regard its use in Council meetings as a good thing as it demonstrates you are paying attention to the debate and not disappearing in your mind to 'a happy place'. I tweet as @clrandrewcooper

In my role as Chair of the Local Government Association's Inland Flood Risk Management Group I highlighted concerns affecting residents in Armitage Bridge directly to Government departments and the Association of British Insurers.

I and my Green Party Colleagues continued to put out regular newsletters throughout the year and at Christmas we produce an annual report from January to December which is distributed to 7000 households.

One of the most important issues affecting our area is the Local Development Framework and we have given a consistent message to Kirklees that the land below Castle Hill should be protected from Development as it was the whole of Huddersfields backyard and the foreground to the historic and iconic Huddersfield landmark Castle Hill.

I continued to be a strong supporter of 'Growing Newsome' both as a local allotment holder and someone who mucks in and helps out at events putting away tables and chairs and helping distribute subsidised fruit trees to householders as part of our 1000 fruit tree campaign. I just help out, the real organisation is done by local people and that is why it is so good. They also distributed over a thousand seed potatoes to local residents.

I was the only Kirklees Councillor to attend the public enquiry regarding the Tesco development where I spoke against the application. I stuck to sound planning grounds. What was interesting was to see the huge legal team Tesco's employed to fight their case.

I spent a morning going round scrapyards with Police, Trading Standards and Kirklees Environmental Health Officers. It was an interesting day and as result I got together with them later to work on a voluntary code of conduct for scrap dealers. Amazingly, Kirklees Council later took up this idea but apparently they came up with it entirely separately. Bizarre!

Our contribution to the Kirklees Budget process in 2012 was to develop something we called Kirklees Budget 2.0 which aimed to give more local and community control over Kirklees budgets. It was an innovative and revolutionary concept and so was consequently defeated by the combined votes of the other parties at the Budget Council meeting in February.

I continued to take up local issues such as security at Newsome Mills, the land at Hart Street, traffic calming in Springwood and Berry Brow and many individual concerns from residents.

I again drove the Green Party volunteer Minibus on New Years Day now in its 19th year and part of my Christmas holidays now.

2012 was the year I sought re-election for the fourth time. I was successful with a good 800+ majority. My opponent had a lot more money spent on their campaign and a lot of support brought in from outside so it was particularly pleasing to be re-elected by local people so convincingly.