

Annual Report: Cllr. Andrew Cooper 2013/14

Ward Work

I have dealt with the usual varied casework issues for local Newsome residents, run advice surgeries, participated in clean ups and supported vital local beer festivals!

 Council Work and Achievements

This was the year the Local Development Framework was ruled out of order by the Planning Inspectorate for supposedly failing to meet the 'duty to cooperate' with other Local Authorities. Clearly this was nonsense and was in reality all about the low housing numbers chosen by Council. I have made clear at Council that the claims by Government that we have local autonomy over planning policy are bogus and I argued that we should not withdraw the strategy but call Governments bluff. I and my Green Party colleagues were defeated and the LDF was withdrawn.

The Green Party with our Valley Independent colleagues were successful at getting motions opposing Fracking and supporting the Financial Transaction (Robin Hood) Tax passed. Debate on both was delayed for several meetings due to running out of time on the Council agenda. I am not convinced that shortening our meetings is going to make this situation any better.

Our Group was successful in achieving significant concessions in the Kirklees Budget negotiations including agreeing a 2000 house solar panel programmes for council properties, a commitment to devolution of budgets, a shared priority on the importance of protecting adult care and some useful discussions about the protection of local library services.

In Newsome Ward we ran the New Years Day free volunteer bus service for the 21st year in a row to provide a service to people without access to a bus. I always enjoy driving it and it is part of my holiday now.

We were pleased to see the pedestrian crossings installed at Kings Bridge after many years of requesting this. This is a busy commuter route and the safety of pedestrians has no doubt been improved.

The huge cuts to Council funding by the Coalition Government remain a constant source of concern. The additional £129 million being stripped out of Council funds can only lead you to the conclusion that the government simply doesn't understand the impacts of the cuts they are making or doesn't care about the harm to local people that they will do.

This round of local elections saw my long standing colleague, and good friend, Graham Simpson stand down after many years service as a Green Party Councillor. On the positive side Karen Allison, a former Kirklees employee, held his seat in the elections and will be a great asset to our group on the Council.