

Councillor Report

So as you know, thanks to the amazing efforts of the campaign team and many volunteers, I was elected both as a borough and a county councillor in May. It was a landslide result, 1052 votes, more than all the other candidates put together, which is why I am now what's called a 'double hatted' councillor.

As I am a lone Green councillor on Hastings Council I don't have the right to sit on any committees but I can ask questions at full council and bring motions (as long as I can find a seconder). At the last council meeting I spoke out against the proposed restaurant planned for the old Harold Place Toilets site. £1.7 million for a restaurant built for a chain who employs people on zero hours contracts. Little return for the council and all it will do is take business away from the many already struggling independent restaurants and cafes in the town. It is also a key site for the Hastings as a Garden town proposed station to sea route. There has been no public consultation about this plan, like many other of the council's proposals.

At the October council meeting I brought a motion calling on the government to commit to a carbon tax to make polluters pay, speed up the move away from fossil fuels and for the revenue to be used as a citizen's carbon dividend to assist in a just climate transition. This was seconded by Councillor Heather Bishop and supported by the Labour councillors but not the Tories.

At East Sussex County Council I am one of 4 Greens alongside Wendy and Johnny from Lewes and Georgia from Forest Row. We meet via zoom every fortnight and between us have been busy asking questions and proposing motions at full council.

In October, we brought a motion to support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill which the lead member for climate change had said he would support but at the last minute the Conservative group changed their minds, submitting an amendment that made no sense. They seem very defensive about now having four Greens on the council and we make sure we turn up and ask searching questions at lead member's and cabinet meetings.

We submitted a response to the Bus Back Better strategy and have also made suggestions for how to spend the extra £8 million left over from Covid related grants including enabling communities to create 20 mph areas in their neighbourhoods.

We are also pushing for carbon literacy training for all councillors and officers and finding ways to introduce the Doughnut economics framework into decision making as Cornwall Council already does.

At the December council meeting we will be proposing a motion calling for a ban on the use of Glyphosate on our pavements.

As Vice chair of Place Scrutiny I will be working on revising the Local Transport Plan in the light of the recent government report into Decarbonising Transport as well as how to localise and green the council's procurement processes. The

council has a budget of £403 million and is the biggest employer in the county so can have a big impact with where and how it spends its money.

I also sit on the Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority which looks after the health of our waters and sea wildlife from coast to 6 miles out. The local fishermen are pleased to have a local rep and I am meeting with them prior to each quarterly meeting. This is the body that was responsible for the inshore trawling ban that is hoped will help restore the kelp forests and other sea bed life.

Finally I sit on the pensions committee and am repeatedly trying to make the case for divestment but with three Tories to convince this isn't easy. The frustrating thing is that the holdings in fossil fuels have reduced considerably over the last five years from over 4% to less than 0.5% which is as fast as the rate that councils who have committed to divestment have managed but ESCC refuses to call this divestment.

I also spend a few hours each week responding to resident's queries. I attend residents and Old Town Traders meetings. I also do a walkabout with the Highways steward every few weeks, identifying pavement trip hazards, potholes and blocked drains as well as overgrown hedges blocking paths. I have been holding councillor drop in sessions once a month at different venues but they haven't been very well attended so am not sure I will continue these. I think street by street door-knocking will be more useful.

I work well with Councillor James Bacon and we have collaborated on the consultation for Swan Gardens replanting and will also be collaborating on engaging with residents and traders on Courthouse Street to find a solution to the constant flouting of the pedestrian zone.

I hope the discussion today about creating safer streets will help build appetite for action on speeding cars and creating a more pedestrian friendly neighbourhood, this is one of my priorities for the ward although it will take some time to get action from the county council.