



## Castle Ward Borough Councillor report

August 2013

This is my half yearly report following the report I published in January.

The Labour Group continues to hold the Tory administration to account in a variety of ways:

- We table questions in advance of each council meeting and get a written reply. In the full council meeting we are then able to ask supplementary questions.
- We also raise questions on the reports submitted by the portfolio holders on Housing, Finance, Planning and Regeneration, Environment, and Communities.
- We take turns with the other opposition party to present a statement of our policies on particular themes. This is called opposition business and has covered such areas as housing, the environment, improvement to the parks, equalities and so on.
- We submit motions for debate. We do sometimes win the vote even though we are a minority party. Examples of this are the motion we submitted calling for a borough strategy for access to the arts for young people. We also successfully argued for Freedom of the Town status for Fire-fighters. Initiated by Labour this went in as a joint motion. We also argued recently in favour of Credit Unions and against loan sharks. Some motions we lose. For example we lost a motion recently calling for families with young children not to be housed above the ground floor.

### **Labour Motions since Xmas**

**January-** Supporting Credit Unions, Supporting International Women's Day, Helping families find Cheaper Energy

**March-** Calling for a Women's Forum, Supporting HS2., Supporting Bedroom Tax Appeals Panel

**April -** Armed Services local book of remembrance, problems of HMOs, Condemning food vouchers being given instead of cash payments.

**June-** A strategy for providing Access to the Arts for Young People

**July -**Freedom of the town for Fire Fighters, Young Families need ground floor flats, Training for community activists

### **Labour Opposition Business since Xmas**

Benefit Changes due to Welfare Reform

Community Safety

Improving Parks

It is possible for members of the public to register to speak on the day of the full council (before 12 pm). It is always a pleasure to hear the issues raised by members of the public. A recent issue members of the public spoke to was Saving Sekhemka. Passionate contributions were made from the floor, all applauded and supported by Labour.

All councillors are on committees and make a contribution there. I served on the Over View and Scrutiny committee for two years and am now on the Licensing committee.

I make representations on behalf of constituents to the planning committee on a regular basis, trying to stop the over development of residential areas and the growth of HIMOS, (Houses in Multiple Occupation). I also represent my constituents at Cabinet where I can. This is the place



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where major decisions affecting the town are made. These meetings are public and again members of the public are entitled to speak there.

One of the reasons why I enjoy being a councillor is because it gives me the opportunity to meet local residents and support them to improve life in their part of the ward. I attend as many residents meetings as I can and take up any issues that arise with the borough council. I also work strategically with groups to put in place projects or plans that they feel will improve life for them. My local leaflets reflect that work and they can be found on my website.

Two projects I will highlight is the development of 'playstreets' in the ward. Why is this important? Play streets give public access to a local area for children and their carers. They are cost free and allow outdoor play close to home. This encourages neighbourliness and community engagement in an informal way.

I have also been working with groups to create more community activity in different parts of the ward. I run a drop in on Thursdays in Spring Boroughs and will be running a Tuesday drop in at Vernon Terrace community Centre from September. This drop in will overlap with my County councillor role. The drop-ins facilitate local people developing their own projects and campaigning around their own needs.

Life is getting tougher for many families and we are seeing an increase in the use of food banks and the iniquitous use of food vouchers in place of crisis loans. In order to understand this I have with some of the agencies set up a poverty watch group so that we can monitor what is going on and where the gaps in support are.

Borough Councillors have £3000 a year to spend on community projects. I am keen to support projects that promote community engagement. The reason for this is that in these very hard times we need each other more. We live in a system that tries to divide us. We are stronger together. I am also keen to support projects and activities across all the age groups, ethnicities and for people with disabilities.

Case work takes up a lot of time. The majority of cases I deal with are housing issues and environmental issues. I have also been dealing with antisocial behaviour, street drinkers and lately more and more benefit issues.

For further information please look at my website and read my blogs, [www.daniellestone.co.uk/blog](http://www.daniellestone.co.uk/blog) or to alert me to any issues please email me on [dstone@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:dstone@northampton.gov.uk) or phone 07500930903.

Many thanks