

On the 5th May 2022 my tenure as your Belvedere Ward councillor will come to an end.

It has been a huge honour and my privilege to represent this, my home ward, for four years. I would like to think that I have done a reasonable job, but that will be for others to judge.

Early on I managed to successfully arrange a visit to the Crossness Nature Reserve by the Deputy Mayor for London (for environment) and to then attend and put forward residents' oppositional views at the Public Enquiry on the Cory "Waste to Energy" expansion plan.

I spent a good deal of time using my bi-monthly ward walks, working with the LB Bexley officers responsible for clearing fly-tips, and I believe I identified, and they arranged to clear, many many tons of horrible detritus. We even eventually got rid of two dumped and nasty refuse laden yellow vans left just around the corner from the "Bexley is Bonkers" blogger and he published the pictures to show it.

There was a massive swathe of the stuff constantly appearing at Railway Place by Belvedere station. I became such a pest to the senior officers on this that I was eventually successful in getting gates placed at either end to prevent fly-tippers access and to date it looks a much better place, although the garden agreed with Orbit Housing for the small patch of land adjacent never materialised, partly due to lockdown and changes of personnel at Orbit. And the idea of using the old coal yard as a temporary car park to address the commuter parking issue as a result, failed due to the land owners selling just as we got close to an agreement.

The railway footbridge's necessary repairs that I mentioned in a ward walk with the LB Bexley Chief Executive Officer suddenly were allocated funding to get some repairs done. The re-surfacing was a poor interim measure but at least was done. Then slightly later the deteriorating footplates for the walkway were repaired on the Southside of the bridge and some on the Northside. A fresh coat of paint was applied to the Southside (where most of the commuters arriving at the station would see) but the Northside was left unfinished. I did seek the completion of the work but apparently having spent allegedly in the region of £400k, the work stopped. When I enquired when the work would be completed I was informed after a new budget round of financing. So I took that railway footbridge for a metaphor for LBB as a whole, the works completed on the Southside with the Northside left to continue to deteriorate.

I have had the pleasure of seeing residents in crappy circumstances rehoused after some seriously fair and frank exchanges with resistant officers.

Only recently I was pleased to help someone who had been placed in temporary accommodation, by another London borough, in Belvedere. They had been here 5 years and wanted to be closer to their family and friends. It took some six weeks work but we got them the move they wanted and they are now planning their future, something they had had on hold for the previous five years.

There has been one family who I could not seem to get help and relief from their noisy neighbour problem or get it solved. We had officers, police, sound monitoring equipment, video footage, photographs and still somehow the noisy neighbours managed to evade responsibility and liability. That was a four year failure I think.

And yet, just around the corner, at very short notice and with two "on street corner meetings" we managed to get 40 people engaged in another noise invasive issue. The group set up SLAP (Stop Lesnes Abbey Proposals). We collectively agreed a strategy and opposed the application at a Licensing sub-committee and after a marathon 4 plus hours, we eventually won the day, although the notice came a week after the event. Councillors on the committee and officers having to stay even later than us to review and determine the outcome.

The saddest event was the murder, adjacent to Belvedere station, of Vitalii Skrypniak. He was a Ukrainian HGV driver coming to the UK to help us with, our then, logistics problems. He had been in the UK 3 days. He has left behind a wife and a young son.

I organised a "Vigil" as I thought that this was not a fair reflection of Belvedere or its community. We had a huge response from the community, local business' and officials. Well over 200 social media posts and interests on one site alone and we had had it posted to several local groups.

Despite the torrential downpour on the night, and it was truly foul weather, we had over 40 people attend the vigil and a few attended but stayed in their car nearby to sensibly stay dry !!

A general invitation was made for people to attend and as well as the local community we had the Erith and Thamesmead MP put in an appearance, An Erith ward councillor, the Metropolitan Police Borough Commander, the entire Belvedere Safer Neighbourhood Team, Network Rail security personnel, and two senior officers from the Ukrainian embassy. Then the community were invited to speak many took the opportunity to step up, and an excellent impromptu speech from a twelve year old boy whose mother had attempted to help Vitalii was probably the stand out one, compassion, concern and serious humanity, well done sir !

Finally I would like to thank the proprietor and staff of Picardy Cafe on Picardy Street who agreed and then hosted me every week that we could, from the beginning of 2020 (post the 2019 general election). They facilitated my regular access to our community by means of my doing "pop up" surgeries there every Saturday morning and I was able to help even more residents as a consequence. They are closed this coming Easter weekend so my last "Pop up" surgeries will be the 23rd and 30th April and then I hand the baton on so.....

Thank You.

Yours

Dave

Councillor Dave Putson