

Councillor Robert Watts - keen team player

Editor Rowena Davison talks to Shepperton ward Councillor Robert Watts about his values, beliefs and ideas.

After more than 50 years as a Shepperton resident, representing Shepperton Residents' Association since 2004 and becoming its vice-chairman in 2010 - Robert Watts was elected to Spelthorne Council in May 2011.

Responsible for matters environmental, Councillor Watts is a strong supporter of the local community and is particularly interested in recycling, highways and planning.

Why did you become a councillor?

I feel strongly about representing the needs and views of the community. I am also determined to raise awareness of what goes on at the Council with our residents. As a semi-retired chartered civil and environmental engineer, and a consultant, I am also happy to contribute any expertise I have which might help in any way.

There is a tough balance to be struck between meeting expectations and providing cost effective, quality services. I consider that good budgetary control and innovation in cost savings must be achieved in all service areas.

What are your particular interests?

I am interested in recycling, bio-diversity and I was very interested in the improvements that have recently been made in Shepperton High Street.

Currently of course, food waste has been very much a priority.

How do you feel the new food waste collection service is going?

I think that people are, by and large, making a great effort to respond to the new system. For most people, the critical issue is cost and we must communicate effectively about the savings that can be made through reducing waste.

What are your priorities?

I think there is some very important work to be done on ditches to ensure they are properly cleaned and cleared. This is vital to prevent flooding which, in Spelthorne, is a big risk due to its proximity to the River Thames. We are investigating working with the Community Payback scheme to use offenders' time in clearing our ditches, putting their time to good community use.

Recycling in public places is very important too and we need to do more to encourage that.

What about spare time?

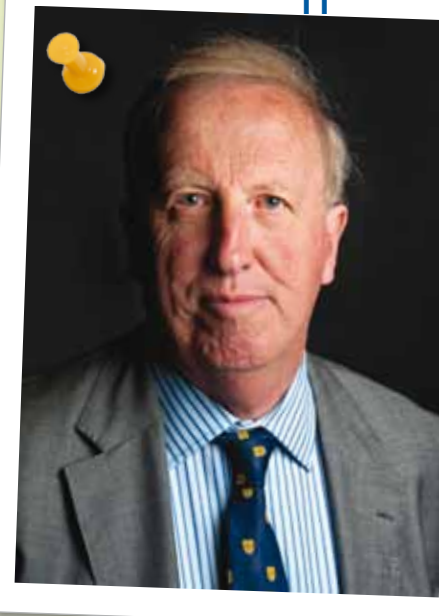
I am a keen gardner and grow most of my own vegetables – I also like eating out in nice restaurants.

I have spent a lot of time travelling including around South America and the Caribbean and I have also worked in the Arab world. Working abroad has made me very self sufficient and aware of the different cultural and political issues in that part of the world.

Finally, what are your wishes for the future?

I definitely want to work closely with staff and ensure that we are a good and efficient team. I want to work for the benefit of residents both in Shepperton and Spelthorne before considering other potential avenues.

i For further information please contact Councillor Robert Watts, Cabinet Member for Environment, by calling **01932 244407** or send an e-mail to **cllr.watts@spelthorne.gov.uk**



Pic: Cllr Watts and the Council Leader Vivienne Leighton with one of the new collection trucks