

Councillor Annual Report 2022, Councillor Maria Watson, Clifton East

Introduction

I was first elected in May 2019, and what a busy first term it's been, working hard for Clifton East with my fellow Councillors.

It's an absolute privilege to represent the ward that we all love, and we hope we're doing a good job representing the citizens of Clifton East. It is our number one priority to put the views and opinions of our residents to the Council, something that we all feel hadn't happened enough in the past. We are back to holding regular advice surgeries on the first Saturday of each month giving residents the opportunity to see their councillors face to face and discuss any problems or concerns they may have.

Council Involvement

- Member of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Community Involvement

- Member of Highbank Community Association Management Committee.
- Member of the Clifton Community Centre Management Committee.
- Member of the Clifton Green Team litter picking group.

Ward Work and Achievements

I was involved in the pilot scheme with NCH to refurbish a neglected garage site to make rentals more appealing to residents and more sites are now on the agenda to be refurbished. I have also been part of the naming of the new flats, dedicated to remember Kieron Hill a young Clifton man that died in Afghanistan. He was very much respected and loved within Clifton.

I supported the local Clifton NG11 Food Bank with donations and continue to support local community group Step Out Stay Out and are in discussions for a permanent base for them.

I also help and support our local community centre with events through funding and by volunteering when needed at events.

At present, plans are in place to create a Covid memorial garden within Clifton Central Park. Ward funding was committed, and 6 new benches are now on order and will be fitted when they arrive. Any money left over will be used to create flower beds near the benches. Further money has been set aside to create a ramp down into the flower pit and we are currently seeking match funding from the private sector to help us complete this through the help of our RDO.

Over 20,000 wildflowers seeds have been scattered along the Nethergate stream to encourage and sustain insects and bees. Over a 12-week period myself and volunteers cleared Nethergate stream of broken glass and debris that had accumulated over many years and cleared blockages of overgrown grass to allow the stream to flow freely.

At the same time, I was invited to do a small talk to the children of a Highbank primary school when they made bee hotels and I went with them to mount them with the flower park. This is in addition to the 60 new bird boxes I have helped add to Central Park, a welcome addition both for the birds and the community.

I helped organised the 2021 Christmas parade around Clifton and two free Santa grotto days for the local children in which 600 plus children came along. I helped put together the Easter egg community event where over 400 children attended the hunt within the flower park I was involved with putting together the recent Clifton fun day. Now in preparations for the Halloween free event and our yearly Grotto and parade plans.

I have worked closely with tree services and highways and clearing teams and agreed for where money is to be allocated for new road repairs, street furniture and tree maintenance where possible as well as the planting of an additional 3000 trees with the ward.

Currently in talks with NCH to create a playing area on Barbury Drive so local children can have play equipment to enjoy.

Still liaising with the Police to get a permanent knife-bin in Clifton to tackle and reduce injuries or death through misuse of knives. We have developed links with NET trams to discuss anti-social behaviour and have been on tram line walks to discuss other issues i.e. cleansing of tram stops, bins, signage etc. I supported job fairs held at local community centre and help residents with information on fuel crisis helpline.

Learning and Development

Completed courses in GDPR, Prevent Duty regarding children, and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021 and 2022 through the Spencer Academy Trust (Farnborough school Clifton).

Use of Devolved Budgets

- Green Lane resurfacing Phase One and Two.
- Clifton Flower Park rejuvenation.
- Christmas lighting along Green Lane and a Christmas Carnival.
- Installing a new memorial bin.
- Added parking spaces to the future development on Southchurch Drive.
- School Street Project.
- Community Easter Egg Hunt.
- Resurfacing of a large section of Summerwood Lane
- Funding secured for the garden redevelopment at Holbrook Court.

Challenges

We hope to play a much bigger part in next year's budget, we aim to make sure the Council is much more prudent with its finances going forward and challenging any rate rises.

We want to champion more social housing being built in our ward, to help get as many people off the waiting list as possible and to make sure Clifton gets a fair proportion of the funding for this.

We will continue to work closely with the police, CPOs and with Neighbourhood Operations to ensure Clifton is a safe and vibrant place to live.