

Buzz

Out on the floor



'The monthly page where we give floorspace to representatives of Broxtowe's five main political parties to tell us what they're thinking'



Moving out

"NO-ONE would have believed in the last years of the 19th century that human affairs were being watched from the timeless worlds of space. And yet, across the gulf of space, minds immeasurably superior to ours regarded this earth with envious eyes and, slowly and surely, they drew their plans against us."

So said Richard Burton at the start of the musical version of 'War of the Worlds'. And after the events of the past few weeks I know exactly how he felt! Broxtowe is a small borough but with a distinct identity, yet Nottingham City has, since the summer, been openly suggesting that it should be split up. Their proposal is that Beeston, Bramcote, Chilwell, Toton and Stapleford should become part of an enlarged city. Presumably they will be suggesting that the north of the borough should move into Ashfield.

So what is the City's motivation for suggesting such a radical shake up? Have they suddenly been consumed by an overpowering love for Beeston and a desire to warmly embrace us into the city? I suspect not. The real reason is land. The City has little open land. Broxtowe has a sizeable amount of green belt. The City wants this to build new houses on. If they get their way, then the 6,150 houses that Broxtowe is currently having to accommodate over the next 15 years will appear chicken feed.

I have always believed in the principle of self-determination, that people should be the final arbiters of decisions about who administers their area. If residents do want to be part of an enlarged City, then we should accept that and make it happen. However, it must be the choice of

local residents and not that of the City Council. I don't believe for one moment that people do want to change but I'd really like your views. Broxtowe Lib-Dems have set up a survey on our website at www.broxtoweliberaldemocrats.org.uk for people to have their say and we'd be delighted if as many local residents as possible would take a few moments to tell us what you think.

Cllr David Watts



Social mistakes

THE death of a child from abuse has been hitting the headlines in the past couple of weeks. Let me make it clear from the start that any death by abuse is a tragedy. Having said that, it is important that we see the wider picture. The death of a child through abuse is a rare occurrence in this country. That is why they hit the headlines. Yes, they should not happen, mistakes are made, systems not robust enough.

We need to remember, though, that these are very, very complex situations that are being dealt with. It is dealing with people who are emotionally fragile and damaged, who lead chaotic lifestyles and are often addicted to various substances. Many are very adept at lying and covering their tracks. Most people have no idea how difficult it can be to work in these situations. Dealing with highly charged, complex situations, with enormous pressure to get the decisions right. Working with people is not like applying a mathematical formula to get the right answer. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, as in all situations in life.

When we read the headlines, how often are they praising all the good work and the right decisions that are made 99 percent of the time? We live in a culture that wants to blame, where we purchase newspapers because of

bad news, not good. These workers need our praise and encouragement rather than our condemnation. They are doing a job that most of us reading this would not be willing, or able, to do.

Six months from now the headlines will read that it is claimed that social workers are too heavy handed and dictatorial, taking too many children into care to protect them.

Green Party policies would reduce the stress of grinding poverty. The Citizen's Income would produce a fairer society. But we have to accept that there is no such thing as perfection with people. None of us is perfect. There will still be the very, very occasional tragedies.

*Richard Eddleston
Chair of Broxtowe Green
Party and former social
worker*



Running circles round ring-fencing figures

I'VE resumed my usual habit of spending much of each weekend on doorsteps.

I'm old-fashioned about politics, and think that the modern idea of campaigning only by "air war" (leaflets and direct mail) is hollow. The air warriors lose touch with what people think, and end up sending leaflets and letters that don't relate to what is actually worrying people. MPs and candidates should aim to knock on every door over the five-year period, which works out at visiting 200 homes a week. Sometimes people will be out and you can only leave a note, but you talk to enough people to get a clear feeling for the political temperature in real life.

What are the current hot issues? The dominant local question is of course how Beeston will get through the next year of tramworks. People may realise that the disruption is inevitable, but they're not convinced that enough is being done to get us through in one piece.

There are things that can be done about this without being an MP, and I've been working to get a closer look at the worst issues.

Meanwhile, though, I think the national media is under-estimating the growing concern about the state of the NHS. The Government promised that funding for this would be ring-fenced, but the fence has been gradually collapsing, for three reasons:

- (1) The expensive, disruptive and apparently pointless reorganisation
- (2) The diversion of GP energy into making the complex competitive contract regulation work, and the slide into privatisation that is following across the country
- (3) The cutback in social care, forcing hospitals to keep patients for longer as there is sometimes literally nowhere to send them.

The cumulative effect is to drain money needed by the core service. The four-hour limit on A&E waits introduced by the last government is a fading memory – go to the QMC on Saturday night and it's anyone's guess how long you'll wait to be seen. This, however, is just a symptom of the strain on the whole system. The Government is trying to recover some stability by cancelling the 1 percent pay rise due next year – even though that will still leave staff worse off in real terms.

Interviewed in the Nottingham Post about her recent promotion, Anna Soubry quotes David Cameron as saying to her, "I know you have wanted to move from Health." At a personal level, I wish her well in her new job in Defence. But the Department of Health needs Ministers who are genuinely interested and willing to fight the NHS's corner. I hope her successor will work to prevent further decay.

On the one hand, the Government claims to be worried about the national debt, but allowing it to continue to rise.

Meanwhile, they are setting aside £40 billion for HS2. They are willing to spend money on tax breaks for couples (so long as they agree to marry, don't both work and neither earns more than £32,000). They are subsidising a new housing bubble with state-subsidised 95 percent mortgages. They would have spent hundreds of millions on bombarding Syria if Labour and Government rebels hadn't blocked it.

Amidst all this vote-hunting, isn't it time they paid more attention to the basic health service on which we all depend?

Nick Palmer



EU Referendum

IT is important that local voters understand – how can Mr Cameron say he will promise to hold a referendum over whether the UK stays in or comes out of the EU after his negotiations with the EU in 2017.

This has to be another move to delay the referendum or get out of having one, because the President of the European Union (EU), Snr José Manuel Barroso, has already said that Mr Cameron's attempts to negotiate a new relationship with the EU would be vetoed. Mr Cameron needs a unanimous agreement from all 28 nations. He has as much chance of this as a snowball in hell. So why throw more of taxpayers' money away into the black hole that is the EU. We should have a referendum now.

Snr Barroso is Portuguese; the Portuguese are "supposed to be the oldest of our allies." No chance!

*Bob Heeley
UKIP*



Editor's Note:

After contacting the Regional Press Officer for the Conservative Party in the Midlands at the end of August in order to get a balanced political input into this monthly column, he did finally step forward on Monday of this week to ask about deadlines, word counts, etc, in time for this issue and was provided with the information he sought.

Then, later on the same morning, he emailed to say: "Now he understood the background to the cancellation of *The Beeston Express* 'Between You and Me' MP column and given the circumstances, he would not be providing any copy for *The Beeston Express*' political column."

Only my opinion, but this rather abrupt about-face had an air of someone just having been told not to have anything to do with *The Beeston Express* for whatever reason – let me take a moment here to remind readers that the 'Between You and Me' column was not cancelled per se, it was reformatted earlier in the year to provide a cross party forum in response to reader requests. Anything you may have heard to the contrary is not true but, as a result, we apparently continue to be subjected to an attitude that is not quite what you'd expect from the elected and what should therefore be the democratically-minded bureaucracy that governs us.

I can't do any more, folks. Let them get on with it.

Although I do think it's a shame.