

Low Ash Primary School – Interview with Councillor Hinchcliffe 11.1.17

On Wednesday 11th January 2017, the School Council of Low Ash met and interviewed Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe.

How long have you been a Councillor?

For 5 ½ years. I am now the leader of Bradford Council.

Have you always been a councillor?

No. I used to own a recruitment agency and I also worked in marketing.

Did you always want to be a councillor?

No I didn't. When I was at school, I wanted to be an opera singer! I went to university and worked for a degree in languages. After university I went to work in marketing. Later I became active in the Labour Party. As I got more and more involved in the Labour Party and in the local community, people began to encourage me to stand for election as a Councillor.

What does a normal day as a councillor look like?

I don't really have a 'normal' day as every day is different. But, I am usually in meetings from 9am-6pm (these can be on a range of things). I am then in evening meetings from 7pm-10pm. A lot of my meetings are about trying to persuade people to 'do' things for the good of Bradford. After my meetings, I catch up on my work emails. At weekends I like to get out in Windhill & Wrose and meet and talk to people.

How often does the Council meet?

We generally meet every 6 – 8 weeks, although sometimes this may be more frequent. There are 7 full council meetings a year.

What happens if the Council disagrees on things?

Do you mean with each other or the government? We disagree with the government on quite a lot. (I am from the Labour Party and the government is Conservative), but I try to 'bang the drum' for Bradford as much as I can with the government.

If the Council disagrees on things, we take a vote.

What changes have you made in Bradford? / What are you most proud of?

I am most proud of the impact I had on the school capita funding for Bradford. One year, the government gave Bradford £700,000. I knew this wasn't enough, so I campaigned and met with people from the government to fight for Bradford's cause. The next year we were allocated £23 million!

What is the most difficult part of your job?

I find it difficult as the government is reducing the amount of money we are given to spend on things. This means we have to stop things and services which people want. This upsets people. That is hard as we don't want to upset people.

Who is the most important person you have met?

I've met a lot of important government ministers but nobody properly famous!

Sometimes we don't feel safe when we walk to school because of all of the cars and we don't have a big enough car park. Can the Council do anything about parking at our school?

It's a difficult one as it's difficult to find space for another car park. Where would it go? If we did find an area where a car park could be built, money would need to be found to build it and this would be hard at the moment. We need to encourage people to drive safely and responsibly so all children are safe. Or, have you considered a walking bus? Another local Primary school has one and this encourages more children to walk to school rather than come in cars.

Is there anything you can do about vandalism in the local area?

The Council deals a lot with the consequences of vandalism (cleaning it up and replacing damaged things). One day, we won't have the money to do this so it's really important that we try to prevent vandalism.