

After reading the article about how Cllr. John Bennett has ‘outed’ himself as a Conservative Councillor in Kirkham, I feel it appropriate to give the article a reasoned response.

I feel very strongly that when a Councillor has stood as either an Independent or Conservative, they should not be permitted to ‘jump ship’ – as a number of them have – to join another group, given that their electorate has voted for them as they appeared on the Ballot paper. If, for whatever reason, they feel the need to do this, they should stand down and allow a bi-election for the residents to make the decision whether they want this person to still represent them.

The Independent group has always worked and been allied with other groups at Fylde and has always had a leader. This does not, on any occasions, stop any of the present opposition voting – and speaking – as individuals who represent their electorate. However every Conservative Councillor has to follow the party-line – whether this is a true reflection of the electorate who have given them the right to represent them or not. Independents do not have these constraints.

If it were not so insulting, I might laugh at the thought of John Bennett being consulted by the Leader of the Council, John Coombes, with regard to what is happening in Kirkham. John Bennett is not a member of Kirkham Town Council, Rural Splash, Friends of Kirkham Parks, Kirkham in Bloom or Kirkham and Wesham Business Group – to mention just a few of the pro-active groups which passionately support Kirkham. Independent Councillors are members of all these groups and more besides.

Let us remember, that it was John Bennett in the 2008 Annual Budget Meeting, who actually recommended Pay and Display to be introduced into Kirkham. Is this indicative of a Councillor who understands and cares about his own town? Is he a Councillor that should be consulted “and has a feel for what residents in Kirkham are thinking?” Oh – and his ‘change of ship’ has been rewarded with the Chairmanship of Development Control.

To look at this objectively, it seems no different from a child in a playground who wants to be on the winning side. Which side will John Bennett want to be on in 2 years time?

Party politics should not exist at Borough level (and are questionable even at national level, given the scant differences in policies these days). I am sure that many people are feeling weary of having politics rammed down their throats, but as an Independent Councillor, I am immensely proud to represent Kirkham and speak and vote from the heart for the best for our town.

Elaine Silverwood  
Independent Councillor  
Kirkham