

Jo Robb



It seems to me that we are extremely lucky to have Jo Robb as our South Oxfordshire District Councillor for the Green party and I am sure she will serve us well. She has only been in post since May but already she has undertaken training, attended meetings and joined committees. Nevertheless, she is thoroughly enjoying it and her enthusiasm is infectious.

She knows that she has a lot to learn – she is on the Planning Committee and has to learn planning policies; she's on the Licencing Committee and also the Community Grants committee. The latter is the most enjoyable – giving money away ensures popularity!

Although she knew it was going to be hard work, what she did not expect was that it would be so much fun. Councillors from all parties are very welcoming and sup-portive of each other. Jo was surprised when she attended a heated debate and once it was over and they left the chamber, that signalled the time for all councillors to 'get on like a house on fire' regardless of party alignment.

It was seeing Greta Thunberg speak at The World Economic Forum in Davos earlier this year that first grabbed Jo's attention. She went on to read the IPPC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report to the UN and was shocked by what she read. As a result, she joined the Green Party and also Henley in Transition (Transition is a movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world) as she felt that she had to take a stand.

The Green policies that Jo wishes to pursue involve more tree planting, introducing greener forms of transport and green requirements on new homes, implementing more facilities for cycling and she wholeheartedly supports SODC's Establishment of a Climate Emergency Advisory Committee.

Lorraine Hillier, a Tory, is her co-councillor for our ward and has been enormously helpful to Jo. They visit parish councils together; sometimes three or four in one evening. Jo finds parish councils inspiring – so much of the work is done voluntarily by people who care about their communities.

Born and brought up in Sydney, Jo has that typically Australian openness and direct-ness that can be so refreshing. Following school, she studied Law and worked for a large law firm in Sydney. She came to London in 2001 working first as a Legal journalist and then as a Financial journalist covering emerging markets: this meant that she travelled to places like Russia and Kazakhstan. This lifestyle became too much when she had two sons (now seven and nine) so three years ago she and her husband, Phil, a lawyer who works in the City of London, moved to Shepherds Green. Having enjoyed living in London and all the benefits that it confers she prefers being in the countryside with the green space and fresh air. She describes herself as a country girl now: she keeps chickens, has a dog, a tortoise, a guinea pig and has surprised herself by becoming a keen gardener: she doesn't miss work at all and hopes to continue as a Councillor for years to come.

Recently, Jo joined the Henley Open Water Swimming Club and, indeed, knows our own swimmer, Henry Bell, very well. She finds it totally invigorating – somewhat different from

the Sydney waters she grew up with! Such is her enthusiasm that she actually got up at 04:00 to swim for the summer solstice.

Back in Sydney, her mother is disabled, and her father is her main carer. Jo goes back once a year both to help care for her mother and to give her father a break. Her family have joined her on the journey back to her homeland but, at the moment, she prefers to go alone so that she can concentrate on her mother. Her brother lives in the US, so she doesn't see him very often either.

Of course, Jo recognises that flying around the world is not green, but she tries to restrict her flying so I think we can all forgive her this annual flight to Oz.

Rita Hadgkiss