

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT WITH COUNCILLOR JIM MURRAY

CD: Welcome along to Councillor Jim Murray from Eastbourne Borough Council. This is now, I think, what your fifth podcast I think it is now, isn't it?

JM: I think it is my fifth yes. A beautiful sunny day outside and I'm stuck in here with you.

CD: Yeah well, alright sorry, but yes exactly. So you're stuck in here with me. We've had some great responses to your previous podcasts. They have been fantastic. You're planning podcast I think is an award winner Jim, in terms of being able to let people understand how the planning process works. Certainly in Eastbourne. So that's been really good but today we are going for something a bit different aren't we? It's not so much, you know, looking at the nitty gritty of local politics but we are looking at how local politics is effected by a massive, massive, if you like, news feature or something that really matters to the country. And that is?

JM: Brexit. Yes, I'm going to grasp the thistle and see if I can answer some questions on Brexit for you.

CD: Well yeah, exactly, and you know really at this stage in June 2018 going over Brexit and explaining to everybody what it's all about is probably a bit pointless, and I think we all kind of know, but just in case someone is listening in 15 years' time and they don't know, at the end of the day the UK voted to leave the European Union. If you are listening back in 15 years from now, we may or may not have left the European Union, who knows. But at the end of the day, right now, we are planning to leave the European Union. We have only a few months to go until we are supposed to leave. When was that supposed to be Jim?

JM: March 29th I think is the leaving date.

CD: Of 2019?

JM: 2019 yep.

CD: Right and things are really moving ahead. So you wanted to, sort of, come in here, and Eastbourne's an interesting place to talk about this because, well, you tell me why you think it's interesting instead of me talking for the next half an hour.

JM: Well Eastbourne's a brilliant town because it's very multicultural and we have got a huge amount of different people living here from all over the world. But we have also got a lot of people here who have either lost work, or feel as though they have been not fairly treated by the European Union. So when the vote came around, we were one of the front parts of the country that voted quite highly to leave, so I think 63% of Eastbourne wanted to leave.

CD: Which personally I was quite amazed at to be honest. Because I would have thought quite the opposite, being a coastal town, you know, with reasonably close links to the continent but clearly not.

JM: Yes, I think it came as a shock to everybody, sort of how high that was. Yeah.

CD: Which is interesting and I mean, you know, we are not here to get into whether or not we are remainers or Brexiteers or whatever it is, you know, it's about really trying to understand why people voted in that way. And there's many reasons for it, like you say, people feel that Europe hasn't done anything for them, you know, as Monty Python said 'What have the Romans done for us?', well what has Europe done for them? Do you find that when you talk to people?

JM: I think that a lot of it is rumour and problems actually around the fabled straight banana that we had to have which has been forecast for us from Europe. That was never a reality, it was just one of these things that propped from the papers, and I think one of the reasons why the country decided to leave Europe was because of the fantastic campaign that the Tories ran to sort of, try and get us to leave, saying about the £360m that we could reinvest back into the NHS, and all the other monies that we are spending that we don't need to, and we can reinvest back into our own country.

CD: Yes, that infamous £360m or whatever it was which wasn't actually that at all apparently, so they say, yeah, I think that that's on record though isn't it, that that wasn't correct and that was before the rebates and all that sort of thing wasn't it?

JM: Yeah £360 million pounds was the gross amount, so once you count back in money that you get back from Europe, it ended up being about £127m.

CD: Well that's quite a lot though isn't it? That's a big difference. So in other words, what happened was, just to be fair and to give both sides of everything, is that that would have been the figure that would have been paid out to Europe, before rebates would have come back to the UK for various things. I don't know, I'm guessing here to do with farming, or to do with any other infrastructure projects that are being undertaken I guess?

JM: Yeah. So the people who wanted to leave Europe were spreading those rumours to people who wanted to stay in Europe, giving equally wild figures. So for every pound that we spend in Europe, you get ten pounds back in investment from Europe into the country. It wouldn't necessarily come into your pocket, it wouldn't necessarily go straight back into the quaffers of the government, but £10 would actually go back into investment from various building companies and agricultural and everything throughout the country. Once again, that £10 for every £1 is probably quite high, it's probably closer to about £5.

CD: Yeah and again, if you're looking at the statistics as you are there, I mean, you know, really, how much of that is directly attributable to being part of the European Union or not, because of course this is where things were very confused wasn't it, because being the UK and an English speaking member of the European Union, it was very good in terms of American companies for instance, to come here at one stage before the Irish obviously decided that they would adjust their taxation rates and let them come in, instead of coming in here. But yes all that sort of stuff really goes on...you know, there's all sorts of things, but anyway, sorry I digress. I'll start talking about inward investment from the Americans and people are just going to glaze over. So let's go back to what we were actually talking about.

JM: Well it is important because all of that is part of the whole melting pot that we had before we decided that we were going to leave Europe. And because of that mixture and because of all the various deals and various subsidies that we were getting from Europe, at the end of the day, we weren't getting too bad a deal, you know, which is why I was quite surprised when everybody turned around and said well actually no we quite want to leave.

CD: Yeah and again, just so that everyone understands something, at least I feel it's important that this is out there, in terms of a journalistic kind of view, you know, if you look at the amount of money that's rebated and everything else that goes on and the deals that have been already made with Europe, a lot of people actually are unhappy that there even has to be kind of like a withdrawal time, you know what do they call that...where there's the after 2019, then there's two years, so the transition.

JM: The transition period yes.

CD: The transition period, which of course...

JM: So it's a soft Brexit rather than a hard Brexit. Hard Brexit was what we were talking about 12 months ago and we are now down to a soft Brexit so that we leave nice and carefully, making sure that we are closing the door quietly behind us rather than slamming it in everybody's face.

CD: But that, I think a lot of people are confused. Everyone's confused, let's face it...

JM: Yes.

CD: Right now with the soft and hard Brexit, because there is so many nuisances and different types of exit. Now are you alright to explain the difference between the two apart from that, from what you've said? Or do you think that's enough?

JM: [Laughs] The complexities of that I think we are a little bit too much for this short period of time that we've got.

CD: That's fair.

JM: For example, the new deal that's just been going across the table in Government just recently is how we end up at the end of the deal, and whether or not we get a vote on whether or not we should stay or whether or not we should leave. And part of that deal was this 20 billion pounds that Theresa May has now announced is additional funding for the NHS, of which 5 billion pounds will come from reimbursements from the Brexit for when we leave Brexit, and the other 15 billion pounds we have actually got to pay for out of our tax rises.

CD: Oh okay.

JM: So it's been sold as something which is really good coming out of Brexit but it's not, it's just 25% of the deal is coming from Brexit.

CD: Which isn't anything to do with Brexit, we'd have received that money anyway I guess would we?

JM: Yes.

CD: Or is that there would have been one of these investment things that we would no longer be part of?

JM: Ahh Brexit has had a huge amount of projects and things that have been running for a number of years, of which Britain has signed up for. We've promised to keep paying into those for a number of years, and even if we leave Brexit we have still got to keep paying those subsidies and those fees for the next 10-15 years.

CD: Which is amazing to think.

JM: Yes.

CD: We have benefited though that's the thing.

JM: We have benefited from it yeah. So we can't sort of suddenly pull out. You can't buy a house and then just suddenly decide well I want to keep the house but I'm not going to pay back any of the mortgage. And that's basically what's happening in Europe as well, you know, we've paid into all of this. We have got a really good deal out of it but now we want to leave the party without paying the bar bill, is another one, you know. And so even when we leave Europe, we are still going to be paying an awful lot of money into Europe for a number of years which is why we won't see the benefit of it for an awful long time.

CD: No, I think that's what commentators are saying isn't it, that it's going to take 20 years before anything sort of like settles down and we become a sovereign nation about this. But let's go back to something that you said a second ago which was quite interesting about having a vote on whether or not we exit. Now what did you mean by that?

JM: This is where I'm, alongside Steven Lloyd, I'm a remainer. I think that we should be staying in Europe but Eastbourne has decided that they want to leave so therefore we get behind our electoral, we are a democratic group, we get behind our electorate and support them. They have told us that they want to leave, we will support them in that.

CD: The will of the people?

JM: The will of the people. However, if the Tories come to us with a terrible deal where we lose all of our controls on labour, so there's no minimum wage, there's no support for the Unions, there's all the zero hours contracts are allowed to continue, and there's no control over actually how the workforce is supported whilst it's at work, which is what possibly could happen, because all of those deals came from Europe, not from the UK.

CD: Oh really.

JM: All of those came from Europe.

CD: Okay.

JM: So if all of those deals are lost, and they are not in the statute books when it comes to the vote, then I think the vote should go back to the people and the people should be allowed to

decide, okay this is what you've got on the table, are you happy with it? And if you're happy with it then vote for it, and if you're not happy with it, then vote against it. And that's all that we are asking for, we want to make sure that we have got the fairest possible deal for the electorate when it comes to actually making that final decision.

CD: And on the face of it, that makes sense you know, that we all want to make sure we make the right decision.

JM: You always read your contract before you sign it. And that's basically what it is, you know, we've been offered the job, we've been told what we're going to be doing, we have now got the fine details that we need to be able to look at, once we've had a look at those then you get to decide whether or not you want to sign the paperwork or not sign the paperwork.

CD: Yeah. Okay. Well you know I think that that's a really good idea and it makes sense right because it does make sense as you say, you know, you've done the deal, now make sure that it's right just before you sign it. You know you apply for a credit card, they send you through the terms and conditions right okay fine. So the thing is though, I mean for a lot of people maybe they don't understand which parts they are going to be asked to, say this happens, this new referendum on this decision, what do you think would be or should be asked of the electorate to agree to or disagree with, if you see what I'm saying? Because there's so much. You've got laws, you've got employment law, yeah criminal law, employment law, you've got banking, you've got some economics, there was some, what am I talking about, loads of economics, what would we be voting for do you think? What would be the best thing? How would it be easy to do? Do you see what I mean?

JM: I work with a lot of companies asking them for funding to help me out with charity work, with community work and things like that. And the first question is always from them is what do I get out of it? You know they are not being mean, they're not being selfish and you know they want to invest some money into the local community but they also need to know, okay what's the benefit to my company? And I think we need to do that for the electorate as well, you know there's a lot of unnecessary paperwork which we don't need to see but at the end of the day, there will be a few fine detailed points at the top of the list which we then put to the electorate, you know, employment rights, is the NHS going to survive, are we going to end up nationalising everything or not nationalising everything, and that sort of thing. And those will be the key points that we will then put to the electorate to decide on. The finer detail is always a nightmare. We have got an example of that with Aerospace at the moment where they want to move out of the UK because as the UK leaves Europe then they don't get as good a deal for selling their parts. Not because of any financial deals so much but because of testing. If they are not in the European Union, the test that they apply at the moment don't count. So if they are in the UK and they are testing them to exactly the same standards as Europe they are not applying the same standards or the same quality tests that Europe wants under their guidelines.

CD: Got ya. This is the CE mark or something?

JM: Yes, yeah. So therefore they have to then, so if they want to continue making their product and selling it to Europe, they have to be within the European Union you know. And it's just

those fine details that a lot of companies are now discovering, you know, if I do this, this and this, within Europe, I'm fine. If I'm still in the UK and the UK leaves Europe, I can't sell to those people anymore.

CD: No.

JM: 20% uplift, 25% uplift of my fees.

CD: And that's even without looking at any trade tariffs or anything else that come in.

JM: Yeah before any of that happens.

CD: Yeah okay. Well you see this is why I ask because it's interesting some people will say, but hang on, what are we going to vote for? And that is, I think it's a fair point. But I think that a lot of the electorate as well probably don't give a rat's monkey about all this do they, they just want to be straight out and that's it. They don't care, Europe couldn't care less, see you later, bye, they want a hard Brexit. Now I've actually come across a few people like that who voted to get out of Europe and voted for Brexit because they didn't like David Cameron right, or they didn't like this or the Tory party did this to my pension, or whatever. And then you think, well hang on a second, obviously that wasn't the question in the first place, I think you actually voted in the wrong election but having said that, you voted to do that and that's politics isn't it.

JM: Very much so, that is politics. Local level we get affected by what happens nationally and at national level they get effected by what happens locally as well so if we do badly in Eastbourne as the Lib Dems, then Steven will do badly on a national level. If the Tories do badly, then the opposite happens, Steven does well and the Tory candidate doesn't do quite so well. And it's very much on a personal level and that's what people are much more likely to vote on. Which is why I say it's important for us to be able to give it to them in a very straightforward black and white way, if you vote for Europe, you're going to be 50p a week worse off. If you stay in Europe, you are going to be 25p a week better off for example you know. So very straightforward, clear lines and this is what will happen, rather than all these lies and deceits and things that we have been going through for the last 18 months.

CD: Yeah it has been turbulent hasn't it having to put up with this.

JM: One of the big points that we miss out on in Europe is the fact that we have got an aging population at the moment which we have got to pay for in pensions. There is no pension pot. The pension pot is provided by the younger workers, so me working as a 40-ish year old, I'm paying the pension pot for the 65/70 year olds. None of that money is being saved for me for when I go into my pension. So if those workers aren't there to pay into that pension pot, then there is no pension pot for them, which is one of the reasons why the Government is having to slash everybody's pensions at the moment. To be able to survive we need a net migration into the UK of 400,000 a year to be able to top up that pension pot.

CD: Just crazy even to think. Okay so explain that in really simple detail.

JM: In really simple detail, if we don't have the workforce in place to pay for the pensioners we won't have enough money to be able to pay the pension pot without borrowing. We haven't got the workforce in place, we won't have the workforce in place because we know what ages our people are as they are coming through. In 20/25 years' time we won't have the workforce in place. We need to have net migration so one million people come in, 600 people leave, 400,000 people stay. That 400,000 people are here in the country, they are working, they are paying into their national insurance and their tax, that money then goes into paying the pensions for the people who are alive at that time.

CD: Yeah.

JM: And without that 400,000 people, we have to borrow money.

CD: Okay so that makes sense, so we need 400,000 people. So we need to grow our working population by 400,000 people on top of the natural growth that's happening from people who are just becoming old enough to work.

JM: Yes.

CD: Right so it needs to come on top of that. 400,000 that's a lot isn't it?

JM: An awful lot of money and people.

CD: Yeah right. So and this was another issue wasn't it, obviously immigration. So I mean I've spoken to UKIP MEPs about this and all sorts of stuff and obviously that's quite colourful those conversations, but what it seems to be is that its unchecked immigration and there was always the scaremongering about people coming in from Europe and taking jobs and how the Eastern European states becoming European can just flow over here and take everyone's jobs. Now obviously if we need to have 400,000 people coming in, right for these jobs, we have to have the 400,000 jobs to give to these people though don't we?

JM: Which we should still have. You know the work is out there, we have got unemployment at its lowest levels, we have still got I think 800,000 jobs still waiting to be filled. Some of those are low level work which is exactly what the Europeans come over here and do the work for, you know. Some of it is high level work which is why we are having problems recruiting doctors at the moment, because the immigration laws are being put in place restricted all the doctors from coming over here to work.

CD: Yeah we will come back to that in a sec but yes, exactly. Actually we will do it now, so this is what the government did wasn't it to try and address the immigration concerns, was to look at immigration as a whole because really they kind of glossed over the fact that they couldn't do anything about immigration from Europe because that was part of being part of Europe.

JM: Yep.

CD: And then obviously people didn't like that and that's another reason for Brexit but as a consequence of this, as you say, we are not recruiting the educated doctors or any professionals.

JM: There's engineers, architects, everyone. We just haven't got them in place. Underfunding in FE and HE from Central Government and restrictions on the amount of people that can come into the country. So they capped the professionals coming into the country at say 20,000 people a year so once it hits 20,000, that's it, you can't have anybody else coming across the borders.

CD: No more visas.

JM: No more visas. So then the doctors and the hospitals I think is 5,000 doctors they are short now, because they have just lost all of these people coming in. It's not appeared from nowhere, these 5,000 doctors are spread out all over the country and some of them have retired, some of them are left, some of them have moved abroad because the pay deals are better over in Europe and other countries, you know, so we get this cross migration, both ways across the border. And so Theresa May has had to back down on that one and open up the borders again for any professionals.

CD: She has?

JM: She has done that yes.

CD: Well she should have got it right in the first place and that would have made it a lot easier wouldn't it. So this comes back to something that we kind of discussed a while ago in your planning podcast right where people may not think that if there is a whole bunch of houses being built in Eastbourne, Eastbourne had to actually fight to get that, say Redrow or Persimmon, or whoever it was to choose Eastbourne as somewhere to actually build these houses, because they could go anywhere.

JM: Yes.

CD: Right and so you as head of the planning committee, that's the title, you have to compete with Tunbridge Wells or Brighton or whatever else, and it's much the same for these professionals if you think about it. Germany is also in the same position. France is already in the same, every country will be in the same position of needing doctors, or anybody else that's a skilled professional. And so we are competing with those. And if someone's got to go and learn a foreign language, you know, if they have got to start from next to nothing, they might as well learn German right, if they are going to get the job or French. I mean the likelihood is that they'll know a bit of English so they'll prefer to come here I guess but not if we're not part of Europe because that's part of it again isn't it you know.

JM: No it's all about the cross border pollination shall I say. You know once you've got into Europe then you can get anywhere that you like within the borders.

CD: Then you are talking about inward investment from Americans and stuff like that, as we've mentioned earlier on. But okay so as far as Eastbourne's concerned then, let's get back to that before we end up being Panorama or something. At the end of the day, there's a whole bunch of people here who have voted to get out of Europe for whatever reason and obviously, you know, it's great, and everyone's trying to make the best fist of that basically with the deals, but what would make people happy who did vote for Brexit? Do you think

they all prefer like from your talking to people, do they just want a hard Brexit? They just want to go see you later, bye, and walk away? Do they think that's right? I know you mentioned earlier, not necessarily right, but do you think that they think it's right?

JM: They certainly think that it's the right thing to do is have a hard Brexit, you know we have decided that we are going to leave, let's get out of Brexit. Very complicated when it actually comes down to the nuts and bolts of how it actually happens, but I think once we explain that to people, let them make that decision and then if they turn around to us and say we don't want a vote we are quite happy with whatever happens, then that's what we'll go with as well you know. We've always said that we will always support the town and we have always done that as well, you know, if you are working within a company, and you have got half the team saying we want to do it this way, and the other half of the team saying we want to do it the other way, and you have a vote on it, whoever wins that vote, that's the way that the company goes. And everybody gets behind that vote and works with the company to see the end goal and that's what we are doing within Eastbourne as well. You have told us what you want. We will get behind you. We are going to get behind you and support you. But what we don't want to do is we don't want to end up giving you an awful deal where you end up worse off than where we are at the moment.

CD: Yeah and do you know what, actually I think that's a really good point that you just made because I think that a lot of people are a bit concerned that the whole Brexit wagon if you like, is trying to be derailed, and I think what they think is that some politicians are trying to actually reverse and have a second referendum on whether or not to leave Europe or not. But that's not what you're saying is it?

JM: No, not at all. Everyone's decided that they are going to leave Europe but I think even Labour have even got behind it now. The Lib Dems are the only ones that are saying that they want to stay. But in Eastbourne you've told us you want to leave so we will support you in that. I think that we should be staying in Europe because we are going to end up with a better deal even at this late stage but let's work together, let's find out what we can do and make sure that we get the best possible deal for everybody.

CD: Yeah so it's about getting the best possible exit deal or the divorce bill or whatever it is that people call it rather than thinking about not leaving Europe okay, just make that point again. No one's actually saying that. I know people do talk about that, they wanted to have a second referendum as to whether or not to leave Europe and all that sort of stuff but that really would have gone against the democratic view I think in a lot of occasions.

JM: That moment's passed. We are now in a different place and we need to be moving forward with what we've got at the moment. The hands that we have been dealt at the moment.

CD: Yes, absolutely and do the best job possible. No that's really good. So it's going to be interesting to see how Eastbourne's affected, you know, being close to Europe, we see a lot of tourists coming over from Europe obviously. Right now during the summer there are coach loads of foreign language students and all that sort of thing coming over. That probably won't change to be honest will it, there'll just be a different sort of visa method for them to come in, if at all. But again, we're guessing though?

JM: Putting my anti Europe hat on, you know, Britain is a very strong and powerful country, you know, we've been a big leader within Europe. The reason why they want us to stay is because we've been so powerful and so helpful to them in a number of things that they've achieved and I think even when we leave Europe they would want us to be the best of friends. I get an awful lot of funding from Europe for various projects that I do collective with my FE projects and from talking to the people who have provided this funding, I don't think that's going to dry up any time in the near future. They still say that the funding should still be available to us and I think that's going to happen on a number of levels across Europe. So that we will still be able to have access over there, it might be slightly trickier to get across the border checks, you know, you might have an extra 30 second hold up or something where they actually check your passport instead of just waving you through, but apart from that, the physical stuff that Joe Public sees on the ground, I don't think it's necessarily going to change too much.

CD: **No, no, exactly. So okay. So we are running out of time so we'll need to sort of wrap this up Jim and I think it's a fascinating subject. Obviously everyone does to a certain degree or other, some people will be saying just get on with it, why are you wasting time, other will say, hang on a second, we need to make sure we've got the right decision, which is I think the majority actually think that, and then we've got all sorts of people... but just as my final note on that, funnily enough everybody, again I've spoken to a lot of MEPs over the last year or so, and they say exactly what you've said Jim, and these are also UKIP MEPs who say this, that Europe is sad. Okay the people in power in Europe are actually sad that we're leaving. Now a lot of people won't care about that. They'll just oh okay I don't care whether Europe are sad or not, I want out and do it now, which is fine, but I think they're our neighbours, and so we need to be doing a good job that basically secures our finances, as well as making sure that we leave on proper terms. Like you said earlier on, right at the beginning, that we don't just slam the door and bring up the drawbridge. Is that about right?**

JM: Definitely, very much so.

CD: **Oh Blimey. I summed everything up there. No Jim it's been fantastic and I think it's good to get away for once to actually talk about Eastbourne and talk about Brexit and talk about a national position on that. And to actually let everyone know that they don't have to be concerned if they ever were concerned, that you know, Eastbourne wasn't heading to towards a Brexit deal, and that everyone's working towards getting that done.**

JM: No, we are all behind the people of Eastbourne to make sure that they, like I say, that we get the best possible deal when we leave Europe.

CD: **Yeah exactly, exactly. So if you have any questions for Councillor Jim Murray for future episodes about, or you want to ask anything about Brexit, then do get in touch with us at the station. You can email me at chris@eastbourne.online and we will get something together and have a chat and drag poor old Councillor Murray in again to talk about all this sort of stuff and if you've got any other suggestions for podcasts for Councillor Murray to look at, we've looked at planning, we've looked at all sorts of things but there's many, many things to come in terms of how local councillors help Eastbourne to be able to**

function and also actually talk about the wards as well, which would be quite nice wouldn't it. So get in touch.

JM: Small victory we've had with Milton Grange. We've managed to save Milton Grange yesterday.

CD: Oh see, now there we go, hot of the press, yeah tell us about that.

JM: So Milton Grange and Firwood House. There were the two respite houses that we've got in Eastbourne. So when you go into hospital and you need somewhere to go just to get you ready before you go back into your house, the County Council run by the Tories was threatening to shut both of them down. We've managed to save one of them so Milton Grange now will stay open but unfortunately we have lost Firwood House.

CD: Oh okay right. Well at least that's something because yeah...we were involved with that to a certain degree, you know, when the protests were going on. So it's good to see that that's come out and something's happened with that. Yeah brilliant. So excellent, good news. That's a good way to end it. Councillor Jim Murray, thank you very much for coming in.

JM: Thank you.

CD: Alright bye.

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