

MEMBER ADVOCATES – ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2021-22

Councillor Neil Butters – Member Advocate for Rail Liaison

Withdrawal of Bristol-Waterloo Service – South Western Railway ‘Consultation’

Strongly objected.

Freshford

Worked with PC, GWR et al to create new replica enamel station nameboard – now in position; original for village. Real time information displays installed. Footbridge to be repainted, prior to general unveiling.

Oldfield Park

Submitted by GWR for better disabled access.

Public Transport Consortium

Co-opted member of national executive. Useful – two-way - source of information. Told them Crossrail (Elizabeth Line) should open within next few weeks.

GWR Community Rail Conference

Attended recent event, Reading.

Councillor Jess David – Member Advocate for Biodiversity*

*[*It is anticipated that the title of this role will be amended to Member Advocate for Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery for 2022-23.]*

Member Advocate for Biodiversity

- Took part in monthly meetings with officers and attended meetings with stakeholders.
- Contributed to policy work including the development of the Local Plan Partial Update and the Tree and Woodland Delivery Plan.
- Tabled council motion on pollution in local rivers, committing the council to partnership work to improve river water quality.

Cllr Alan Hale – Member Advocate for Road Safety

It has been a busier year than previously.

I have given advice to ward councillors regarding a perceived dangerous junction near Queen Charlton and also advised councillors for Keynsham East about a complaint regarding the absence of a speed limit on the outer reaches of Wellsway.

The planning application for the digester at Queen Charlton meant that I was able to provide arguments against the application on traffic and road safety grounds in support of the planning officers successful recommendation to refuse.

I was successful, in tandem with other ward councillors, in achieving two safe crossing points on Charlton Road in Keynsham.

I have more recently led the councillors' efforts in Keynsham to draw attention to the issues regarding the newly opened High Street and the casualties that followed.

I have remained available to councillors to give support and advice on road safety matters.

Councillor Yukteshwar Kumar – Member Advocate for BAME issues

The Race Panel was established in October 2020 and several enthusiastic and learned members from cross sections of the society joined the panel. The panel has met almost every month since then without any cost to the council. In 2021-22, the panel invited police officer, and scholars who work on race & gender issues to speak at some of the meetings. The members of the panel are extremely active and share various informative articles and events among the group which is then cascaded further. The panel's remit includes:

- Educational inequalities
- Employment inequalities
- Financial inclusion and poverty
- Hate crime and preventing discrimination
- Health and wellbeing inequality

The Panel will continue to strengthen the voice of people from different race and ethnic backgrounds in shaping and influencing policy development, decisions, and delivery within our unitary authority and beyond.

Councillor Ruth Malloy – Member Advocate for Great Spas of Europe and Twinning

The Great Spa Towns of Europe

After a delay due to the pandemic, the group of eleven spa towns was inscribed on 24th July 2021 as a serial, trans-national World Heritage Site - The Great Spa Towns of Europe - on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The official presentation ceremony took place in Karlovy Vary (Czechia) in late September 2021, when all the spa towns were presented with ceremonial certificates.

The Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan (2016-2022) is updated every six years, and the new management plan will refer to both World Heritage sites: the City of Bath and Bath as one of the eleven Great Spa Towns of Europe. This was a requirement of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

A GSTE Association has been created to manage the GSTE World Heritage site. The eleven spa towns also want to share best practice and develop common strategies, for example in the areas of heritage and conservation.

Another hoped-for benefit to all the spa towns is an increase in visitor numbers, and so we plan to work on shared marketing, as the larger GSTE group but also in smaller sub-groups, as appropriate. Bath and North East Somerset must work closely with Visit West and Visit Bath to ensure we make the most of this new partnership.

www.greatspatownsofeurope.eu

UNESCO's 45th World Heritage Committee, due to take place in Kazan (Russia) in June 2022 has been postponed. Both the City of Bath WHS and the Great Spa Towns of Europe WHS have condemned Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Twinning

Twinning activities have increased significantly since the last Full Council AGM. Online meetings, which proved a lifesaver during the lockdowns, continue and enable even closer contact with our twin towns than we perhaps had in pre-pandemic times. In addition, individual and group in-person visits have now resumed, the next one being to Alkmaar to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the twinning later this month.

Last November Chris Wilford (Director of Education) arranged for me and others to make a presentation at a BET headteachers' meeting about virtual school exchanges, based approximately on the Erasmus+ e-twinning programme. The twinning associations continue to encourage both virtual and physical partnerships between schools, at the same time being aware of the pressures all schools have been under these past two years.

A twinning event was held in April at the BRLSI (courtesy of Bath German Society), at which the twinning association chairs gave presentations about their twin towns and the history, recent activities and future projects of the associations. For example, three twinning associations are planning a shared stall at the Christmas market, which will be a great opportunity to raise awareness about international twinning and friendship!

Also in April, we learned of a new opportunity for the twinning associations: representatives of Bath Spa University and the University of Bath have asked if we can help arrange work placements in our twin towns for their students, who want to take part in the Turing Scheme. We will do our best to assist.

Councillor Sarah Moore – Member Advocate for Accessibility

The past 12 months have been difficult to meet with a lot of residents that have accessibility issues, however, I have been fortunate to talk with various groups that represent these residents and had some very informative discussions.

I have taken part in several meetings with different groups concerning the City Centre security proposals and the active travel proposals, including in person meetings with residents with visual impairments and mobility issues. I arranged for disabled bays to be put on both Twerton High Street and Mount Road to enable easy access to the chemist and shops and discussed and advised on accessibility issues in a number of areas in BANES with the ward Councillors and Cabinet Members. I have also highlighted access issues with the new home for Assured Mobility and am keen to get this resolved.

Other accessibility issues have been highlighted across the authority area and I am looking forward to working with the Cabinet Members and officers to start addressing these as soon as possible.

Councillor Alastair Singleton – Member Advocate for Renewable Energy

We remain steadfast supporters of the Local Electricity Bill, and I have co-ordinated that approach. Continued to liaise and work with our Community Energy organisations, analogous groups and individuals to encourage the development of technically sound and appropriately sited renewable energy projects. Promoted creative thinking and fresh ideas, such as heat capture from disused mineshafts. Worked with colleagues, officers, academics and others to raise the profile of rapid take up of renewable energy as a critical element of the B&NES climate strategy.

Councillor Shaun Stephenson-McGill – Member Advocate for Engagement with students

I held a number of meetings with the Presidents of Bath Spa University Students' Union and the University of Bath Students' Union. This led to the scheduling of a number of meetings between Cabinet Members and these two Students' Unions to strengthen links and to develop work streams to improve communication and engagement between the Students' Unions, their members and the Council. This was less substantive for some due to the nature of their Cabinet portfolio. This work was in addition to the ongoing activities I participated in, together with Cllr Romero, on the Student Community Partnership Board and its sub-committee / groups / Forums on Housing, Personal Safety, River Safety and Green (Group). The SCP includes Bath College and Norland College as well as the two University's and their Students' Unions. I liaise regularly with the Community Coordinator, SCP, and her Team, who are based at the University of Bath site at Dartmouth Avenue, Oldfield Park.

Councillor Chris Watt - Member Advocate for Looked After Children

As the country emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, the past 12 months have continued to pose challenges for the council. Budgets are tight and economic activity has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels.

Despite this, the council's Children's Services team have continued to work hard to support the district's looked after children.

All children in care have an allocated social worker and this past year has again seen the rates of looked after children in B&NES remain relatively stable.

I welcome recent efforts to ensure the turnover of social workers is kept to a minimum. In the past, children have been supported by a number of different social workers and it is recognised that fewer changes in personnel will result in better outcomes for the children.

Encouragingly, B&NES has recently employed two Young Ambassadors in order to boost the participation of young people in the delivery of services. These young people are aged between 19 and 25 and have themselves experienced being in care.

Last year the council introduced a Long Term Matching Panel for children who are unable to return home. This will help match children with the people most capable of helping them, and should have a hugely positive impact on young peoples' futures.

We know how important it is, for their wellbeing and future development, to ensure children in need of care are kept within the local authority boundary and relatively close to family and friends. I welcome the council's aspiration to improve the numbers of children kept within B&NES and I hope the recently-launch fostering recruitment campaign is a success.

I also welcome the introduction of the Lifelong Links Programme, a new approach that aims to build lasting support networks for children and young people in care. This is achieved by rebuilding relationships and reconnecting children in care with loved ones.

All this points to the excellent work being done in B&NES for looked after children and I would like to thank officers and front line staff for their efforts and continued dedication to such vital work.

Councillor Ryan Wills – Member Advocate for Rural Communities

I have been looking at rural communities and the issues they face. I have attended events held by the Rural Services Network including their annual conference as well as seminars on specific policy areas such as housing, transport and issues for young people. I have also taken away these issues and discussed with Cabinet members.