

Thank you for this opportunity to make a short statement on the B&NES Music service.

I would like to ask for consideration of funding to help the service build back after COVID, which saw numbers fall dramatically.

Already this year the service, which employs almost 50 part time music tutors, has supported music in 92% of state schools. Its services, funded by an Arts Council England grant, must ensure that every child, from 5 to 18, has an opportunity to engage with music. It delivers lessons, ensembles, live music, professional development for staff and more. Ensembles range from samba to saxophones, wind bands, choirs and a philharmonic orchestra.

You will have noted on the agenda a decision on the Future Governance of the Music Service which responds to a new vision for delivery of music education from the Department of Education. The intention is for the B&NES service to merge, in the near future, with those of North Somerset and South Gloucestershire local authorities to form a tri-hub alliance to better attract grant funding whilst still retaining its own identity.

The reason for this request now is that the service has been through a challenging time, trying to build back after COVID whilst being in a transitional period in terms of delivery model and organisational change.

During COVID, numbers of instrumental learners plummeted and the numbers participating in ensembles dropped by half to just 100. Though there has been a gradual improvement in learners since then, the number taking part in groups, has been slower to recover.

Young people coming together at music centres helps build back social engagement and mental health well-being post COVID.

The music service very much wants to increase engagement across B&NES and build back participation. Additional funding would enable the following:

Firstly, responding to student feedback through the Bath Festivals – Routes Through Music project, the service would diversify to include music production, purchasing equipment and specialist instruction to

take around schools and youth centres, particularly meeting the needs of rurally isolated students.

Secondly, to attract young people who are not currently accessing music activities, they will run a programme of music-making workshops across B&NES leading to a festival day at a music centre, introducing a new cohort to the bands and orchestras.

Thirdly, they aim to add new ensembles to include absolute beginners and a wider range of genres.

Finally, engagement with young people to identify barriers to participation will be prioritised.

These additional measures starting in April will enable the service to at last kick-start its post pandemic recovery and create a sustainable local action plan to build back participation.

Our administration is committed to supporting the arts and what better way to do this than by supporting all our young people to discover and enjoy a wide range of musical activities.