

Alexander Robinson

Students as Residents of the City of Bath - Developing the civic relationship between B&NES, Students and Education Providers

Dear Council,

I am speaking today as the outgoing President of the Students' Union at the University of Bath. I come in support of the tens of thousands of Student Residents that live within Bath and North East Somerset and make up roughly one third of the population of the City of Bath.

Students contribute significantly to the local economy in Bath, through spending in local businesses, renting, working or in the cultural capital that makes Bath a vibrant place to live.

The Student Community Partnership (SCP) exists as bridge between the Educational Institutions, their Students' Unions, and the Local Authority in Bath. They campaign for good neighbourly relations, safety, sustainability and other aspects of community awareness through campaigns, events, and volunteering. I pay thanks to a number of councillors who engage with their partnership and support its work.

I do, however, believe that there is more that our Universities and the Council should be doing together to improve the experience that all residents have in Bath by listening to the needs of the student population.

One example is how The Universities in Nottingham and their city council have come together to develop a Student Living Strategy, the first priority being to improve 'quality, safety, affordability and location of accommodation and promoting growth in affordable options across the city'.

All residents here in Bath and North East Somerset would benefit greatly from this type of collaboration. At the moment, both Universities find themselves renting buildings from private companies through nominations agreements in order to house students in the city – often at high rates which are passed on to students, for example with the new Centurion house, the cricket ground development, single rooms are priced at £220 per week, (£11k a year). In the private sector over the road, rooms start at £330 a week, (£17k a year). In addition, modelling of the bed-stock capacity across HMOs taking into account both all student residents and the wider population of the city, could help us to better understand how the city should respond to calls for more and better affordable housing for all.

A collaborative approach between universities and the local authority could help to challenge the status quo. Would the council be willing to look at Nottingham's work and consider forming a group to work on something similar?

More generally, what will this session of council do differently to previous councils to engage with its student residents and ensure that meaningful conversations and consultations occur for the benefit of all residents of Bath and North East Somerset?

Thank you