

## B&NES Council Meeting KeynshamNow Speech

I would like to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of KeynshamNow by telling councillors a little about the work of Keynsham's Youth Town Council.

The first meeting was held on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Around 15 young people met with four volunteer adult mentors, including myself. We elected a chair, secretary and other officers from the young people. Our discussions focused on what we were going to do. It was agreed the group would make all the decisions, including its name. We decided to meet once a month with a formal agenda and minutes. Our aim was to make sure that the voice of young people would be heard, especially by the decision makers and opinion formers.

The young people learned the skills needed so that issues close to their hearts were known. They learned how to work within the community, how to campaign on improving young people's mental health services, reducing plastic waste, poverty and knife crime, campaign for votes at 16, and how to create opportunities. To learn how this country is governed both locally and nationally. This essential information is not taught properly in schools. They learned how to speak in public, take part in community events, raise money for chosen local charities and meet with civic leaders.

The highlights include successfully campaigning for floodlights at the Keynsham Skateboard Park, costing £6000.00, raising over £3000 for local charities, discussing with school leaders on how to improve their students' mental health. Speaking in public about positive solutions to antisocial behaviour by young people. Q&A sessions with Dan Norris, WECA mayor, MPs Wera Hobhouse and Jacob Rees Mogg who also met us in London, last November, when we toured the Palace of Westminster. We have met the Mayor of Bath in his parlour, and the leader of B&NES Council. In November Clare Moody, our new Police and Crime Commissioner will be attending our meeting.

Most important of all, we now have young people who are local councillors in Keynsham and others who are active in the community because of KeynshamNow. This includes the young man sitting next to me who was a member of KeynshamNow for around five years. This is vital, difficult work. If our politics is to remain healthy, every community needs a youth council.