

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to address council in supporting the need for a community hall in Keynsham.

Over the last few years the increase in new homes has seen the population of Keynsham grow from 15,500 in 2011 to 20,500 in 2024, and it's still rising.

People moving into these homes have been welcomed and this has enabled the town to become much more diverse and has significantly reduced the age profile.

Unfortunately, we have seen very little improvement in infrastructure and community facilities and it's hard to see where any CIL or section 106 money has been spent. A comment often heard in and around the town from countless residents and visitors.

The provision of a community hall in Keynsham would help to address this shortfall. It would bring the community together and give residents a facility they could take ownership of, and take some pride in.

In Keynsham we are blessed with having a diverse number of quality performing Arts companies that are inclusive and open to all age groups. At present, there are limited opportunities for these groups to perform in the town. A fit for purpose facility in Keynsham could address this shortfall and bring live theatre back into the town. The benefits that such a facility will bring to residents is obvious to see. More opportunities for participation in the arts and culture for young and old alike, bringing about a major improvement to the quality of life and wellbeing of its residents. Such a facility would also encourage more visitors into the town to spend their money in the local shops and cafes and enjoy the other facilities Keynsham has to offer.

Any Community facility needs to maximise its use and a Community Hall should be no different. To this end, the new Community hall could be multi - purpose and could support the work of the numerous charities that exist to make life better for local residents.

Over the years I have seen the role of the Charity sector change, charities complemented the services provided by Local Authorities and other agencies. Because of year on year funding cuts to these bodies, the charity sector has had to pick up the slack and evolve from complementing those services to providing them.

We are very fortunate in Keynsham in having a great 3rd sector that provides a varied range of support services to help local residents. Bringing these charities together under one roof would bring numerous advantages. It would lead to better communication between charities and enable a more strategic approach to meeting the changing and challenging needs of the town. This could lead to better joint working, joint funding bids and less duplication.

The debate around a community hall in Keynsham is not new and pre-dates this council.

I would argue that the need is greater now than its ever been. If the political will is there, and with the support of the community, this vision could become a reality.