

MEMBER ADVOCATES – ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2020-21

Councillor Sue Craig – Member Advocate for Great Spas of Europe

This project remains on hold while we wait for a decision from UNESCO regarding the 44th World Heritage Committee 2020 which was postponed due to the pandemic.

We are currently expecting the meeting to take place in June/July 2021 and the Chinese Government feel that they can offer a safe venue for it to take place.

Until this is confirmed, the timetable for potential inscription as a World Heritage Site remains unclear.

In the meantime, the project team is using the time to look at options for creating a legal entity to provide a mechanism of addressing tax issues, brand registration, etc – all made slightly more complex by the UK now being the only “3rd country” amongst the other EU member states.

We are also taking the opportunity to upgrade the website and put some plans in place for celebrations and marketing later in the year, should our bid be successful.

<https://greatspasofeurope.org/>

Councillor Jess David – Member Advocate for Biodiversity

- Attended various events, including West of England Nature Partnership Conference, speaking for B&NES on local government’s role in accelerating nature recovery.
- Monthly meetings with officers on green infrastructure and ecological emergency.
- Responded to Local Plan partial update consultation on revising policies on ecology and new policy on biodiversity net gain.

Councillor Alan Hale – Member Advocate for Road Safety

The advocacy has not been overly busy though I have been consulted by two or three non-Keynsham South residents about matters that had clearly come to me for no other obvious reason than they were aware of my role. Basic advice was given but they were also referred to their ward councillor as they were enquiring about circumstances that a ward councillor is best suited to continue with and should be aware of.

I have been contacted by an action group seeking to have Charlton Road (rural section – Saltford ward) improved from a safety point of view. I was able to offer advice but also to lower their expectations to a reasonable level and rationalise some of the collision data that they had obtained from the council.

I have given advice to Cllr Alastair Singleton regarding potential measures regarding the improvement of the safety of the junction of Charlton Road at the junction with Redlynch Lane, on the edge of Keynsham but within Saltford Ward.

In the same way I stand available to give similar help and advice to other councillors and to undertake site visits. For those who do not know my pedigree, for 20 of my 31 years as a police officer I was an advanced driver and motorcyclist on Road Motor Patrol plus time on the police driving school as an advanced class 1 instructor. After retirement from the police service my last employment was as Senior Road Safety Officer for South Gloucestershire Council for twelve years, during which time I was chair of the West of England Road Safety Partnership for a number of years. I continue to be an Academy Member of Road Safety GB and I am also a driving examiner for IAM Road Smart (previously the Institute of Advanced Motorists).

Councillor Yuktेशwar Kumar – Member Advocate for BAME issues

The Race Panel was established in October last year and several enthusiastic and learned members from cross sections of the society have joined the panel. The panel has met almost every month since then. The panel is also planning to invite some scholars who work on race & gender issues to speak at appropriate fora. 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 strengthen the voice of people from different race and ethnic backgrounds in shaping and influencing policy development, decisions, and delivery within our county and beyond.

Councillor Ruth Malloy – Member Advocate for Twinning

This year has been challenging for twinning activities. The pandemic has prevented many events, visits and exchanges from taking place. However, many of the twinning associations have held online (Zoom) meetings and invited their counterparts in the twin cities to join them, which has been a great way to keep in touch and strengthen our friendships.

Councillor Paul Myers – Member Advocate for Community & Public Buildings

Our community and public buildings are vital assets for local people across Bath & North East Somerset, providing a place to come together and have individual or shared experiences, and as a base for projects of all kinds such as the famous 'Room of Requirement' in Harry Potter.

Ordinarily, being Advocate for Community and Public Buildings involves a combination of giving advice, routing enquiries, getting expert support and inputting on all aspects of Council policy on the subject.

However, the pandemic over the last 12 months has seen many of these buildings play a key role while at the same time face an unprecedented threat to their viability. Most of these organisations

survive on extremely small and tight budgets, are reliant on volunteers and, therefore, unless they have been hired for pandemic operations, they have been forced to close and face a catastrophic loss of income. I have encouraged many to apply for the grants available and signposted committees on where to find COVID-19 guidance.

Looking to the future, we need to support our Community and Public Buildings sector and the teams that run them in order to help them survive and continue to provide valuable spaces at the heart of our community.

Councillor Alastair Singleton – Member Advocate for Renewable Energy

Proposed motion which facilitated B&NES to support the Local Electricity Bill; maintain link to national campaign. Liaise with community energy groups; contribute to communications approach to residents and Parish Councils. Meet and explore ideas with energy providers, academics, entrepreneurs and activists. Work with/support Cabinet Lead and Sustainability Team.

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

I've been working with the Leader of the Council, and Officers to review and refresh the Student Community Partnership and the periodic formal Agreement with the aim to increase the engagement by Cabinet Members and senior officers with the Partnership and thus students and their elected leaders in the city.

Councillor Chris Watt - Member Advocate for Looked After Children

These past 12 months have posed enormous challenges for the Council. The authority has been on the frontline leading the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the community. Nowhere has this work been more vital than in the realms of looked after children.

The pandemic has, for sure, had some detrimental effects on the wellbeing of children in B&NES. Being isolated from friends and having to learn from home have been significant challenges for young people and their parents.

For the authority's looked after children, these challenges have been no less acute. It can often be the case that school provides significant stability to a looked after child. The challenges of accessing both foster and biological families in different homes under lock down and stay at home orders has added complexity.

Throughout the pandemic, the Council has worked hard to ensure that our looked after children have suffered the minimum disruption to their stability. This has not been straight forward, and I would like to place on record mine and other elected members appreciation for the lengths our support teams have gone to during the pandemic to maintain contact with and stability for our looked after children.

This year, the Council has closely reviewed the needs of children and young people in care, and I, as Member Advocate, have every confidence that the service will continue to offer the best it possibly can for some of our community's most vulnerable young people.

Councillor Ryan Wills – Member Advocate for Rural Communities

I have been looking at rural communities largely focusing on connectivity issues. I have attended events held by the Rural Services Network including their annual conference as well as seminars on specific topics. I have taken the ideas from these as well as research of other authorities' work on rural issues and discussed with the Leader of Council and other Cabinet members as to take matters forward. I plan to push for more action on these matters in the year ahead.