

Annual Report – Special Responsibilities

(Under the South Gloucestershire Scheme of Members' Allowances, certain councillors who perform significant responsibilities over and above those of other councillors are entitled to receive additional allowances to recognise those extra responsibilities. The Scheme requires councillors in receipt of such allowances to report on their actions. This report is published on the Council's website).

Report for period: 2016-17

Name: Councillor Claire Young

Position held: Liberal Democrat Lead Member for Environment and Community Services

A general outline of the special responsibilities you perform

Having previously been our Lead Member for Communities, when the committees merged for the 2016/17 year I became our Lead Member for Environment and Community Services (ECS). This widened the areas I covered to include strategic planning and transport, alongside our spokesperson on those issues. I continued to attend the draft agenda meetings with the other parties' Lead Members, to ask questions and try to improve the reports coming forward.

As Lead Member for my group for Environment and Community Services I:

- Led the discussion on and development of our group's policies on ECS issues (in conjunction with our non-Special-Responsibility-Allowance-holding spokesperson on the planning and transport issues).
- Liaised with officers where we wanted to put forward alternatives to the ruling party's proposals.
- Worked with colleagues on our group's budget proposals, which involved not freezing the green waste charge and using some of the money raised by that to reinstate Thornbury One Stop Shop, improve the 82 bus service and cover the start-up costs for the community libraries.
- Led the group at committee meetings and took the lead at full council meetings when relevant issues were being discussed.
- Kept members of my group informed on ECS issues and liaised with officers on concerns they raised.
- Acted as media spokesperson for the group on ECS issues.
- Acted as a point of contact for residents who wished to get my group's perspective on ECS issues.
- Represented the group on the Safer Stronger Communities Partnership.
- Attended the Town and Parish Council Forum meetings.
- Represented the council at those events and celebrations related to the ECS committee, such as the Community Awards Ceremony, where all three parties were represented.
- Attended training and briefing sessions to improve my knowledge of ECS topics.

Key Milestones/Achievements during the reporting Period

- Took the lead working with colleagues on preparing our group's response to the Joint Spatial Strategy and Joint Transport Study consultation, which have very significant implications for our communities.
- Led my group's campaigning on transport issues, such as the 82 bus service.
- Worked constructively to come up with alternative proposals to those put forward by the ruling group.
- Where our alternatives were not accepted, made sure we held the ruling group to account publicly for their decisions. For example leading the challenge at the budget meeting to their proposal to spend money freezing the green waste charge.
- Was the voice of residents and partners like the Town and Parish Councils, raising issues with officers and the ruling group.

What "added value" to the local community have you been able to achieve through your special responsibilities?

- Acting as a contact for residents with concerns within the remit of the ECS committee.
- Listening to residents' views and making sure they are taken into account in the decision making process.
- Scrutinising and challenging the decisions of the ruling group, to try to improve policies that affect the local community
- Raising awareness of consultations and service changes within the local community, through social media, the traditional media, emails and newsletters.

How have your special responsibilities enabled the Council to be more effective?

- By being a voice for local people's concerns and trying to ensure they were taken into account when decisions were taken, I have helped the council be more responsive to residents.
- Through scrutinising and challenging the ruling group's proposals and suggesting alternatives, I have tried to improve the decisions made.
- By monitoring the performance of services in the Committee's remit and asking challenging questions where appropriate, I have helped the Council improve its services.

In what ways has the exercise of your special responsibilities supported the core objectives of the Council?

By challenging the ruling group I have tried to ensure that all the core values, including equality of opportunity for all, protecting the environment and engaging with our partners, have been taken into account when decisions were made. By contributing to agenda briefings and questioning at committee meetings, I have tried to make sure that all the issues were understood and residents' concerns fully considered, with the ultimate aim of improving decision making.