

Update on Citizens Somerset for AM November 2021

When Citizens Somerset launched in March 2019, we also welcomed Hero Austin, as our part time organiser. Despite the challenges of Covid during these past two years, she, steered us through the choppy waters, building good relationships with local power holders and organisations, and developing the leadership team. We were very sad, therefore, when she announced, in June, that she would be leaving the following month: to concentrate on her job in London, with some, much deserved, time off.

It took a little time to accommodate to **our new Organiser, - Carina Crawford-Khan**, and she to us, but I certainly think, now, that we have the measure of each other and also a good understanding of the tasks ahead of us.

We had a very helpful **Away Day in September at the Meeting House**, when Dixie Darch (a local Lib Dem District Counsellor, and member of the Maverick group in Citizen Somerset), gave us a run down of the local political situation looking towards the new Unitary Authority for Somerset: still full of uncertainties, not least when the election will be!!) and we began to think about how we can take steps now, up until the election, to celebrate the relationships we have already with the local council (particularly around our offer of housing for the homelessness population), and the asks to embed our campaign aims in the new authority.

You may remember that, just before the initial lock down, we had an oven-ready action around Fair Fares for young people, linking the work with students at local schools, the YMCA, with the campaign group (drawn from our other member organisations). We have, since, been unable to run an action, in person, which has meant that members have not had the opportunity to engage as we would have hoped, nor seen how such an event gains us publicity and support.

However, this is due to change **this week**, when, as part of the initial campaign for the living wage for Care Workers, (a national campaign that we support), we are due to hold **an event at the Meeting House, as part of National Real Living Wage Week**.

We will be celebrating those organisations, (care and other), that have accredited with the Living Wage Foundation. We hope to hear from a worker about the difference this makes to their life, and students, from Kings College (one of our member organisations, who engage in a weekly Citizens programme) will be posting letters to businesses they have researched, to encourage them to accredit to the LWF.

Finally we hope to walk to the District Council Offices to engage with the leader to affirm her commitment to SWAT becoming a RLW employer (and subcontractor,) and to embed this as an aim for the new authority.

An invitation to Friends has been sent with **a request to let us know if you plan to attend** since space will be limited.

The next event we encourage Friends to attend, will be the **AGM on Monday 6th December 7-9 at Temple Methodist church**.

We will be looking back over the challenging year it has been, celebrating the learning and achievements we have made, in our campaigns, strengthening our member organisations, and engaging with new prospective members (our drive is particularly to bring in state schools, and we will be employing a part time organiser to help us with this specific aim: we have made a good start).

We will also be looking forward, and outlining the steps we are planning to take towards a pre-election assembly (May 22 or May 23).

This AGM will offer an opportunity to learn more about community organising, to meet others over tea and cake, and build our shared commitment to a more kindly and just future, with equality at its heart.

Again, do let us know if you are willing and able to attend this important outreach and engaging opportunity.

Fran Hicks

Co-chair Citizens Somerset