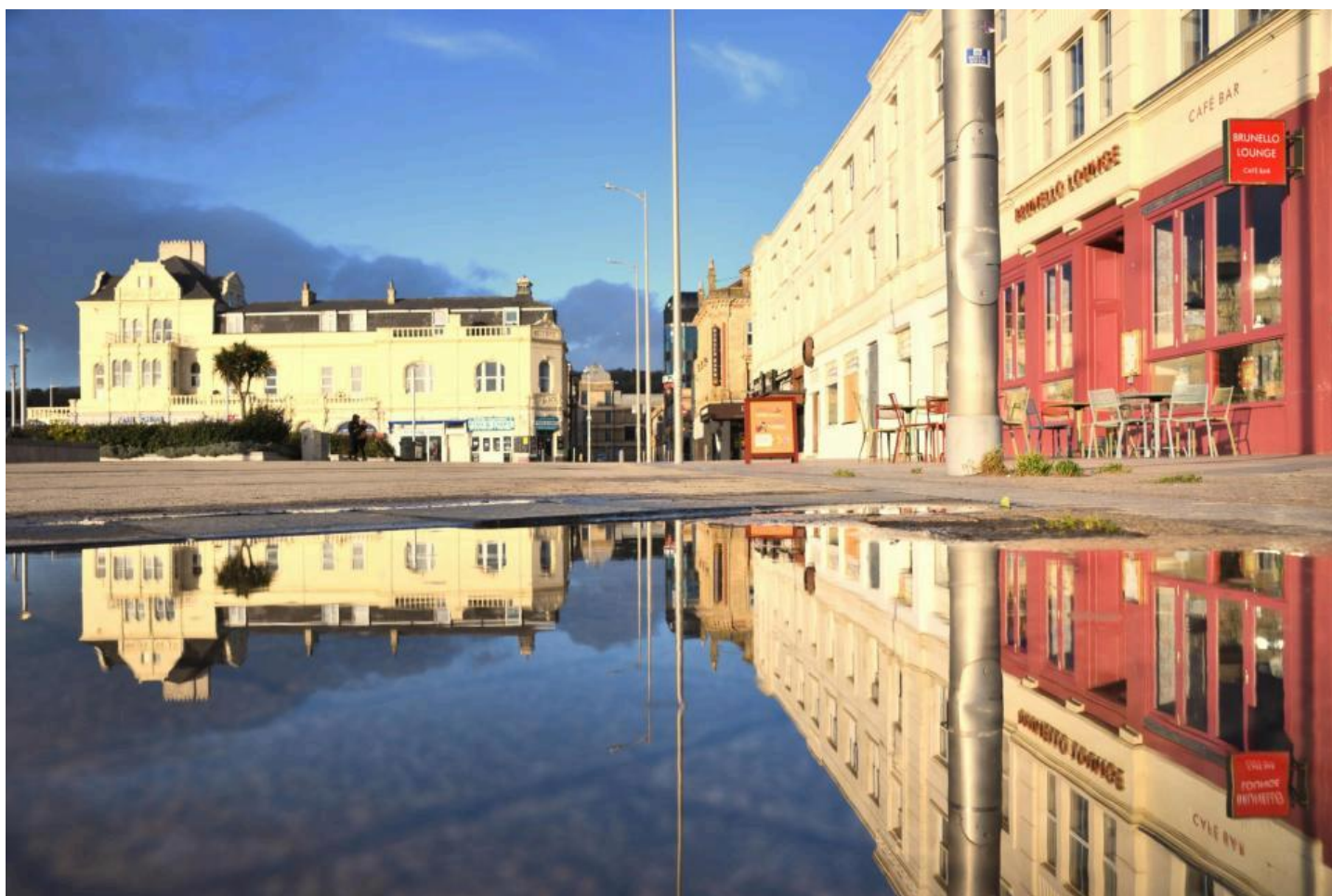




# Letter: Weston should be a place of support, not division

2ND APRIL   WESTON-SUPER-MARE TOWN COUNCIL   LOCAL GOVERNMENT   WESTON-SUPER-MARE



Weston-super-Mare reflection (Image: Roy Curtis)

By Caroline Reynolds

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Dear local residents,



Like you, I love Weston super Mare. I love the beach and the parks, I love the variety of restaurants, theatres and bars and I love the diversity of people.

I have been asked why I have “secretly” tried to “push through” the proposal for Weston super Mare to work towards becoming a Council of Sanctuary, that is not the case.

Last year, in my role as a voluntary, elected councillor, I was asked by the council to be a member of the Amenities and Culture Committee, to Chair the Planning and Environment Committee and to be a Champion for Anti-racism.



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Weston Town Council already had an anti-racism policy but work on it had stalled. My job as a champion was to enliven it. Having gained the School of Sanctuary Award in about 2010 during my career in teaching and having worked on the City of Sanctuary for Bristol I thought this initiative would be a good focus to bring together the charities, voluntary groups and council departments who work in this area and to show that we are 'better together'. Over eighty councils have gained or are working on this award; Weston is at least as good as them, why shouldn't we be able to celebrate too.

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Whilst I am concerned and vocal about global issues, I believe that at the age of seventy-two, I am too old to enter national politics but I can volunteer as a councillor and work on improving local issues within its remit. These include allotments, bus shelters, parks, play areas and green spaces, youth services and tourism related aspects, notice boards and bus shelters. I want all of these to be safe and welcoming places and for Weston super Mare to be a place of sanctuary for all.

The award would celebrate and show appreciation for the amazing work of people and organisations in our town; events like Peace Feasts, Mela, Diwali and Eid celebrations and Ukrainian festivals which bring so many of us together. It would also encourage the Town Council to continue to show their support for these alongside so many other events, such as Eat festivals, Yoga in the Park, charity and fun races and Carnival. It will result in us developing a strategy which we intend to be fair to all and to offer sanctuary to all.

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I had hoped that being a Council of Sanctuary would be a focus for community cohesion and a route for supporting unity not division. I still believe we have more in common than our differences and that the majority of local residents want to offer safety and a welcoming attitude. I understand that people do not want to be overwhelmed by new arrivals and are concerned about spreading services thinly. When resources are few, we need to support the most vulnerable in society, whether they have been



placed here, moved in recently or have lived here all their lives. This is not about taking away from people, it is about showing kindness and compassion and helping those in need.

I have had a very unpleasant and uncomfortable week but I have also received a lot of love and support. I do not want to be silenced by fear, anger or division, I want people to recognise all that's good about our town.

Councillor Caroline Reynolds  
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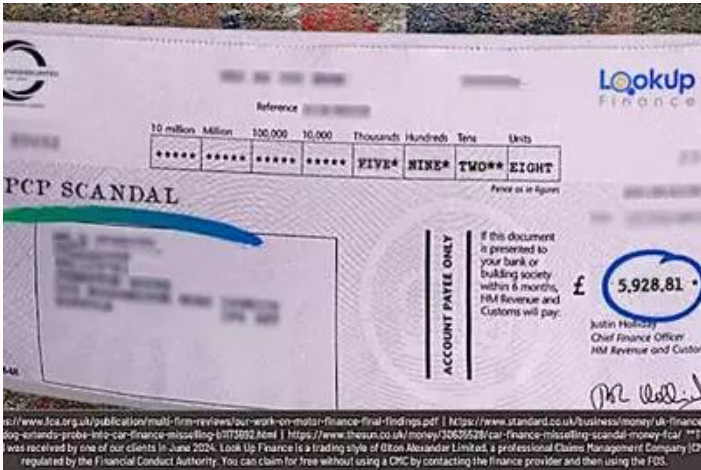
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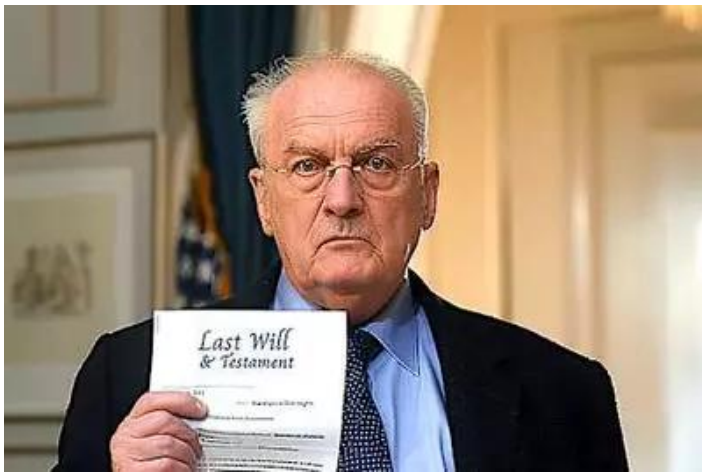
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