

Agenda Item No: 7 **Report No:** 109/08
Report Title: Chair of Council's Business Report
Report To: Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 26 June 2008
Ward(s) Affected: All
Report By: Chairman's Secretary
Contact Officer(s): Ann Spike 01273 484112

Purpose of Report:

To consider (a) the outgoing Chair's civic programme and (b) the civic programme for the forthcoming year and budget provision.

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 To note the report
-

Reasons for Recommendations

Information

- 1 The role of the Chair is as detailed in the Constitution
 - To focus his/her activities on the communities of the District (including communities of interest, as well as geographical ones) and, by focusing on the Council's priorities, strengthen links between those communities and the Council.
 - To act as an enabler and ambassador by arranging meetings between the Council and other parties for the benefit of the District.
 - To celebrate those people or groups in the District who do extraordinary things to help others in the community, and to recognise those whose everyday lives are a challenge but who succeed in spite of their difficulties.
 - To celebrate successes of partners involved in major projects with the Council, particularly projects steered by the voluntary sector.
 - To encourage activities that 'recognise' and support staff, (e.g. the annual garden party).
- 2 During the year 2007 / 08, 77 engagements were carried out by the Chair and Vice Chair, excluding Council meetings. It is stressed to each Chair at the start of their year of office, that it is not the volume of engagements that a Chair manages to attend or host but the 'quality' of the engagements in terms of the local community that is important. Each Chair has different personal circumstances to contend with e.g. they are retired, in full time / part time

employment, have a young family or perhaps are caring for a relative and we don't want the Chair to feel they have to try to 'beat' the number of engagements from the previous year. The role of Chair is not a 'one size fits all' and it is up to each Chair to tailor their year to fit their own particular circumstances.

With regard to 'quality' of engagements a 'quality' engagement is one which is in support of the Council's priorities and which takes place within the District. If the Chair is invited to attend an event hosted by a Mayor / Chairman of a neighbouring authority, unless the event is something that will enhance / support this Council's priorities and those of its residents then the Chair is advised not to accept in an official capacity. He/she can of course attend if he/she wishes but attendance is then financed by the Chair him/herself.

The focus of Councillor Chartier's year was Equality and Diversity to promote equality for everyone and to celebrate the diverse nature of our community. In support of this he hosted events in the district.

This focus reflects the Council's key aims for 2007/08 which were :

- Protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment
 - Supporting and promoting a diverse and prosperous local economy
 - Supporting the housing, health and social needs of everyone in our communities
- 3 During the year 2007/2008 the Chair, supported by the Vice Chair, has met with, supported and offered hospitality to a diverse range of people.
- 3.1. The first event of Councillor Chartier's year of office was to present Certificates and Awards to Volunteers of Southdown Housing Association at the Association's Headquarters in Lewes.
- 3.2. In January this year Holocaust Memorial Day was marked by the planting of a tree in Ringmer with the help of scouts, councillors and their families and members of the public. It was a very moving occasion with several present participating by reading prayers and extracts of poems / writings.
- 3.3. In February this year a second 'Seedy Saturday' event took place at Southover Grange in Lewes and due to public demand will hopefully become an annual event. A co-operative partnership involving allotment holders, Common Cause (a group organizing the Farmers' Markets and promoting / educating young people in allotments/composting), Transition Town Lewes, RSPB, volunteers and the Council, this followed the very successful inaugural event in 2007. The theme for 2008 was food; purchasing good locally produced food, encouraging people to grow their own, cook and enjoy eating it. The event was once again an outstanding success with over 900 people attending to swap seed, and so much more – children's activities included story telling and craft workshops making their own bird feeders from recycled and natural materials, lectures on permaculture, seed sowing, and workshops on sharpening tools were well supported and the opportunity to taste and purchase local food proved a great success. A spin off event has already been arranged by Lewes Town Council for September this year and by Seaford Town Council in October.

- 3.4. During the year the Chair hosted numerous events for staff, including a lunch specifically to thank members of the Equalities Working Group, staff support officers and the staff forum for disabled staff.
- 3.5. More recently a reception was held for Volunteer groups, organizations and individuals who support the Council in providing its services to local people. The idea was to thank everyone for their contribution to community life, however, many of those present also made useful local contacts for themselves with members from other groups.
- 3.6. The Chair also attended events as diverse as art exhibitions, theatrical productions and military tattoos, to Royal visits, AGM's and a visit to Lewes Prison.
- 3.7. 20 % of the Chair's engagements took place outside the boundaries of the District, all of which were in support of Council's initiatives and the Chair's role.
- 3.8. Wherever possible local caterers and/or suppliers of organic produce are used for each event.

4 **Year 2008/2009**

Councillor Butler's focus for her year of office is Citizenship – involving individuals, groups and communities enabling them to celebrate shared values and encouraging them to work together to enhance the community in which they live. Carla is an ardent campaigner for her local community and is keen to encourage others to become more active.

It is not possible at this time to set out a detailed programme for the whole year, this still has to be determined. However, initial plans are in hand

- to mark the retirement of the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex in July
- to shadow several officers in their jobs.
- Lewes House will be open on 13 September as part of the national Civic Trust Heritage Days event.
- the Chair will also host the annual summer party for staff and councillors and their partners and present long service awards to staff attaining 25 years service with this Council.
- to promote an activity in connection with Local Democracy
- to mark holocaust memorial day

5 **Financial Appraisal.**

The total budget available to Councillor Chartier as Chair of the Council in the municipal year 2007/2008 was £14709. Total expenditure incurred to date is £13969 and the balance of £740 will be put towards any Council expenditure on the 2009 Tom Paine Project. The total budget available to Councillor Butler in the municipal year 2008/2009 will be £15,520.

6 Environmental Implications.

There are no Environmental Implications.

7 Risk Management Implications.

None

8 Background Papers/Appendices

A list of the Chair's engagements for 2007/2008 is appended for information.