

**Agenda Item No:** 11 **Report No:** 106/12  
**Report Title:** Chair of Council's Business Report  
**Report To:** Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 28 June 2012  
**Ward(s) Affected:** All  
**Report By:** Corporate Head – Legal and Democratic Services  
**Contact Officer(s)-**  
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**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.

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**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 2011/12, 88 engagements were carried out by the Chair and Vice-Chair, excluding Council meetings. It is important to note that it is not the volume of engagements that a Chair manages to attend or host during their year of office but the 'quality' of the engagements in terms of the local community that is important. In addition, the Chair also visited Parish and Town Councils to reinforce the message 'One District, One Council'. Six visits took place via either an informal meeting or attendance during a Parish Council meeting (note that these have not been included in the Engagements list).

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 or 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.

It is also worth noting that this is the first year that the Civic Office has operated on a part-time rather than full-time basis with the Civic Officer being engaged for 22 hours a week, instead of the previous 37 hours.

The year's focus for Councillor Russell was to support local voluntary organisations. This was achieved through the range of engagements/events set out in the Appendix. During the year 2011/12 the Chair, supported by the Vice-Chair, met with, supported and offered hospitality to a diverse range of people:

- 2.1 One of the first events hosted by the Chair was the staff's annual Garden Party. This was held at Lewes House and attended by 162 members of staff. The last event of the year that was organised and hosted by the Chair was a 'Thank You to Voluntary Organisations' held at the Linklater Pavilion in Lewes.
- 2.2 In January this year, Holocaust Memorial Day was marked by the planting of a tree in Peacehaven Memorial Garden attended by the young Mayor of Peacehaven and the Mayor of Peacehaven. Rabbi Charles Wallach read a poem 'The Damaged Diamond'. This was followed by a visit to Peacehaven Community School to attend activities organised by the young Mayor.
- 2.3 The Chair hosted and attended events as diverse as AGMs, award ceremonies, commemorative and remembrance ceremonies, opening of new buildings, meeting with ethnic community groups, special needs schools/schools and youth clubs. The Chair hosted the launch of the Heritage Open Days event and a leaflet was produced to highlight properties open to the public. 16 schools from across the District signed up to take part in Her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Exhibition at the invitation of the Chair, presenting 1532 portraits prepared during the Chair's term of Office. The Chair and Mayor of Lewes worked in partnership to support preparations for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Strawberry Tea, inviting youth organisations and elderly residents to take part. A visit to Northease Manor School presenting Olympic medals for the Schools Competition winners/runners up also took place.

2.4 10% of the Chair's engagements took place outside the boundaries of the District, all of which were in support of Council's initiatives and included the Academic Award Ceremonies for University of Brighton students.

2.5 Wherever possible local caterers and/or suppliers of organic produce and fair trade are used for each event.

### **3 Year 2012/13**

Councillor Tony Nicholson would like the focus of his year to centre on supporting communities across the District.

It is not possible at this time to set out a detailed programme for the whole year; this still has to be determined. The Chair will host events for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Torch Relay, two events of national importance. The following events will take place/or have taken place:

- Co-hosting in partnership with Lewes Town Council The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Exhibition and Strawberry Tea at Lewes Town Hall.
- Flag raising at Newhaven Fort and Lewes House to mark British Armed Forces Day on 25 June 2012.
- Olympic Torch Relay event at Lewes House on 17 July 2012.
- A thank you to volunteers at Lewes Town Hall on 17 July 2012.
- Staff end of summer party in September 2012.
- The annual bonfire night party at Lewes House on 5 November 2012.
- A ceremony to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2013.

### **4 Financial Appraisal**

The total budget available to Councillor Russell as Chair of the Council in the municipal year 2011/12 was £16,300. Total expenditure incurred to date is £11,177.69. In a year of financial constraints efforts were made to reduce expenditure, which was achieved.

The total budget currently available to Councillor Nicholson in the municipal year 2012/13 will be £16,300, which covers the period 9 May 2012 to 8 May 2013. The figure includes the Chair's monthly allowance.

### **5 Sustainability Implications**

There are no sustainability implications arising from this Report.

### **6 Risk Management Implications**

There are no risk management implications arising from this Report.

### **7 Equality Screening**

I have completed the initial Equality Analysis screening exercise and have identified no negative impacts arising from this Report. Therefore, a full Equality Analysis is not required.

**8 Background Papers**

None

**9 Appendices**

A list of the Chair's engagements for 2011/12 is appended for information.