

Agenda Item No: 8 **Report No:** 70/15

Report Title: Chair of the Council's Business Report

Report To: Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 18 June 2015

Report By: Catherine Knight, Assistant Director of Corporate Services

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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 of the Council is as detailed in the Constitution:
 - To Chair Council Meetings.
 - 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.
- 2 During the year 2014/15, 108 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.

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.

- 2.1 One of the first events arranged by the Civic Office was a commemoration service to mark the 70th Anniversary of D-Day which was held at Newhaven Fort. The last event of the year that was organised and hosted by the Chair was a tea and cake thank-you to Council staff held at Southover House.
- 2.2 In January this year, Holocaust Memorial Day was marked by an event held at the White Hart Hotel, Lewes called 'Keep the Memory Alive' which aimed to celebrate the human spirit with an evening of poetry, pictures, songs, film and personal testimonials. The event was organised by the Holocaust Memorial Day Group in association with the Lewes Group in Support of Refugees and Asylum Seekers and Lewes Amnesty International Group. It was supported by Lewes District Council and Lewes Town Council. Councillor Dr. Micheal Turner, Mayor of Lewes, opened the event and the Chair, Councillor Tony Nicholson, provided the closing remarks. It was the first event of its kind and was very well attended. It is hoped that a similar memorial event will take place in January 2016 at the All Saints Centre, Lewes.
- 2.3 The Chair hosted and attended events as diverse as AGMs, award ceremonies, commemorative and remembrance ceremonies, unveiling of monuments, exhibitions and opening ceremonies. The Chair also visited several local businesses as part of his Business Theme, including Breaky Bottom Vineyard and Network Seafoods. Several events formed part of the First World War Centenary programme, including a service to commemorate WW1 at the War Memorial Meridian Park in Peacehaven, the 'Lights Out' national moment of reflection at Southover House, and a service at St Michaels Church in Newhaven organised by the Royal British Legion. The Chair had the honour of attending several Royal visits to the District, including a visit by HRH The Duke of Gloucester at Peacehaven Centenary Park on 15 April 2015.
- 2.4 One of the Chair's last events of the year was 'Unsung Heroes' held at Newhaven Fort on 11 April. Thirty-six volunteers from across the District were put forward by Councillors and Organisations to be recognised as Unsung Heroes. Those recognised included lifeguards, carers and those who run groups for schools, the elderly and people with disabilities. Each hero was presented with a certificate by Mrs Amanda Hamblin, Deputy Lieutenant, and received lunch, a tour of the Fort and a goody bag. A talented young singer called Tamsin Hodges performed a range of songs for the guests.

- 2.5 13% 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 Act of Remembrance at India Gate, Royal Pavilion, Brighton, to mark the courage and sacrifice of Indian soldiers in WW1 on 19 October 2014.
- 2.6 Wherever possible local caterers and/or suppliers of organic produce and fair trade were used for each event.

3 Year 2015/16

Councillor Ruth O'Keeffe would like the focus of her year to be charities and voluntary bodies within the District. She has proposed to visit one charity or voluntary body in each Ward during her year of office.

It is not possible at this time to set out a detailed programme for the whole year; this has still to be determined. The Chair will co-host events in Lewes and Seaford to mark the anniversary of the awarding of a Victoria Cross as part of the WWI Centenary Commemorations as detailed below. The following events will take place/or have taken place:

- An exhibition to mark Srebrenica Memorial Day, 10-12 July 2015
- A ceremony to unveil a WW1 VC paving stone for Sidney Woodroffe at Lewes Library on 30 July 2015.
- A ceremony to unveil a WW1 VC paving stone for Cuthbert Bromley at Seaford War Memorial on 16 August 2015.
- The launch of the Heritage Open Days weekend on 3 September 2015.
- The annual bonfire night party at Lewes House on 5 November 2015.
- An event to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2016.

4 Financial Appraisal

The total budget available to Councillor Nicholson as Chair of the Council in the municipal year 2014/15 was £16,300. Total expenditure incurred to date is £6,227.81. In this time of financial constraints efforts were made to reduce expenditure, which was achieved.

The Chair's budget for 2015/16 has been reduced due to annual underspends, following discussions with the Finance department. The total budget currently available to Councillor O'Keeffe in the municipal year 2015/16 will be £12,000, which covers the period May 2015 to May 2016. The figure includes the Chair's monthly allowance.

5 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from this Report.

6 Sustainability Implications

There are no sustainability implications arising from this Report.

7 Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications arising from this Report.

8 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.

9 Background Papers

None

10 Appendix

A list of the Chair's engagements for 2014/15 is appended for information.