

Agenda Item No: 9 **Report No:** 92/16
Report Title: Chair of the Council's Business Report
Report To: Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 1 July 2016
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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 2015/16, 146 engagements were carried out by the Chair and Vice-Chair, excluding Council meetings. It is worth noting 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.

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 they wish but attendance is then financed by the Chair themselves.

- 2.1 One of the first events attended by the Chair was the 65th Annual Chattri Memorial Service for all Indian soldiers who died while in one of the many Indian hospitals in Brighton & Hove during World War 1.
- 2.2 In January this year, Holocaust Memorial Day was marked by an event held at Lewes Town Hall called 'Don't Stand By'. The previous theme for HMD 2015 was reflective, looking back over the 70 years since the liberation of Auschwitz, and the 20 years since the Genocide in Srebrenica. The theme this year was forward-looking with a clear call to action in the present: focusing on the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, and considering individual responsibilities not to be bystanders.
- 2.3 The HMD 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. Cllr Susan Murray, Mayor of Lewes, provided the opening welcome address, and Cllr Ruth O'Keeffe provided the closing remarks. The event featured local peoples' stories, music, film and readings. Lewes District Council's Communications team designed the promotional material for the event, and also for an associated exhibition entitled 'The Refugee's Gift', which was well received.
- 2.4 This was the second Holocaust Memorial event organised by the Lewes Holocaust Memorial Day Group, and the numbers of attendees, and comments received, were encouraging. An event called 'How Can Life Go On?' is being planned for January 2017 and will again be supported by Lewes District Council and Lewes Town Council.
- 2.5 The Chair also hosted a memorial exhibition at Lewes House on 11 and 12 July entitled 'Remembering Srebrenica', which followed the Leader of the Council's attendance at a delegation to Bosnia in March 2015, 'Lessons from Srebrenica'. The exhibition included images, survivor stories and film provided by the charitable initiative 'Remembering Srebrenica'. It also featured artworks by Robert McNeil, lead forensic technician for the United Nations in Bosnia in the aftermath of the Balkan wars. Attendees included the Mayors of Lewes and Seaford, Ian McClelland of Lewes Amnesty International, Annie Ralph of the Holocaust Memorial Day Group along with colleagues, and Razia Aziz, Interfaith Minister.
- 2.6 Several events formed part of the First World War Centenary programme, including two Victoria Cross commemoration stone ceremonies, one in Lewes

on 30 July for Sidney Woodroffe VC and one in Seaford on 16 August for Cuthbert Bromley VC. Central government designed and created commemorative paving stones to be laid in the birth places of receivers of the Victoria Cross, and two were awarded within the Lewes District. The stones were laid close to the centenary anniversary that the Victoria Cross was awarded. The events were jointly organised by Lewes District Council, East Sussex County Council and Lewes Town Council/Seaford Town Council.

- 2.7 One of the Chair's last events of the year was 'Unsung Heroes' held at Newhaven Fort on 16 April. As part of her theme for the year, 'Charities and Voluntary Organisations of the Lewes District', the Chair raised £4,335 for the 52 charities nominated to her through the organisation 'When Skies Were Always Blue', of which she is Chair. With an end of term contribution from the Chair's budget of £865, each of the 52 charities was presented with a cheque for £100 by Deputy Lieutenant Mrs Kathy Gore OBE along with a certificate. Those charities/voluntary organisations recognised included Blind Veterans UK, Chestnut Tree House, Homelink, Patina, Seaford Youth Sports, and RNLI Newhaven Lifeboat.
- 2.8 The Chair had the honour of being presented to HRH The Duke of Gloucester along with other dignitaries at the opening of Saxon House, Newhaven on 20 April. His Royal Highness, accompanied by the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex Peter Field, received a tour of the building and formally opened the building.
- 2.9 The Chair supported an afternoon tea event at Lewes Town Hall on 21 April to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's 90th Birthday. Residents of Lewes, Newhaven, Seaford, Peacehaven and Telscombe attended the event and the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex gave an address. In the evening, the Chair attended a beacon lighting event at Newhaven Fort as part of the Queen's Birthday Beacons initiative.
- 2.10 In 2015-16, the Chair hosted and attended events as diverse as AGMs, award ceremonies, charity fundraising events, commemorative and remembrance ceremonies, unveiling of plaques, exhibitions and opening ceremonies.
- 2.11 14% 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 Brighton University Summer Award Ceremonies at Brighton Dome and the SPARK awards in Eastbourne.
- 2.12 Wherever possible local caterers and/or suppliers of organic produce and fair trade were used for each event.

3 Year 2016/17

Councillor Nigel Enever would like the focus of his year to be arts & heritage within the District. He would take a particular interest in Artwave and heritage open days. Additionally, he has said he would like to hear from any theatrical or musical group that wished him to be involved.

It is not possible at this time to set out a detailed programme for the whole year; this has still to be determined. The following events will take place/or have taken place:

- The launch of the Heritage Open Days weekend on 1 September 2016.
- An Artwave Awards event in September 2016.
- The annual bonfire night party at Lewes House on 5 November 2016.
- An event to mark Holocaust Memorial Day around 27 January 2017.

4 Financial Appraisal

The total budget available to Councillor O’Keeffe as Chair of the Council in the municipal year 2015/16 was £10,389. Total expenditure incurred to date is £9,783.23. In this time of financial constraints efforts were made to reduce expenditure, which was achieved. The Chair’s budget for 2016/17 has been reduced due to annual underspends, following discussions with the Finance department. The total budget currently available to Councillor Enever in the municipal year 2016/17 will be £10,000, which covers the period May 2016 to May 2017.

5 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from this Report.

6 Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications arising from this Report.

7 Equality Screening

This is a routine, procedural Report with no potential for negative impacts. Therefore, an Equality Analysis is not required.

8 Background Papers

None

9 Appendix

A list of the Chair’s engagements for 2015/16 is appended for information.