

Report to: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12 September 2019

Title: Chair of Lewes District Council's Civic Programme

Report of: Catherine Knight, Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Ward(s): All

Purpose of report: To consider (a) the Chair's 2018/19 civic programme and (b) the civic programme for the forthcoming year and budget provision.

Officer recommendation(s): 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 Chair's engagements 2018/19

- 2.1 During the year 2018/19, 58 engagements were carried out by the Chair (Councillor Stephen Gauntlett) and Vice-Chair (Councillor Johnny Denis), 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 One of the first events of 2018/19 attended by the Chair was a Royal Visit by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal. Her Royal Highness visited Plumpton College for the Hope In The Valley Group 50th Anniversary on Wednesday 9 May 2018, and the Chair joined the Civic line-up to be presented to her.
- 2.4 The Chair's theme of office for 2018/19 continued to be 'to encourage and affirm wildlife conservation throughout the District, particularly with young people'. Councillor Gauntlett attended a variety of engagements in order to develop this theme, such as a 'Bees Needs Week' event, attendance at the Colour in Nature Walk: See, Find and Create, and the installation of toad ladders at Lewes Railway Land.
- 2.5 At the end of the civic term 2018/19, Councillor Gauntlett donated £1,000 from his remaining budget to Greenhavens Network. Greenhavens Network was set up to support community groups who are volunteering to protect green spaces and bring them to life. They currently represent over 92 community groups, stretching from Telscombe to Seaford. Councillor Gauntlett plans to develop his theme further throughout 2019/20.
- 2.6 In January 2019, Holocaust Memorial Day was marked in Lewes by events held at the Depot Cinema and Lewes Library, following the theme for the year, 'Torn From Home'. The events were organised by the Lewes Holocaust Memorial Day Group, and supported by Lewes District Council, Lewes Town Council, and the Depot Cinema.
- 2.7 The Mayor of Lewes for 2018/19, Councillor Janet Baah, hosted a launch event at Lewes Town Hall on Friday 25 January, and this was followed by a film event entitled 'Persecution, Survival and Celebration' at the Depot Cinema on Saturday 26 January, at which the Chair provided the closing remarks. The day commenced with a workshop called 'Stories Real and Imaginary' – an across-the-generations writing and story-telling workshop focusing on the 2019 theme. On Sunday 28 January, the film 'Schindler's List', was shown, followed by the event 'Music and Poetry: Torn From Home' which featured Local musicians,

singers and poets who gathered to reflect upon the 2019 theme from a variety of different perspectives. The events were successful and very well-attended, particularly the Saturday film event which was sold out.

- 2.8 It is expected that the 2020 events, following the theme, 'Standing Together' will feature a concert at St John Sub Castro, Lewes on Saturday 25 January, and a film, music and poetry day at the Depot Cinema on Sunday 26 January.
- 2.9 On 25 April, the Chair helped facilitate the 'Girls For Change – Rights, Dignity, Hope' debate event to mark 2018's milestones in the UK's democratic history. The event was hosted by the Mayor of Lewes, Councillor Janet Baah, and was held at Lewes Town Hall. The aim of the day was to encourage girls aged 9 to 17 from a range of schools in Lewes to discuss what changes they would like to see happen before 2028, and for special guests to set out how they could help achieve these goals.
- 2.10 Lewes Heritage Open Days (12-15 September 2019) is once again being supported by Lewes District Council. The Chair hosted the launch event at Lewes House on 29 August 2019 and provided the welcome remarks.
- 2.11 In 2018/19, the Chair attended events as diverse as award ceremonies, community picnics, exhibitions, theatre productions, AGMs, remembrance events, and concerts.
- 2.12 19% of the Chair's engagements took place outside the boundaries of the District, all of which were in support of the Council's initiatives, and included the High Sheriff of East Sussex's Summer Reception in Battle, the South East Reserve Forces & Cadets' Association (SERFCA) Armed Forces Briefing at Crawley Army Reserve Centre, the 77th Anniversary of the Dieppe Raid Commemorations in Dieppe, and the re-opening of the Congress Theatre in Eastbourne.

3 Year 2019/20

- 3.1 Councillor Gauntlett's theme of office for 2019/20 continues to be 'to encourage and affirm wildlife conservation throughout the District, particularly with young people.'
- 3.2 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 77th Anniversary of the Dieppe Raid Commemorations, 18-19 August 2019.
 - The annual bonfire night celebrations at Lewes House, 5 November 2019.
 - Events to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 25 and 26 January 2020 following the theme 'Standing Together'.
 - A 'Community Champions' event in April 2020.

4 Financial Appraisal

- 4.1 The total budget available to Councillor Gauntlett as Chair of the Council in the municipal year 2018/19 was £10,000. Total expenditure incurred was £9,107.55. As Councillor Gauntlett was re-elected as Chair in May 2019, the remaining budget can be utilised in the 2019/20 term of office, and any remaining can be donated to the Chair's chosen charity/organisation at the end of this term. The budget allocation for the Chair's 2019/20 term is £10,000.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

7 Equality analysis

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

8 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Chair's engagements 3 May 2018 – 18 May 2019