

**Report to:** Policy and Performance Advisory Committee

**Date:** 3 November 2020

**Title:** Chair of Lewes District Council's Civic Programme

**Report of:** Simon Russell, Committee and Civic Services Manager

**Ward(s):** All

**Purpose of report:** To consider (a) the Chair's 2019/20 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 2019/20**

- 2.1 During the year 2019/20, 51 engagements were carried out by the Chair (Councillor Stephen Gauntlett) and Vice-Chair (Councillor Adrian Ross), 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 2019/20 attended by the Chair was a meeting with Tor Lawrence, Chief Executive of Sussex Wildlife Trust to discuss the Chair's theme of office and to look at extending a version of Greenhavens to inland areas of District
- 2.4 The Chair's theme of office for 2019/20 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 the Friends of Brickfield Children Nature Hunt and picnic, the Friends of Castle Hill Nature Reserve Open Day and "opening" of pond, and a talk by Professor Dave Goulson at Southover House on ecological corridors and bees.
- 2.5 In January 2020, Holocaust Memorial Day was marked in Lewes by events held at the Depot Cinema and Trinity St John Sub Castro, following the theme for the year, 'Standing Together'. The events were organised by the Lewes Holocaust Memorial Day Group, and supported by Lewes District Council, Lewes Town Council, and the Depot Cinema. The leaflets and posters for the events were once again produced by the Council's Printing Services team
- 2.6 The Mayor of Lewes for 2019/20, Councillor John Lamb, hosted a launch event for Holocaust Memorial at Lewes Town Hall on Friday 24 January, and this was followed by an event entitled 'Coming Together Through Music' at Trinity St John Sub Castro on Saturday 25 January, at which the Chair provided the closing remarks
- 2.7 On Sunday 28 January, the film 'Life Is Beautiful', was shown at Depot Cinema, followed by the event, 'Music and Poetry: Standing Together' which featured local musicians, and poets who gathered to reflect upon the 2020 theme from a variety of different perspectives. The events were successful and very well-attended
- 2.8 Planning for the 2021 Holocaust Memorial events, following the theme, 'Be The Light In The Darkness' is currently underway, however due to the difficulties

surrounding Covid-19, events may be on a smaller scale in January. Lewes District Council will provide the usual support, including design and printing of leaflets and posters, and attendance by the Chair at events where appropriate.

- 2.9 Lewes Heritage Open Days (12-15 September 2019) was once again supported by Lewes District Council. A launch event hosted by the Chair was held at Lewes House on Thursday 29 August, at which the Chair provided welcome remarks
- 2.10 In 2019/20, the Chair attended events as diverse as award ceremonies, community picnics and nature hunts, exhibitions, theatre productions, AGMs, remembrance events, and concerts
- 2.11 27% of the Chair's engagements took place outside the boundaries of the District, all of which were in support of the Council's initiatives. These included the Sussex Armed Forces Briefing at Crawley Army Reserve Centre, the 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Dieppe Raid Commemorations in Dieppe, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenants of Sussex Presentation of awards ceremony at Christ's Hospital School, Horsham and the 3VA Annual General Meeting 'Sustainability for the years ahead' at the Welcome Building, Eastbourne.

### **3 Year 2020/21**

- 3.1 Councillor Adrian Ross's theme of office for 2020/21 is "A Green Recovery, Environmental Action and a Fair Society".
- 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.
- 3.3 Councillor Ross has written to a wide range of charities and organisations within the District to inform them about his theme, and to ask if they would benefit from his assistance in promoting their work and increasing awareness about any relevant projects or initiatives. Planning is currently underway for a programme of visits/meetings with the organisations who have requested his help
- 3.4 Before his term comes to an end, Councillor Ross also hopes to recognise the 'Community Champions' in the District who have gone over and above to help others during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is likely to take the form of a cross-departmental initiative, involving the HR team and the Business Planning & Performance team, however details are yet to be confirmed

### **4 Covid-19**

- 4.1 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many events and engagements that the Chair would usually attend have been cancelled or postponed. The 78<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Dieppe Raid Commemorations did go ahead in Dieppe on 18-19 August, however unfortunately the Chair and other UK dignitaries were unable to attend
- 4.2 Events at Lewes House usually hosted by the Chair in the Autumn, such as the Bonfire Night event for staff and dignitaries, and the Santa's Grotto event for Lewes Late Night Shopping have been cancelled this year. However Councillor

Ross continues to attend socially-distanced, Covid-safe meetings and events where possible, including many online remote meetings

## **5 Financial Appraisal**

- 5.1 The total budget available to Councillor Gauntlett as Chair of the Council in the municipal year 2019/20 was £10,000. Total expenditure incurred was £8,169.32.
- 5.2 At the end of the civic term 2019/20, during the Coronavirus pandemic, Councillor Gauntlett donated £1,050 from his remaining budget to seven food banks in the District who were going over and above to assist residents.

## **6 Legal Implications**

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

## **7 Risk Management Implications**

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

## **8 Equality analysis**

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

## **9 Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Chair's engagements 20 May 2019 – 20 July 2020