

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 29 August 2023

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Work of Council Champions 2022/23

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise Council of the work of the Council Champions during the previous 12 months.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the work of the Council Champions in 2022/23; and
- 2.2 To consider whether there are any additional areas that would benefit from the appointment of a designated Champion.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 28 June 2022, the Council appointed a number of Elected Members to act as Champions for specific sections of the community or ranges of activities. Those Champions were as follows:

- Enterprise – Councillor Bennett
- Young People – Councillor Ritchie
- Older People – Councillor McFarlane
- Armed Forces and Veterans – Cllr McMillan

In addition, at its meeting on 23 August 2022, the Council appointed Councillor McGinn as Champion for the Voluntary Sector.

- 3.2 The purpose of the Champions is to act as a positive focus for the local community at Elected Member level in respect of the relevant section of

the community or range of activities so as to ensure that full consideration is given to the impact of Council activities and decisions upon that section of community or range of activities. The role profile for Champions, agreed by Council, required an annual report be prepared on the work undertaken for consideration by Council.

- 3.3 The work undertaken by the Champions is set out Appendix 1 to this report. In addition to consider the work undertaken by the existing Champions, Council is asked to consider whether there are any additional groups of the community or areas of activity that would benefit from the appointment of a designated Champion.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial - none
6.2 Personnel - none
6.3 Other - none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Work undertaken by Champions 2022/23

AUTHOR'S NAME	Morag Ferguson
DESIGNATION	Head of Corporate Support
CONTACT INFO	mferguson@eastlothian.gov.uk
DATE	9 June 2023

WORK UNDERTAKEN BY COUNCIL CHAMPIONS 2022/23

Councillor Bennett – Champion for Enterprise

My first year as Champion has seen me in a role of “apprentice” and “inductee”. I have met and shadowed officers and fellow Councillors, learning about the work supporting businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic and helping them with post-COVID recovery.

I have attended Connected Economy Group (CEG) meetings, and listened to the thoughts, opinions and ideas of partners and key stakeholders: Visit Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Mid and East Lothian Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

I have learned of the hard work our Economic Development team carry out in their support of businesses in key sectors allowing them to set up and grow. I shall participate in the development of our Economic Strategy, to build on the work since the first Strategy was published in 2013.

I have seen the work of our business advisors and Business Gateway staff, with their “clinics” around the county being welcomed by all who attend them for advice and support.

East Lothian Investments and East Lothian Land continue to engage with new and growing companies with loans and acquisition of land to promote enterprise and innovation. Tourism, golf events, and Food & Drink are key sectors in the enterprise strategy. Our Estates and Procurement teams together with Climate Change officers and others help promote all that East Lothian Council can offer by way of contracts, building and land opportunities.

Developments at QMU, Blindwells and Cockenzie will further encourage enterprise and innovation to help make East Lothian prosper. I very much look forward to growing into my role and continuing to support to business and enterprise within East Lothian, adding value and wellbeing for our county and communities.

Councillor Ritchie – Champion for Young People

A lot of my work this year has been learning what the Council does to support and engage with young people, establishing relationships with our youth workers, and working out how we can do more going forward.

I have sought to champion the voice of young people in every Council meeting, asking relevant questions and trying to ensure young people and their needs are part of debates on a range of issues.

Particular examples of this have included drawing attention to the youth perspective on divestment and seconding the motion put to Council asking for action on this; participating in the debate on banning single use vapes to highlight the impact of these on young people; and asking questions as to how we have engaged our young people in consultation and budget processes.

I have attended meetings with our Specialist Youth Workers and Community Development Officers to hear about the valuable and important work they are doing and have begun to look at how we can better support them.

I have also met with our MSYPs to hear about local issues that matter to young people and have started to look at how we can have more of a youth voice in our local decision-making process through good work already happening on our youth forums.

I was delighted to attend many concerts across the county showcasing the talent of our young people including the Instrumental Music Service's concert in support of MacMillan Cancer Support.

I have supported colleagues in efforts to bring local job and training opportunities for our young people, particularly the work of Cllr Colin Yorkston to bring apprenticeships to the Wallyford and Blindwells developments.

I have also visited organisations in our communities doing work with our young people, like Heavy Sound and the Pennypit Trust's holiday lunch clubs.

I look forward to building on this work in the coming year, working with our staff to support all young people and finding more ways to meaningfully engage the young people of East Lothian in our decision making.

Councillor McFarlane – Champion for Older People

I have worked to make sure that the Council invest in care in the community to help keep older people in their own home, if this is their preference.

I attended the AGM of North Berwick Day Centre on 26 September where the Directors and Trustees were appointed.

I ensured that the residents of North Berwick Day Centre were provided with copies of a questionnaire so their views could be gathered on the Edington Hospital closure – and could be relayed to Paul McLennan MSP at a subsequent meeting.

I have attended a meeting of day centres and discussed concerns, including the cost of living, outreach, pub visits, stroke groups. Three new Directors were appointed.

I attended two tea dances held at North Berwick Rugby Club for older people with dementia organised by Aging Well East Lothian.

I have publicised Aging Well East Lothian activities on my Councillor website, e.g. walking hockey, walking football.

I attended the Scone Café at Abbey Church, North Berwick held every week for dementia sufferers.

I attended Older People's Champion Gatherings on 8 February and 10 March 2023 and, on 16 March 2023, I attended the Age Friendly Communities Event at the Scottish Parliament hosted by Christine Grahame MSP.

Councillor McMillan – Champion for Armed Forces and Veterans

I was honoured to accept the appointment of Veterans and Reserves Champion. I had worked closely with Councillor Goodfellow in the previous administration and saw the commitment he made and the work he did throughout the county working closely with veterans.

Since May 2022 I have continued to attend Veterans Breakfast in Prestonpans to liaise with the organising committee and offer engagement and support to individuals on a variety of Housing, employment, personal and family issues. A new Musselburgh Veterans Club has recently opened.

I attended a number of external meetings with Veteran's Housing Scotland, CWGC at cemeteries in East Lothian for Graves Week and in Edinburgh Castle for the launch of CWGC Scottish Charity.

I visited the Lady Haig Poppy Factory in Edinburgh in November where I met staff and purchased wreaths and poppy mementoes to take to Champigny Sur Marne. I was proud to lay a wreath at the memorial in the town, the site of the Battle of the Marne in 1914 and 1918 where my grandfather (2/8 Royal Scots had served). I met French, German and Italian Mayors and presented poppy badges and pencils to them and explained the symbolism to French school pupils.

In my role as Champion I sit on the East Lothian Armed Forces Covenant Group. Chaired by the Head of Community & Partnerships, this group has a wide membership of 3rd sector organisations, the Lothian & Borders Yeomanry, Veterans Scotland, Poppy Scotland and the Health & Social Care Partnership. The group has recently revised its Action Plan so that it is reflective of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty and they have recently reconvened an Armed Forces Employee Network.

My meetings and encounters have enabled me to see the constructive support veterans and veterans organisations give each other. Those who have served in our forces continue to serve in our communities, in sports clubs, foodbanks and lend their skills to society in so many ways through their employment in public and private sector and through volunteering.

I was particularly honoured to be invited to attend a ceremony in Glasgow to mark the award of new colours to 602 Reserve Squadron RAF. The squadron has long

links to East Lothian, claiming the first enemy aircraft to be shot down in WW2 over the Lammermuirs.

We also noted with pride and sadness the death of Mrs Margaret Runcie who had served with the Wrens in WW2. Margaret was a regular and lively member of the WRNS Association and well known in our county.

I continue to meet with Cabinet Secretary and other Veterans Champions to maintain and build links. Regular meetings are held with stakeholders to work towards the Gold Standard of the Veterans Charter, with all recognition to Sharon Saunders and Stephanie Kerr.

The Council marked Armed Forces Day Monday 19 June.

Councillor McGinn – Champion for the Voluntary Sector

The opportunity to champion and support the voluntary sector across East Lothian is something I was honoured to accept. It seems to have been a bit of a slow burner with the pressures of other new roles impacting greatly on my time; it is, however, a role I am determined to engage in to the best of my ability for the remainder of my period in this position.

As Elected Representatives, we are eternally grateful for the roles played by members of the community who volunteer in great numbers across East Lothian. They make up and support many organisations such as Community Councils, Parent and Carer Councils, Area Partnerships, Day Centres and our Food Networks, to name but a few.

As we emerged from the spectre of the global pandemic I was able to play a key role in supporting volunteers who helped to keep our communities supported and fed. My work with Team Elphy is one such role I will never forget and I would pay tribute to all of the resilience groups that sprung up throughout East Lothian in our time of need.

I have supported the work of Roots and Fruits, East Lothian as they continue to make fresh fruit and vegetable available to those in poverty across the county and was able to support the provision of their small community garden space which will help people come together and reduce isolation.

I was delighted to be invited along to a number of children's galas across my ward and very proud to be asked to deliver the community address at Whitecraig Children's Gala. Thankfully we have seen almost all of our galas return this summer, supported by volunteers across our towns and villages - a superb effort by everyone involved.

I have engaged with Volunteer Centre East Lothian, a key partner in providing support and building empowered communities throughout the county. Engagement with VCEL will be a growing part of my role in the years ahead. A few months ago I attended the Inspiring Volunteer Awards organised by VCEL;

this was simply a wonderful celebration of the passion commitment and joy volunteers bring to every corner of East Lothian and to share this evening with them was simply wonderful

Undoubtedly a highlight from the past year for me was attending a presentation ceremony where Katy Pollock and her team at Home Start received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, a fitting tribute and recognition for all the support given to young families in East Lothian by their volunteers over the past 20 years and more.

I realise it is not possible to name check every volunteer, individual or group across the county; however, I am sure we are all indebted to the service they give and would wish to say a heartfelt thanks to each and every one. My aspiration is to continue to engage across all areas of East Lothian and to promote the fantastic work they do.

As someone who has volunteered in my own community for over 20 years I believe passionately that it is one of the great acts you can do for others. I would finish with a quote. I cannot claim it as my own but I fervently believe it encompasses the feelings that volunteering brings.

"Be kind and remember, integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching".