

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 27 August 2024

BY: Executive Director for Council Resources

SUBJECT: Work of Council Champions 2023/24

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 Council Champions in 2022/23;
- 2.2 To consider whether there are any additional areas that would benefit from the appointment of a designated Champion.
- 2.3 To agree that future reports on the work of Council Champions will be submitted annually to the Members' Library.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting on 28 June 2022 and 23 August 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

Older People – Councillor McFarlane

Voluntary Sector – Councillor McGinn

Armed Forces and Veterans – Cllr McMillan

Young People – Councillor Ritchie

- 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 2023/24

AUTHOR'S NAME	Carlo Grilli
DESIGNATION	Service manager, Governance
CONTACT INFO	Ext 7770
DATE	7 October 2024

Appendix 1

WORK UNDERTAKEN BY COUNCIL CHAMPIONS 2023/24

Councillor Bennett – Champion for Enterprise

It has been a privilege to serve another year as the Council's Champion for Enterprise.

Throughout this last year, I have supported the Council's new Economy Strategy, which was endorsed by Council after an extensive consultation period with key partners and stakeholders, within and outwith East Lothian, including the Connected Economy Group, Scottish Enterprise and VisitScotland.

I want to acknowledge the efforts of and express my thanks for our Economic Development and Tourism Team for their continued hard work, such as their collaboration with East Lothian Food and Drink BID and for organising the East Lothian Business week, when Council services made themselves available for work and collaboration with local businesses on issues that matter to them, assisting in promoting understanding of the Council's role and contributions and enabling success.

I was pleased to see East Lothian Investments continue to offer its unique lending support and to offer a prize for 'Young Entrepreneur' which they will announce soon.

East Lothian Land continues to work with business and Estates colleagues to seek opportunities for inward investment following the success of the Brewery Park, Haddington model.

Major developments at QMU, such as the Food and Drink Innovation Hub, ongoing preparatory work at Cockenzie, and proposals at Blindwells as well as various projects throughout the county will be a base for entrepreneurialism and innovation in East Lothian.

I have attended the COSLA Economy and Environment Group and have worked alongside constituents who sought to set up and grow their businesses within East Lothian.

I look forward to continuing to grow in my role and work throughout the next year to encourage enterprise in the county.

Councillor McFarlane – Champion for Older People

Over the last year I have attended Tea Dances at North Berwick Rugby Club run by Aging Well and by volunteers who provide respite for carers and give stimulation and pleasure to dementia sufferers and people with brain injuries. The music and movement during these sessions stimulate speech and memory.

I have also attended meetings and taken part in planning Older People's Services in East Lothian. The group involved with planning have engaged directly with 702 people, including community groups, Area Partnerships, members of the public, people with lived experience, staff groups, professional leads, carers, volunteers, medical professionals, third sector and independent advocacy organisations.

I attended an event staged in Blackadder Church, North Berwick hosted by Aging Scotland where information was provided on care and repair, housing options, health and social care and carers of East Lothian.

I also arranged a meeting with David Ferrier, who is chairperson of the trustees of East Lothian Day Centres. We discussed the work that Day Centres contribute to. It was agreed that older people's day centres have a key role in promoting independence and confidence in older people with complex needs and their carers by making local centres accessible and supportive.

I attended a business meeting at Haddington Day Centre to discuss the financial aspects of running these centres and the additional costs involved in leasing their premises.

I was invited to attend an event at the Scottish Parliament in order to take part in Generations Working Together (GWT) which focussed on intergenerational learning, ageism and community engagement. The information was provided that East Lothian already encouraged nursery visits to Day Centres and that volunteers from local high schools help and engage with older people in Day Centres and Care Homes.

Councillor McGinn – Champion for the Voluntary Sector

“Volunteering is at the very core of being a human. No one has made it through life without someone else’s help.” – Heather French Henry

What a fantastic perspective on life and what it means to be a volunteer. If you think about it, we have all at some point had someone come into our lives who was a volunteer.

The work in hospitals of the RVS, Macmillan volunteers, our in-bloom groups or the Guides, BBs and the Scouts: all groups run by volunteers across the county supporting our families every single day.

Over the past year I have once again been given the opportunity to spend some time with many such groups and individuals across East Lothian and have heard some wonderful and inspiring stories about what it is to be a volunteer.

Home-Start East Lothian are committed to promoting the welfare and supporting young families in East Lothian and was delighted to be invited along to a volunteers evening in the Fraser Centre Tranent. My curling skills left a lot to be desired but the opportunity to spend time with new volunteers was simply delightful.

The launch of Fa’side Community Kitchens Annual Report was another inspiring event. I was invited along to say a few words in my role as Cabinet Spokesperson, but, if truth be told, I was delighted to be once again in the heart of volunteering in my community.

Fa’side Community Kitchen (FCK) was formed in February 2021, growing from the response during the pandemic to a permanent fixture in our community. Again, I was delighted to hear the stories and witness the real impact FCK has on our community.

Recently, alongside colleagues, I have engaged with Lily’s Ormiston, a Community Interest group set up to benefit members of the local community of Ormiston. They are passionate about tackling food insecurity and reducing food waste in the village and have some fantastic plans that will allow their impact to grow. My role has been engaging with Council officers to support this venture and seek out opportunities to support Lily’s as they grow. I am very excited about what can be achieved working across the voluntary sector and the Council which will allow us to support the most vulnerable across the county. More about Lily’s Ormiston next year, I hope!

A personal highlight was in early summer as part of volunteers’ week was attending VCEL’s Inspiring Volunteering Awards ceremony. You could hear a pin drop when we heard some remarkable stories about our volunteers such as Benjamin Brown, a young man who has given his time to support and engage other young people running the Dungeons and Dragons and Pokémon Club, his impact on his peers is simply wonderful.

And who could forget our Volunteer of the Year, Malcolm Fairgrieve. Malcolm's volunteering at Macmerry Miners Welfare & Community Hub, Roots & Fruits charity and other key initiatives outlines what it means to be community volunteer of the year.

You simply cannot come away from these events without bursting with pride at the selfless devotion volunteers have for others in their communities.

Building our communities is a responsibility we all have an equal share in. However, I am 100% convinced we could not do so without our wonderful volunteers and on behalf of East Lothian Council I would simply wish to say THANK YOU.

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

Councillor McMillan – Champion for Armed Forces and Veterans

I have been privileged to continue in the Veterans Champions role.

Attendance at various regional and national meetings attended by the Scottish Government Minister with responsibility for Veterans and attended by Scottish Parliament officers as well as representatives from charities and organisations and other Champions from across many areas keep me informed on issues and available resources to support our East Lothian Veterans.

I particularly note the contributions of Poppy Scotland, Linburn and SSAFA, and RAF Benevolent Association. I have also worked with WRNS local association and Commonwealth War Graves Commission during the year.

It is important for me to emphasise the ongoing and 'live' contributions that so many former members of our armed forces make to our economy locally with the skills and competences they gained whilst serving in our force, and now deploy in their new lives and careers.

Many also contribute to our communities through their voluntary work and organise Veteran Breakfast and Meetings in the Hollies in Musselburgh and at Royal British Legion premises in Prestonpans and Dunbar, where excellent support, fellowship and companionship is offered to those attending, maintaining many strong links and solid networking. A Veterans Group is emerging in North Berwick. I have been honoured to attend meetings and to see that fine work these groups do. It has been particularly rewarding this year to see volunteers acknowledged by local community awards and by East Lothian Courier. It was good to welcome representatives to our June Armed Forces Day.

East Lothian Council was awarded Gold Covenant status, working with advisers from the Forces and ensuring we reach and maintain the highest recognised standards in our dealing with Veterans, Reservists and Cadets. Much credit for this recognition goes to Sharon Saunders and Stephanie Kerr, now replaced by Caroline Rodgers and Toby Renouf, ably supported by Joanne Allen and the commitment of our Chief Executive.

Recently, I held a meeting with Mr Jim Wilson who is the Veterans Commissioner, who had prepared an analysis of the number of veterans in our county by age, and to discuss with him the number of those of working age and whether they were in work.

We also discussed the main issues raised by the veteran population in East Lothian and agreed these were housing, health and employment – reflected in feedback and the number of cases brought to me by constituents. I shall prepare a short report on the Commissioner's analysis and submit it to the Members' Library but would welcome discussion with any member or Group.

Councillor Ritchie – Champion for Young People

It has been an absolute privilege to serve as the Young Person's Champion again this year and I look forward to my continued work in this role in the year ahead.

Throughout this year I have taken every possible opportunity to raise issues on behalf at Council meetings, as well as asking questions around the role of youth voice in our local democratic processes, particularly in light of the UNCRC Incorporation Act.

I have raised the views of young people who have reached out to me on key issues, including on the Nature Emergency, and have raised questions around positive destinations and opportunities for all young people, and other important issues like housing and having things to do in their communities.

I have participated in local youth fora, and discussed key issues with our incredible MSYPs. I have also worked alongside member colleagues and officers to support youth work and engagement across East Lothian.

Next year I am seeking to set up surgeries specifically for young people to attend, and I would welcome the opportunity to work cross-ward and cross-party on this opportunity. It is so important that young people feel they can access and participate in their Council.

I'm grateful to all the young people I have had the pleasure of working with in this role this year, and to all the council staff and local organisations and volunteers who work so hard to support our young people.