

Annual Report – Special Responsibilities

(Under the South Gloucestershire Scheme of Members' Allowances, certain councillors who perform significant responsibilities over and above those of other councillors are entitled to receive additional allowances to recognise those extra responsibilities. The Scheme requires councillors in receipt of such allowances to report on their actions. This report is published on the Council's website).

Report for period: 2015/16

Name: Maggie Tyrrell

Position held: Liberal Democrat Lead Member for Adults, Housing and Public Health Committee

A general outline of the special responsibilities you perform

Lead the Liberal Democrat group in all matters relating to Adults, Housing & Public Health.

Lead the Liberal Democrat group at meetings of Adults, Housing & Public Health Committee.

Lead for the Liberal Democrat Group on issues related to AH&PH at Council meetings.

Attend agenda briefings to shape the agenda & ensure relevant items and required information comes to the committee.

Attend briefings with senior officers. Communicate with Liberal Democrat group members to ensure they are informed of issues.

Liaise with other spokespersons over issues of joint interest.

Sit as member of Appointments Panel for senior officers of CAH Dept.

Speak to the media on AH&PH matters on behalf of the Liberal Democrat group when required

Key Milestones/Achievements during the reporting Period

All sections of the Dept. were required to make substantial budget savings and decisions on how to make such savings while minimising the effect on individual members of the public who are vulnerable proved challenging. The Dept. recommissioned several services during the course of the year, including Substance Misuse Services & Housing Related Support Services. Reviews of Charging Policy were undertaken and were closely scrutinised in an attempt to protect the most vulnerable groups who use them. The integration of Public Health into the Dept. needed constant scrutiny of the budgets to ensure the preventative work of that section was not undermined.

There was frustration within the Lib Dem group that problems arising from cuts to budgets could only be mitigated and not stopped, due to the effect of Government Policy on the Council Budget and the key decisions taken by the majority group at the time the Council budget for the year was set. However, steps were taken to challenge at every opportunity, particularly at consultation and Councillor briefing meetings, to ensure that when decision came to be taken at the Committee they had been fully considered and the options were the best available.

What “added value” to the local community have you been able to achieve through your special responsibilities?

As lead member of Adults, Housing and Public Health I am in a position to question at an early stage of the development of policy that directly affects people using the services of the Dept. This enable the Liberal democrat group to challenge policy that we believe will have an adverse effect on our communities and to enhance policies that we believe to be in the best interests of those communities.

Liberal Democrat colleagues rely on my knowledge & understanding of the work of the AHP Dept. to help them with enquiries made by members of the public about individual concerns. When I cannot advise personally I can advise on the processes involved and can direct them to the relevant section or person within the Dept. that can help.

How have your special responsibilities enabled the Council to be more effective?

I advise colleagues on whether amendments to proposals are required or advisable and I lead the group at Council debating issues at Committee or Council. It is not possible to change the basic policy of the Conservative Group who has the majority on Council and Committee so highlighting the problems we foresee, offering alternative solutions and mitigating the effects of budget cuts is the best that can be achieved. Influencing the direction of policy at an early stage, before it reaches formal decision can be more productive for the community than challenging policy when fully formulated and published.

In what ways has the exercise of your special responsibilities supported the core objectives of the Council?

The Conservative Group hold the overall majority on Council and effective scrutiny and challenge to decisions made under these circumstances is essential to the democratic process and to ensure that all communities and people within them are represented equally.