

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: 2016-17

Name: Councillor Pat Rooney.....

Position held: Labour Group Leader.....

A general outline of the special responsibilities you perform

Key Milestones/Achievements during the reporting Period

This year we have had a review of Ward Boundaries to carry out at the request of the ruling Group and I have worked with the political assistant to devise a full detailed review of all wards in S Glos which I presented in written form to the Commission.

This has been a very detailed, lengthy piece of work over 6 months which has meant visiting Branches and Constituency Labour Parties (CLP's) to explain and seek their views.

Due to the proposed new Cabinet structure which will be introduced in May 2017 the Labour Group has carried out preparatory work to consider a change of focus and structure as to how the Group carries out its roles and responsibilities within the Council. I have consulted with colleagues to devise a 'shadow Cabinet' structure to enable Lead Labour Group members, nominated by Group, to carefully consider the Cabinet's Forward plan and challenge Cabinet decisions when necessary to improve or amend .

This ensures that Group members are fully informed and information is shared amongst the Group.

I and Lead members have agreed to attend Cabinet meetings to challenge the Cabinet members on issues that we believe require amendment or further clarification.

The Cabinet System also creates the Scrutiny Committee and I have ensured that we Co Chair the Scrutiny committee. This is innovative and a different approach at my suggestion so that we have an 'in-road' into the Council agenda.

As the smallest Group on the Council, this would not usually be the usual position but I made the proposal for the Labour Group to Co-Chair and it was accepted by the ruling group and other minority party.

I arrange Leadership Team meetings with Deputy Leader and Political Assistant twice a month to ensure we are all fully informed.

I ask the political assistant to arrange monthly Group meetings to maintain a flow of information and discuss policy.

The Labour Group campaigned to keep the Civic Centre open and we were successful in doing so by proposing that the Council leases out parts of the building for income generation. Kingswood is known for the Civic Centre as a public building and has been

since 1974 and the proposal by the ruling Group to dispose of the building was seen as detrimental to Kingswood and an economic disaster to the local economy. The public were against closure and we led the campaign as local Councillors but as a budget item and I led the campaign to secure the Civic Centre as Council accommodation and our only Council accommodation where the public are able to attend Council meetings.

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

I ensure that I am visible within the Community and speak on their behalf.

As I sit on high profile strategic committees, it benefits the Community as I am able to raise issues, concerns and also publicise the work carried out by Labour Colleagues with business representatives and educationalists.

I work alongside the Voluntary sector and due to my involvement with local initiatives, it benefits the community due to my position on the Council.

I endeavour to be fully informed on a wide range of issues that I have access to and sit on Policy Advisory Groups (PAG) which are the Council’s information channel for minority parties but also PAG’s are used for minority party contributions towards Council policy.

As the Labour Group Leader I have presented amendments to the ruling Group’s budget which have been to the benefit of our residents.

I have spoken on every opportunity open to me, to make sure that the 5 Priority Neighbourhood areas maintain their targeted resource and that we keep them high on the Council agenda.

I provide local residents with as much information with regard to local initiatives via local leaflets, reports and press statements.

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

I ensure that the Labour Group fully contribute to the Budget procedure and challenge the ruling Group’s proposals where we believe we have better and will benefit residents.

I challenge the ruling Group whenever their decisions are questionable or can be seen to be detrimental to particular areas of S Glos.

I contribute at all meetings I attend, speaking on behalf of the Group and ensuring that Council has a robust and visible opposition party but that I do not stop or prevent Council efficiency without valid cause or valid reason.

I hold the ruling Group to account.

I engage with Senior management and lower tiers of Officers in a constructive and effective way.

Devolution has taken place within the 3 Combined Authorities and I challenge the way on which this will deliver to local wards where skills, employment and educational attainment are in urgent need of attention and funding.

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

I have ensured through robust challenges that the Council/s core objectives and overall mission statement :‘Equality of opportunity for all’
Is carried out, ensuring that high quality of inclusive services and facilities are provided and wherever this appears to be failing, highlight and challenge.
Working with diverse groups and recognising their distinct requirements and challenge where necessary.
Supporting good employment practices and policies.
Challenge any discrimination or harassment.