

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: 2013-2014

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Name: Pat Rooney

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Position held: Labour Lead Member for Communities Committee.....

A general outline of the special responsibilities you perform

To ensure that the agreed cross party' Transformation Programme of Savings' for the Communities Committee within the ' Environment and Communities Services ' Department is achieved within timescale and within budget .

To ensure that the decisions made at Communities Committee are acted upon in accordance with the agreed policy .

To be aware of the overall Savings plan for the Council of nearly £80m over the ten year period till 2020

To be responsible and accountable for the decisions made to achieve the required savings that the Government has imposed on S. Glos Council

To ensure that any changes to service delivery has an agreed and accepted full consultation process planned so that ample opportunity is given to residents to have their say where appropriate before changes are introduced .

To inform and advise the Labour Group of key issues and sensitivities where a political decision is required which could impact on the Group

Being proactive with regard to setting Committee agenda where we need to direct policy

Being able to advise Group as to budget constraints and knowing what can be considered for savings or growth

Being accountable to all and able to explain the reason behind decisions taken .

Key Milestones/Achievements during the reporting Period

Due to the imposed Budget cuts by the current Government we were advised that the Communities Committee had to achieve savings of £1m year on year from the Waste Management Service which totalled approx £20m

The extremely difficult and sensitive decision that we had to make as a Committee was to introduce a new Green Waste collection 'Opt- in ' service from April 2014 which removed the automatic collection of green waste being collected on a two weekly collection service. The new cost for the scheme was decided following benchmarking exercises being undertaken providing costs from our neighbouring authorities, as £36 per year

This introduction however , as part of a package , enabled the Council to create more opportunities to recycle waste and therefore reduce landfill tonnage and the inevitable increase in costs to the Council in Landfill charges

This is of course also beneficial environmentally to S Glos Council as it reduces the Carbon foot print '

Through negotiations with SITA over the new Green Waste scheme we were able to introduce kerb side recycling of all plastics which was a request from residents throughout S Glos . Flats are now being able to recycle more waste and introduced recycling of carpet, lino and small electrical items together with further promotion of composting bins and a free composting bin for a new build household .

We have seen 33k residents Opt- in to this service which is far greater than our original expectation .

The ' Localism of Street Scene' which encourages Town and Parish Councils to either take over delivery of services such as grass cutting, hanging baskets and management of emptying dog bins or for these bodies to buy back the services from the Council

A ' Core 'service is still delivered by the Council so it would be the enhanced services on top of the Core service that would be up for negotiation for example highway verges are now only being cut twice a year rather than twelve times a year as was carried out previously '

Where we have Unparished Wards , they receive the Core service .

This has been out to consultation with all Parish and Town Councils and the Unparished Wards and the majority of them have bought back the Core service .

Localism is seen as a benefit to local communities for them to take responsibility for their

environment and communities where possible .

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

During the budget setting process I as Lead member put forward items following the budget consultation that I believed, were of high priority to our residents and vital to be kept and maintained such as Libraries and public toilets. This was agreed by all parties and it was through my negotiation that this was achieved within the extremely tight financial constraints we were working under and will be in future years ..

I also ensured that during the Green Waste Opt- in negotiations that residents who received Income Support or other such recognised benefits would be charged half of the years charge of £36 that being £18 per year for Opt in of the new service which helped support the most vulnerable people in our communities .

I also pushed for this charge to be frozen for two years which I successfully achieved which again supported the most vulnerable people in need of financial support .

I have been able to explain to residents why we placed libraries and public toilets and maintaining pot hole gangs at the forefront of our Labour budget proposals which were agreed and accepted by the other two parties .

Through my role I am able to address the needs of Priority Neighbourhoods of which we have 6 within S Glos and my ward being one of them . From the National indices they have been recognised to have multiple deprivation and we have targeted scarce resources into these areas such as health improvement , anti social behaviour and skills and employment .

The urgent need for basic IT skills to enable residents to claim benefits was evident and by having a programme of volunteers training and supporting residents we have also discovered that there is an underlying problem of low level mental health issues .

This has meant that my role has been to lobby and engage with various outside agencies to help set up and support an outcome based action plan in all of the areas mentioned above .

The gap between the Priority Neighbourhoods and the rest of S Glos. in educational attainment , low skill level leading to being unable to compete in the job market and poor health issues between the Priority Neighbourhoods and the rest of S Glos has not decreased , A small improvement has been made but it is recognised that different solutions are required to prevent intergenerational worklessness which can cause health problems and the cost is not just in financial terms alone .

I continue to lobby and support the work that all the agencies involved carry out within our Priority Neighbourhoods and sit on all the sub groups as well as the Steering Group ‘Connecting Kingswood ‘who oversees the work carried out .

I attend public meetings where requested to speak on issues within my remit and attend events to promote the Council such as Armed Forces Day and local school Sporting events and organised events /performances within S Glos .

I also provide radio or press statements as a Labour Lead member .

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

My role as Lead member, leading my Group through the lengthy negotiations over the Green Waste scheme has enabled the Council to achieve the savings required within the agreed budget programme and on time

And it has , by my negotiation , achieved a more acceptable service to the residents of S Glos .by including the concessions to people on benefit , charging half the normal costs of the green waste Opt – In scheme and also the freeze for two years which was agreed and accepted by Council as part of the Transformation Programme of savings .

I have addressed the areas of future cuts to front line services and advised Officers early in the process where the Labour Group would have difficulties in removing or cutting back on services currently provided .This enables Officers to produce different options and scenarios for discussion .

I have actively participated in the budget setting process in my Group and found savings from elsewhere where we needed to maintain current front line services .

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

I have helped achieve the required savings programme within time and within

budget for the Communities Committee.

I have been able to achieve support for the most vulnerable within S Glos where cuts have had to be made to front line services and kept services going by seeking other solutions and where possible the required savings from other areas when proposed closure was suggested .

I believe that I have been responsible in my decision making ensuring that Core objectives of the Council have been maintained .