



## Member Champion Reports

May 2021

At Council in July 2019 it was agreed that our Member Champions would provide an annual update for councillors and residents. You can view archived committee reports on our [website](#).

Malvern Hills District Council has appointed member champions to promote and support various interests of the community.

The roles focus on four themes:

- **Armed Forces** – working with the countywide Covenant Working Group and supporting the needs of service veterans and families in the district.
- **Heritage** – raising and maintaining the profile of the built historic and natural environment and providing a focus for heritage issues across the council.
- **Rural** – raising and maintaining the profile of the district’s rural areas, drawing the council’s attention to rural issues and working with the council to improve the service delivered to rural areas.
- **Young People** – working closely with our new Youth Chair and Advisors and schools in the district to improve the council’s engagement with young people, consulting them on key priorities.

Acting as a positive focus for the local community, the roles have been developed to make contact with local organisations, familiarise themselves with the needs of the relevant section of the community, act as advocates on their behalf and feedback the decisions of the council. You can view the full role descriptions on our [website](#).

The appointed member champions are:

Focus	Member Champion	Contact	Page
Armed Forces	Councillor Martin Allen	<a href="mailto:martinallen.croome@gmail.com">martinallen.croome@gmail.com</a>	2-3
Heritage	Councillor Tony Penn	<a href="mailto:tony.penn@malvernhillssdc.net">tony.penn@malvernhillssdc.net</a>	4-5
Rural	Councillor Barbara Williams	<a href="mailto:barbara.williams@malvernhillssdc.net">barbara.williams@malvernhillssdc.net</a>	6-7
Young People	Councillor Caroline Palethorpe	<a href="mailto:caroline.palethorpe@malvernhillssdc.net">caroline.palethorpe@malvernhillssdc.net</a>	8-9

**Please note that the following reports include updates from July 2019 – April 2021.**

## **Armed Forces Champion**

**Councillor Martin Allen**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Sarah Rouse, Leader of the Council  
Service Lead: Stephen Gabriel, Director of Housing and Communities

### **Meetings and events**

Since becoming the Armed Forces Champion for Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) I have had the honour of representing our Council with the Armed Forces, Veterans & Support Groups.

My main role has been coordinating with other local council champions and representatives of SSAFA, British Legion, Stepway, Help for Heroes, Combat Stress, Age Concern, Blind Veterans UK and YSS. We were meeting on a three-monthly basis to raise concerns and to agree how we can provide support to serving members of our Armed Forces, their families and Veterans living in our areas. There have been two zoom meetings of the Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership (WAFCP) meeting I have been able to attend in 2020/21. Also, I along with the other local council champions, have managed to get the Housing Policy changed to take into account Veteran's needs. This puts members of the armed forces into band 1, taking into account physical health conditions and serious mental health illness.

One of the main problems the WAFCP has found was that on leaving the Forces, Service Personnel did not know who to contact for help or how to cope in civilian life, from registering with a doctor to cooking for themselves. To try and remedy this we have designed and promoted a contact sheet and, at my request, a handy little pocket guide was produced which is easier to hand out and carry. You can view the sheet and more information on the Covenant at <https://www.malvernhills.gov.uk/community/armed-forces>

In November 2019 I attended a Gunners Breakfast meeting, giving me the chance to network with organisations who wanted to support our Veterans. Later in the year I found myself at the West Midland Reserve Forces & Cadets Association Autumn Briefing. There I had the privilege to hear three cadets talk about their time in the Cadets, they were fine young people.

In January 2020 the first Veterans Breakfast Meeting in Malvern took place at the Foley Arms and I gave a presentation about this champion role.

Due to Covid-19 I have not been able to attend any further events in person this year. However, we did manage to fly the flag on Merchant Navy Day and I spent an interesting morning with the charity Stepway. More on that below.

### **Promoting the work of local organisations**

The main charity I have been following is Stepway. They are a new charity that supports veterans adapting to civilian life and they are based in the Salvation Army Centre on Newtown Road.

During my visit, I heard more about the 7-step civilian skills program to help veterans return to civilian life. I was also able to sit in on a session and talk to the veterans about my role.

### **What I enjoy most about the role**

During the first year I enjoyed my role, meeting many lovely and genuine people. I find that Facebook has been useful to promote Breakfast Clubs in Malvern and Worcester.

Until we come out of this current situation, it is going to be difficult to do as much as I would like as the role relies on meeting and listening to people.

**What I hope to achieve in the next 12 months**

I hope in the next twelve months to work with our Council, especially our housing department to put Veterans first, especially those with disabilities. I am also looking forward to attending events again and working with other parties such as SSAFA.

## **Heritage Champion**

**Councillor Tony Penn**

Portfolio Holder – Planning and Infrastructure: Councillor David Harrison  
Service Lead: Jim Burgin, Head of Heritage Services

### **Meetings and events**

I enjoyed an excellent introductory meeting with Jim Burgin (Heritage Services Manager) and David Harrison (Portfolio Holder, Planning and Infrastructure) at the start of the role and easing of restrictions in August 2020 allowed me to meet with them again when we were able to discuss:

- Writing an article for the Malvern Civic Society, outlining the Heritage Champion role. This has subsequently led to further contact with the Society and it is hoped that a meeting can be held to discuss links with Tenbury too.
- Tenbury's flood defences – I have subsequently been involved with the Environment Agency's presentation meetings in addition to those of the local Tenbury Wells Flood Action Group.
- Heritage open days – one bright moment for me in 2020 was being able to attend an official guided tour of Malvern's Victorian Cemetery, arranged by the Malvern Civic Society. This celebrated the start of the Heritage Open Days in September and was a good opportunity to raise the heritage profile on our council social media pages.

I was also able to join our Head of Heritage services on a visit to a site in March to experience the issues faced with problem listed buildings. I visited a successful heritage restoration project as well as new build development to appreciate both the challenges and opportunities that are presented when having to redevelop in these sensitive areas. I was able to discuss concerns with local residents over the impact of the adjacent neglected site on the character and appearance of the conservation area and issues presented by unauthorised access.

### **Promoting the work of local organisations**

I believe one of the best areas in promoting our heritage in the MHDC area is via tourism. There are some important buildings within the area which hardly get a mention, if one at all, in guidebooks and maps. Some could become key attractions which apart from being important buildings have fascinating histories.

We have much to offer when it comes to heritage and that isn't just buildings. Another thing closely associated with heritage is the natural environment, which connects me with my fellow Rural Champion, Barbara Williams. Unfortunately, circumstances have not helped us in forming a joint strategy, but our countryside is an important part of this area's heritage.

Our Economic Development team made big efforts to organise markets in Tenbury but the pandemic has made that challenging. They chose the Market Square, site of the Round Market for the one which could be held. A perfect local heritage setting and very much appreciated by visitors. It is hoped that as the restrictions of the pandemic ease this theme can be developed.

**What I hope to achieve in the next 12 months**

As an architect I naturally enjoy the role but find it frustrating with the time involved with getting things done. It also occupies a considerable amount of time alongside my normal council duties. Being a Tenbury Councillor, a lot of my involvement has centred on this patch, quite a small part of the whole MHDC area. When you consider what that involves it makes the task quite daunting! I see opportunities in all aspects of the role, but still consider the biggest one to be the rich heritage this area has to offer and which needs maximum publicity in all respects.

**Rural Champion**

**Councillor Barbara Williams**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Sarah Rouse, Leader of the Council  
Service Lead: Amanda Smith, Head of Community Services

### **Meetings and events**

I had a meeting with the AONB, Martley Parish Council and MHDC's Portfolio Holder for the Environment in July 2019 to discuss the proposals regarding extending the AONB further north in our district. This is likely to take some years and will of course require a great deal of public consultation, with Natural England responsible for looking at this.

I also had a meeting with the Service lead and Community First in September 2019. We talked about the Rural Economy Select Committee, which the Government has set up.

In September 2020 I met with a representative from the National Farmer's Union, the Leader of the Council and officers to talk about various issues, mainly about what impact Covid is having on farming, such as milk being wasted and a grant being available to dairy farmers from DEFRA. We also talked about flooding, rural crime and a possible shortage of seasonal workers because of travel. It was decided at the meeting that the Leader and I would write to Harriett Baldwin MP with our concerns and we received a response from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food, Victoria Prentis MP.

In October 2020 I joined a Rural Service Network via zoom talking about Rural Vulnerability. I asked about how we can make our farmers aware of the support available as we are a rural district with a large farming community.

Most recently, I wrote and presented a paper on rural poverty for the council's task and finish group. I also circulated an open letter to farmers in the district to thank them for how they are coping through these difficult times.

### **Promoting the work of local organisations**

At a full council in 2019, when we declared a climate emergency, I stressed that we should consult and work with the National Farmer's Union and they have been invited to join our partner workshops on the matter and I believe they are an important partner going forward.

As we are a predominantly rural district, farming is one of our biggest economies, also farmers are the custodians of our countryside. They are a hard-working sector of the community providing much needed food for the table and local produce, we must therefore secure their future and generations to come.

In the current crisis, we have seen some wonderful acts of kindness in our rural communities. MHDC has started to capture some of these examples through our Good Neighbour Network at <https://www.malvern hills.gov.uk/community/malvern-hills-good-neighbour-network>. To date 23 schemes are registered and we are supporting the development of new schemes in places like Martley and Tenbury.

Domestic abuse also continues to be a hidden issue which is more acute in rural communities. Throughout the pandemic we have read nationally and locally of increases in reports of domestic abuse and the council has been working with Wychavon District Council to seek a national Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation.

This accreditation has seen the development of both customer and staff domestic abuse policies, moving forward training is anticipated for all staff and members via a catalogue of options tailored to suit all needs. We also work closely with Worcester Community Trust to support the DAWN project to support individuals living in rural communities.

**What I hope to achieve in the next 12 months**

Moving forward, from a community safety perspective, I will continue to support the Council to work closely with police and other key partners to tackle exploitation in the agricultural sector.

Flytipping continues to be problematic for rural communities and particularly our farming communities. The Council has seen a surge in reports since lockdown. I want to support the Council to work with farmers to protect their land/property from future fly tipping as well as promote the SCRAP flytipping campaign that focuses on residents duty of care and using the SCRAP code of Suspect all, Check license, Refuse unexpected offers of clearance, Ask where waste is going and Paperwork - get a receipt.

**Young People Champion**

**Councillor Caroline Palethorpe**

Portfolio Holder – Community Services: Councillor Tom Wells  
Service Lead: Ian Dipple, Head of Communications

### **Meetings and events**

All meetings with officers and the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Tom Wells have continued over zoom in the last year, to monitor the development of the Youth offer, including the recruitment of four inspirational young people to the roles of Youth Chair and Advisers. <https://www.malvern hills.gov.uk/youth>. I am also a member of the Economic Policy and Member Development groups respectively, to ensure the voice of young people is represented and this year, invited to join the Poverty task and finish group for the council, to consider the impact of poverty on children and young people across the district.

The Futureproof initiative

(<https://www.malvern hills.gov.uk/community/youth/futureproof>), borne out of the Bigger Picture Survey has ensured an online presence for young people to connect more closely with their community. This will continue this year, and should grow organically as we return to face to face meetings etc.

I set up and facilitate a community youth forum: Positive Tenbury which is supported by a range of partners. I am also a member Malvern Hills District Youth Action Network (MYAN). These meetings happen each term and offer a great opportunity to share information and develop collaborative projects to support young people.

I am privileged to be the mental health lead and Wellbeing Mentor at an academy in the District. The role provides a window into the life of teenagers as they have managed through this pandemic. The impact on their mental and physical health is still, in my opinion only just beginning and I predict a wave of significant poor mental health issues being presented to services such as CAMHS, already very under resourced.

### **Projects or activities involved in**

I promote the role of young people at every opportunity, mainly through schools, and believe that the voice of young people in the district is heard loud and clear since the approval of the Council's four year Youth Action Plan and the recruitment of the Youth Chair and Advisers. These articulate and passionate young people are championing the voice of the young people across the District and many Councillor colleagues have been impressed at their knowledge and understanding of many key issues we are working on already. They bring a fresh and alternative view to tackle environmental issues and the Youth Chair is keen to encourage education establishments to improve the mental health curriculum offer, something I share unequivocally.

### **What I enjoy most about the role**

Being the Youth Champion for Malvern Hills District Council is a great honour and, in my opinion, an important and essential role for the Council as we try to encourage younger people to participate in local politics. Hearing so many dynamic young people articulate their views so passionately and maturely is credit to our democratic process and to our officers who capture the enthusiasm and ensure the young people are heard and valued.

### **What I hope to achieve in the next 12 months**

The further development of the young chairperson and young adviser roles is an exciting opportunity to genuinely involve the youth in the District in the democratic process.

I still would like to see activities increased further across the district and not just in more urban areas. Young people living in more rural areas are often disadvantaged from participating in positive activities due to where they live, a lack of affordable regular transport, poor or no Internet/broadband connection and the cost of activities. I really would like to narrow the gap in participation and engagement for this cohort of young people.

We have raised the profile of young people this year and I believe we now have a platform to involve members from all sides of the political landscape. It is imperative that we continue to engage young people in the democratic process and with the ever-changing landscape I believe we should work much closer together to seek long term solutions to many ongoing issues. Promoting positive mental health, climate change, lack of employable skills, finance, drugs and alcohol, knife crime and isolation are still issues that we have not really tackled honestly and I would welcome debates with our young generations on their ideas to make a more positive society.