



Member Champion Reports

May 2020

At Council in July 2019 it was agreed that our Member Champions would provide an annual update for councillors and residents. A copy of the full report is available [here](#).

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 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 [here](#).

The appointed member champions are:

Focus	Member Champion	Contact	Page
Armed Forces	Councillor Martin Allen	martinallen.croome@gmail.com	2
Heritage	Councillor Tony Penn	tony.penn@malvernhillsdc.net	3
Rural	Councillor Barbara Williams	barbara.williams@malvernhillsdc.net	4
Young People	Councillor Caroline Palethorpe	caroline.palethorpe@malvernhillsdc.net	5 - 6

Please note that the Member Champions have not yet completed a full year in the role, as the roles commenced in July 2019.

Armed Forces Champion

Councillor Martin Allen

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Sarah Rouse, Leader of the Council
Service Lead: Jack Hegarty, Chief Executive Officer

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. I have had two internal meetings so far.

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 meet 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.

One of the main problems we 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 solve 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 www.malvern hills.gov.uk/community/armed-forces

I and other Forces Champions have agreed that funds that are available from the Armed Forces Covenant Worcestershire are to be used to support and enable the continuation of the wonderful work of the British Legion.

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.

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 building. Stepway have joined the Worcestershire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership. Its aim is to bridge the gap with Veterans who are struggling with adapting to civvy street. I am aware that they would like to do outreach work in Malvern and are looking for office space.

What I enjoy most about the role

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

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.

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

Meetings and events

I enjoyed an excellent introductory meeting with Jim Burgin (Heritage Services Manager) and David Harrison (Portfolio Holder, Planning and Infrastructure). We have had some email and IT issues that have hindered our communications but this all seems to be rectified and I look forward to more communication with the team going forward.

Promoting the work of local organisations

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

There have also been some serious problems affecting our heritage in Tenbury since the disastrous floods in February. These were far worse than those in 2007. The wonderful Regal will not be reopening until the New Year 2021 and the Pump Rooms, never flooded before, are currently inaccessible. The tourist office was also flooded, but is now in a position to reopen as soon as this is allowed.

I am also aware that there have been significant changes in the administration at Malvern Civic Society. The Society plays an important role in championing the heritage of Malvern and I will be keen to fully engage with this local organisation going forward.

What I hope to achieve in the next 12 months

Another thing closely associated with heritage is the natural environment, which connects with my fellow Rural Champion, Barbara Williams. We hope to liaise and promote our causes together over the next twelve months.

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

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 Amanda Smith (Community Services Manager) and Community First in September. We talked about the Rural Economy Select Committee, which the Government has set up.

Promoting the work of local organisations

At full council several months ago, 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 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 www.malvern hills.gov.uk/community/malvern-hills-good-neighbour-network

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.

Domestic abuse also continues to be a hidden issue which is more acute in rural communities, which is why we will continue to work with partners to support voluntary organisations that are supporting victims of domestic abuse via various outreach methods.

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 code.

Continue to support and develop good neighbour networks to protect our communities and become more resilient in hard times such as responding to events of flooding.

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

Meetings and events

I have held regular meetings with Claire Vaughan-Wood (Community Engagement Officer) to discuss the young chairperson role and results of the Bigger Picture Survey, which have been useful (these can be viewed at www.malvern hills.gov.uk/youth). Ian Dipple (Communications Manager) has also been involved in these meetings to discuss ways to communicate with young people. I provided relevant information to add to the “Youth” section on the website www.malvern hills.gov.uk/youth. I have met with the Portfolio Holder by telephone conference and via emails relating to the development of the young Chairperson role and the setting up of a Youth Forum.

I also attended a “Take over Day” at the Council in November 2019 and was very impressed with the marketing and communication skills of the three young people who took part.

I am also a member of the Economic Policy and Members Development groups respectively to ensure the voice of young people are represented. I am also a member of the Apprenticeship task and finish group for the council. This has been an interesting piece of work and an opportunity to really share the young person’s voice in this process and offer practical ways to improve the promotion of apprenticeships across the District.

It is really important to promote the voice of our young people in the District at any opportunity. Local Democracy days are important but sadly in 2019 councillors were not able to take part as they usually would as the day took place during a pre-election period. I am aware that most schools in the District held a “General Election” with candidates from all parties though, so schools were still able to carry out democracy related activities.

I attended a special meeting at The Cube, Malvern in June 2019 to discuss youth activities across the District. (Positive Activity funds).

I also attended the Worcestershire Skills Show in March 2020 and was amazed how many young people attended and the incredible number of information and advice was available from a wide range of post 16 providers. Talking to a few young people during the day, demonstrated how switched on most are to their next steps and how important education is to their career goals.

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

I am also a member of a Rural GP mental health project working party. Action for Children has been commissioned by Public Health to deliver a project aimed at

providing a triage approach to young people suffering from mental health issues. This is in collaboration with Worcestershire CAMHs service as well.

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 that includes ideas from the bigger picture survey completed in 2017. The introduction of a Young Chairperson is very exciting, and I look forward to working with the successful candidate in due course. Although we could not deliver this year's Local Democracy Day in the same way, communication between young people and community leaders has improved considerably and several young people have commented that they feel more valued and listened to, which is very positive.

What I enjoy most about the role

I am so fortunate to work with young people in my day to day role and know how inspirational they all are. The approval of the four year action plan developed from the survey of over 1200 young people in 2017/18 is a great achievement and I am so looking forward to welcoming the very first Young Chairperson shortly. I was really pleased with the "What's on Guide" the council created, which was printed and distributed across the District; an amazing information guide demonstrating the plethora of activities and support services on offer. You can take a look at www.malvernhillsgov.uk/youth

Promoting the wonderful work many young people are involved in, sometimes unnoticed, is an honour and something I will continue to share and hope to increase over the next three years. While we must abide to GDPR guidelines, sharing good deeds etc to the wider community is in my opinion necessary and something I hope all Members will embrace.

Working closely with Officers, especially Claire and Ian has been a privilege and I am grateful for their advice, guidance and enthusiasm, thank you!

What I hope to achieve in the next 12 months

The development of the young chairperson role is an exciting opportunity to genuinely involve the youth of the District in the democratic process. I look forward to supporting this young person to ensure they can be effective in this new role. I also would like to see activities increased 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.

I would still like to involve members from all sides of the political landscape. It is imperative that we 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. 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 generation on their ideas to make a more positive society.