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Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Subject:	Member Champions Annual Report
Date of meeting:	23 July 2024
Report by:	Senior Local Democracy Officer
Cabinet Member	Councillor Chris Attwell, Cabinet Member for Central Services
Wards affected:	N/A

1. Requested by

As part of the Member Champions Protocol agreed at the Community & Central Services Decision Meeting held on 5 January 2022 there is a requirement for Member Champions to submit an annual update to Cabinet on their work during the preceding municipal year.

2. Purpose

To update Cabinet on the work of Member Champions during the 2023/24 municipal year.

3. Information Requested

The below reports have been submitted by the Member Champions for information.

Heritage - Cllr Lee Hunt

Throughout the year I have supported Portsmouth's Heritage Strategy through the Local Plan and Heritage Strategy, including making representations especially around smaller things like drainpipes, windows, glass, bricks and similar so that Portsmouth's past life might be reflected into its future.

Heritage Strategy for Portsmouth
Our vision:

A city where heritage is understood, celebrated and integral to our life and success.

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To achieve this ambitious vision, we have four main aims:

- reinforce and develop Portsmouth's distinct historic identity
- invest in the fabric of historic assets and realise viable uses
- ensure that heritage is an integral part of the economic success for the city in the future
- engage and actively involve people - residents and visitors - in our heritage environment, assets and stories

Portsmouth's unique history and heritage benefits from cross-portfolio support, including the Culture Portfolio with the Leader, Open Spaces with myself, and Development with Cllr Mason. Along with this officers across services from Regeneration to Parks, including the employment of our Countryside Officer, also support Portsmouth's Heritage evidenced by the improvements and restoration at Victoria Park. And all of this is scrutinised by scrutiny committees of the Council.

Conservation and other groups were regularly consulted as part of the City Plan, including for example on trees (Tree Wardens)

<https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/leisure/wildlife-and-conservation/trees-in-portsmouth/>

and open spaces at Portsdown Hill

<https://www.portsdown.org.uk/about.htm>

and Milton Common volunteers.

The constant symmetry between Heritage Champion expectations and the good offices of the Council, Conservation and heritage groups ensures Portsmouth's heritage is conserved and enhanced for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

LGBTQ+ & Young People Champion - Cllr Suzy Horton

Over the last year the following areas have been a focus:

- Working cross directorate/ Portfolio and positioning the service as one of equalities
- Continued working with Stonewall
- Supporting other established groups in the city (Downtown, Portsmouth Pride)
- Attending Portsmouth Pride Stakeholder network meetings
- Working with the Youth Cabinet in supporting their focus on EDI issues
- Being the best ally - on social media, attending events
- Meeting with the Specialist Support workers and better understanding the service and what the key issues are in meeting the needs of young LGBTQ people
- Attending the event that presented the research and action plan/ strategy that will enable us to think about how we might serve the needs of intersectional LGBTQ+ communities.

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Armed Forces Liaison - Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson

The Armed Forces Champion continues to advocate for the Armed Forces Community. This report provides a summary of their activity since June 2023 and ongoing priorities.

Summary of activity: Portsmouth is the home of the Royal Navy, and the armed forces are a significant part of the fabric of the city. 2023 has been another busy year for the Armed Forces Champion with activity including revalidation of the Council's prestigious gold award for the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) and development of an action plan to address the recommendations of the Armed Forces Community needs assessment published in 2022. All of this has been undertaken alongside the usual full calendar of remembrance and recognition events, work to continue to strengthen partnership work, continuing to be a point of contact for residents that are seeking support with the resolution of complex cases and chairing the Council's Armed Forces staff forum. The cross-cutting nature of the agenda has required a whole Council approach to ensuring the Council meets its objectives and commitments in relation to the Armed Forces Community, and the Armed Forces Champion thanks all members who have shown their support to the agenda in 2023. A lot has been achieved since the Armed Forces Liaison Member's last report, but there is still more work to do, and 2024 is expected to be an equally productive year.

Respect and Recognition: A full programme of events has taken place throughout the year. In June 2023 Portsmouth's Armed Forces Day returned to Southsea Common for the first time since 2018 in an event billed as bigger and better than ever, which included parachute displays and military vehicles, reserve forces and cadets stands, and information and advice from military charities. Later in the month, the Armed Forces Champion also led the annual flag raising ceremony for Armed Forces Week. Other events included supporting the unveiling of a new memorial plaque at the Guildhall Square War Memorial to commemorate 2.2m national servicemen who served in the British Armed forces between 1947 and 1963, and attendance at annual commemoration events including Trafalgar Day and Remembrance. 2024 is set to be busier still and has started with several high-profile events to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day, including Portsmouth hosting the major national commemorative event at the beginning of June.

Partnership Work: Portsmouth continues to be the leading member of the Solent Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board (SAFCPB). The Armed Forces champion has supported work to increase the influence and reach of this partnership during the last year, which now includes Fareham and Havant Borough Councils, in addition to existing member authorities of Portsmouth, Southampton, Gosport, and Isle of Wight Councils. This means that more local councils within the region, are working together to meet the needs of the armed forces community. Work of the SAFCPB within the last year has

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included publication of a service pupil tool kit for schools, GP Covenant self-assessment in partnership with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and taking learning from the Lord Etherington LGBT Veterans Independent Review. The Armed Forces Champion has also used their platform within the Local Government Association (LGA) to nationally champion for Service Pupils. Forward work includes hosting the Hampshire veteran's liaison and diversion steering group. This groups mission is to find and support veterans who may have mental health issues, learning disabilities, problems with substance abuse, or other vulnerabilities when they first encounter the criminal justice system, whether as suspects, defendants, or offenders. This can include helping reintegrate those with convictions into community life.

The Armed Forces Champion has worked as part of the SAFCPB to consider how best to continue to deliver for the armed forces community. This work has resulted in an action plan, that sets out how the Solent Partnership will work together during 2025, to address recommendations from the Solent Armed Forces Community Needs Assessment 2022, meet the requirements of the Armed Forces Act 2021 and continue to build capacity to respond across the Solent region. The proposal includes three core workstreams aimed at maximising what can be achieved within the resources available. These workstreams are: Strengthening Service Delivery; Assess and Respond; and A Strong Community and can be viewed on the Council webpages¹. The Armed Forces Champion also ensured that continuing to deliver for the Armed Forces community remained a feature of the Council's Corporate plan, which included a pledge to work to support the Armed Forces Community in our proud Naval city and retaining the Council's Gold status for work in applying the Armed Forces Covenant.

Army Generalship Programme: In January 2024, The Armed Forces Champion, supported by the Lord Mayor, hosted the Army Generalship Programme. This involved a group of Generals in training to become Major Generals coming to Portsmouth for a day, to learn about how the Council works with partners locally to address challenges. These challenges included issues such as homelessness, substance misuse, supporting asylum seekers, tackling isolation and loneliness. The day included frontline experiences, such as being out on patrol with Community Wardens, a visit to a Family Hub, shadowing Portsmouth City of Sanctuary case workers at St Luke's Church, and learning about Policing initiatives including Operation Nova. Opportunities like this act as a bridge, connecting those working in senior command, within the British Army, with wider issues in society, and providing an opportunity for shared learning. Those who attended the day, we're very positive about the experience and thanked the Council for providing them with a

¹ The Solent Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board Action plan 2023-2025, available from:
<https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Armed-Forces-Action-Plan-2023-2025-aa.pdf>

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privileged insight into the lives of others and an opportunity to reconnect with the incredible work that is delivered within the local authority.

Armed Forces Staff Forum: The Armed Forces Champion has continued to chair the Council's Armed Forces Staff forum, which now has a distribution of approximately 60 staff. Armed Forces Staff are kept up to date with relevant policies and news and are invited to join activities such as the annual Armed Forces week flag raising ceremony. The group last met in January 2024, to consider work including the Solent Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Action plan, how to encourage more people from the Armed Forces Community to work for PCC as a forces friendly employer, and generate ideas for armed forces staff activities. One of the ideas included a suggestion about spending a day with the Commonwealth War Graves commission team to help clean and clear some of the Graves in Highland Road Cemetery, which is one of the highest honoured graveyards in the city. Suggestions generated at this forum will form the work plan for 2024.

Defence Employers Recognition Scheme (ERS): In 2018 the Armed Forces Champion received the prestigious ERS gold award on behalf of the Council, in recognition of the authority's work to support the Armed Forces Covenant in respect of employment. This award needs to be revalidated every five years. Portsmouth City Council completed the revalidation process in 2023. The Armed Forces Champion has been at the forefront of this work, which involved creating and presenting a dossier of advocacy work, evidencing supportive policies for veterans, reservists, adult cadet force volunteers and spouses of serving personnel and veterans, testimonials from Armed Forces staff, and endorsement from other organisations that had directly observed the Council's sustained work in respect of the Armed Forces covenant over the past five years (2018-2023). These other organisations included the Royal Navy, Shaping Portsmouth, neighbouring Gosport and Isle of Wight Councils, Portsmouth Hospital University Trust, and the Forces Employment Charity.

Case work: The Armed Forces Champion has continued to support complex cases, directly liaising with Military charities, Council departments, and lobbying the MOD on veterans and service families behalf to resolve issues presented. In 2023 The Armed Forces Champion was proactive in responding to concerns from military families and made an offer to the MOD to support with maintenance for local service family living accommodation, building upon the Council's experience of managing a large stock of social housing. Following this offer the MOD acknowledged there is more to do and deliver when it comes to supporting service personnel and their families but felt that locally there were further areas where the Council could work together with the Naval Base Commander on behalf service personnel and their families. Following this the Armed

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Forces Champion has continued to liaise with the Naval Base Commander, with work in 2023 including formalising affiliation with His Majesty's Naval Base.

Conclusion: 2023 has been a busy year for the Armed Forces Champion, with events taking place throughout the year to help raise awareness, commemorate, and thank the Armed Forces community locally for the unique sacrifices they have and continue to make to support the defence of the Nation. Expanding the reach and influence of the SAFCPB, and the creation of a two-year action plan to address the recommendations of the Solent Armed Forces Community needs demonstrates the Council's continued commitment to strengthen delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant across the region. A key achievement this year has been the revalidation of the Council's prestigious ERS Gold Award. Achieving this is a recognition of the significant and sustained effort that has been made across the Council over the past 5 years. The cross-cutting nature of the agenda has required a whole Council approach to ensuring the Council meets its objectives and commitments in relation to the Armed Forces Community. The Armed Forces Champion thanks all members who have shown their support to the agenda in 2023. The year ahead is anticipated to be another busy year, with key priorities being to continue to deliver against the action plan and look for further opportunities to strengthen the offer for the Armed Forces community within the city.

Third Sector City of Service - Cllr Asghar Shah

There is no update for 2023-2024.

Women, Children & Domestic Violence - Cllr Charlotte Gerada

Key achievements during the year have been:

- The establishment of a cross-party women's councillor group to look into how we can encourage more women to stand for public office and address the challenges women face in standing for council.
- Supporting survivors of domestic violence with individual case work, including accessing vital supplies and housing.
- Submitting a motion to Council which was passed to introduce a parental leave policy for councillors to make the role more accessible to those who chose to have or adopt children.

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Signed by (Director)

Appendices: None.

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location