East Dean & Friston
Parish Council

Date:	**5th January 2021**
Title:	**Report 6 - Appointment of a Lead Member for Environment (incorporating the Tree Warden role)**
By:	**Mike Keller (Chair)**
Purpose of Report:	**To inform members of progress in securing the appointment.**
Recommendations:	**That members approve the proposed appointment.**

At the Parish Council meeting held on 3rd December, members approved a proposal to change the status of the village Tree Warden from that of a volunteer lay advisor to the council to a full member. This decision was taken for a number of reasons, among which was to allow the Warden to deal with outside bodies and individuals while having the full authority of the council and the legal protection of the council's liability insurance.

At the same time, council members were aware that the Tree Warden role in itself was fairly restrictive, particularly as environmental matters in general have attained greater prominence in recent years. It was seen as anomalous for the Tree Warden's mandate to cover trees but not hedges, shrubs or wild flower borders. Consequently, members voted to establish a new position within the council, that of Lead Member for the Environment. In proposing this new role, members were also responding to the submissions made in the public session, which requested the council to take a more pro-active role in promoting environmental matters.

With the principle of establishing the position of Lead Member for Environment agreed, I as chair, have been seeking to find a candidate willing to take on the role. Members will be well aware that the council is operating under difficult circumstances at the moment due to the inability to recruit three replacement councillors to fill vacancies as a result of a residents' petition for an election which cannot be held before May 2021. Nevertheless, I feel we should not delay in making this appointment.

My recommendation to councillors is that we should appoint Cllr. Simon Thorogood as Lead Member for Environment, incorporating the Tree Warden role. Cllr. Thorogood, although new to this parish, is an experienced councillor and a former Tree Warden in the village of Brasted in Kent. He is also, by former profession, a geography teacher so is well equipped to deal with environmental matters. He has indicated to me that, if offered the position by councillors, he would be prepared to accept it. I am sure that fellow councillors would be willing to support Cllr. Thorogood with local knowledge should his appointment be approved and I therefore have no hesitation in proposing him for this role.