Dear Association Colleague,

I am seeking your support to go forward a second time as our candidate for Balmoral DEA in next year’s council elections.

It was something of a surprise when I gained the fifth and last seat in 2014. The win when it happened was due to my ability to get increasing numbers of transfers as candidates were eliminated. It thus proved impossible for the second DUP candidate – who turned out to be my nearest rival – to stay in front of me. I would hope to be able to achieve this a second time and think I have been sufficiently effective and open, as the sitting councillor, to get the necessary transfers. I will also have a certain advantage from being an incumbent candidate and the only of the five, originally elected in 2014, who hasn’t since left the council.

I have now served four years as a councillor, the first year of which was when we were in transition or shadow form. In that time, I have learned how to be effective through working with and building relationships with council officials and colleagues.

However I am aware many projects and proposals take a long time to seed and then develop or grow. A second term – if elected again – would see a number of these coming to fruition if I was still around to husband them.

I have been diligent in my attendance at both council and community meetings and taken up a host of constituency issues in Balmoral and in wider South Belfast, not to mention the city centre.

At the same time I have been writing and publishing – e.g. H Montgomery Hyde booklet.

Organising a Legacy Conference on Saturday 3 March at Malone House.

One major effort has been in relation to the dereliction around Shaftesbury Square where I have had some short-term successes.

I have campaigned for a review of the proposal by Translink for a Transport Hub, and not so Central bus and train Station, in Durham Street.

I am vice-chair of the second most important council committee, City Growth and Regeneration. I have argued for a Municipal Art Gallery as a second major tourist attraction in the city centre and against certain North Belfast developments and the BBC moving out of Ormeau Avenue.

Also I am a member of the Licensing Committee – dealing with street trading disputes and entertainments licences.

I was chair of the Diversity Working Group until the Alliance Party brought about its abolition.

My proposal for a Blitz Memorial in the City Hall grounds was agreed in principle in council but blocked by the Alliance Party in committee as they and Sinn Fein wanted an equality review of all outside statuary first (too ‘male, pale and stale’ they said). However officials in City Hall are considering an alternative location in Cathedral Gardens, which was actually a bomb site in 1941. I am hopeful this may progress if I maintain the pressure.

I have been a member of the South Belfast District Community Safety and Policing Partnership and of the council’s South Belfast Area Working Group which I chair this year. It has been effective in allocating Local Investment Fund grants, recipients of which have included Ballynafeigh and Sandy Row Orange Halls, projects in Taughmonagh and Annadale, not to mention a large number of alley gates in both the Botanic and Balmoral DEAs.

Politically given the impasse we are now in and realising the Belfast Agreement’s outworkings are not successful are indeed unstable I believe we should enter a period of direct rule in some form or another that can allow civil servants to agree policies as well as spend money.

The DUP have jeopardised the union because their desire for devolution is greater than for securing the union. They are strangely split. (Baroness Paisley).

UUP Officer statement today: “Since late 2016 the DUP has played fast and loose with the future of unionism. Firstly, by a combination of arrogance and incompetence they created the opportunity for Sinn Fein to bring down Stormont and force a new set of negotiations on Gerry Adam's terms.

“Secondly, they enter negotiations based on a Sinn Fein agenda and end up on the cusp of an Irish language act and changes that could have led to Gerry Kelly being Justice Minister.

“Thirdly, Unionism now finds itself being a spectator as Her Majesty`s Government agrees a legacy deal behind our backs and apparently without the DUP's knowledge.

“Baroness Paisley blames Arlene Foster for the crisis, Edwin Poots claims authorship of the 'agreement that never was' and meanwhile we have no input into Brexit, our hospital waiting lists are at record levels and schools at their wits’ end to survive financially. It’s an outrageous situation.

“One thing is clear, however, the leadership of unionism cannot be left in the hands of the DUP.”

Thanks for your support over my term.

For all these reasons I therefore ask for your vote.

23 February 2018