

MEMBER CHAMPIONS PROTOCOL

Member Champions have evolved in this Council as a result of Initiatives taken by this Council in wishing to focus on member activity on certain aspects of the Council's business and functions. The role and remit is set out below and a generic role definition is appended.

THE APPOINTMENT AND ROLE OF A MEMBER CHAMPION

1. A Champion is a non-executive councillor appointed by the Council to provide a focus on a specific area of the Council's business or where a community group needs to ensure it is given due regard in relation to the activities of the Council and of its partners in local governance.
2. Member Champion must not be Members of the Council's Cabinet.
3. The Council will identify interests to be championed and will appoint named Councillors to champion a specific interest at its Annual Meeting or during the year for the rest of the municipal year and thereafter appointed for each municipal year at Annual Council.
4. Champions may be re-appointed and there is no limit to their term of office.
5. Within the context of the interest being championed, and as part of their overall and individual community leadership responsibilities, a Champion will:
 - Work with Members and Officers within the Council to maintain efficient, effective and relevant services and policies.
 - Exert influence on relevant external partners and bodies in their decision-making and planning.
 - Act as a catalyst for change and improvement.
6. By appointing a member as a Champion, the Council is empowering that member to act in that capacity. It follows, therefore, that the Council should put in place such arrangements as it thinks appropriate to support the Champion in that capacity.

THE PARAMETERS OF THE CHAMPION ROLE

7. The above role is set in the context of the specific interest or theme. The following parameters apply to the role:
 - All Champions must act reasonably in the role.
 - All Champions must recognise and work effectively within the political management and working arrangements agreed by the Council.

8. A Champion

- Is effectively given authority by the Council to take all reasonable actions judged by the member as being necessary to perform the role of Champion.
- Cannot commit the Council in any way that is contrary to established policy, budget and practice, but may confirm a Council position, as stated in published policy.
- Cannot make decisions that bind the Council.
- Is a recognised media contact on matters relating to the interest being championed, but is expected to keep the relevant Cabinet Member and/or Chairman informed of such contact.
- Is entitled to have access to information held by the Council relating to the interest being championed and access to a reasonable amount of officer time to discuss that information.
- The Champion's programme of activities should reflect the Council's overall priorities, but the Champion may include such aspects as seem to him/her to be relevant for immediate attention, as long as overall priorities are not directly prejudiced by those aspects.

SUPPORT FOR CHAMPIONS IN THEIR ROLE

9. Taking all the above into account, the Council will:

- Take steps to promote understanding within the Council of the role of a Member Champion and describe how it relates to other member level functions.
- Promote similar understanding among its working partners, external bodies and the local community.
- Arrange for a support officer in the Democratic Support team be designated to support the Council's Champions. This support will be for the functionality of the role – administration and research - not the professional input.
- Ensure that the professional lead officer(s) relating to each championed interest are aware of the Champion roles that affect them and the rights of Champions to access/discuss information about the service.
- Require each Champion to report annually to the Council about their programme of activity and how they have contributed to the achievement of the Council's overall priorities and to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as and when required, upon any issues arising.
- Put in place appropriate skills development opportunities for Champions within the Council's Member Development function.

- Keep under review the relevance of the role of member Champions in the context of the Council's Scheme of Member Allowances and to make a request to the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider this at such time in the future, should it be felt to be appropriate.

INTERNAL WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

10. The Champion will:

- Liaise regularly with Cabinet members whose portfolios are relevant to the role (for some generic interests this will be all or many of them).
- Monitor the notice of key decisions and seek information from the relevant officers and Cabinet members about forthcoming business and exert influence on behalf of the interest.
- Monitor Overview and Scrutiny work plans and activity and seek information and offer views on relevant review subjects and exert influence on behalf of the interest.
- Take advice from the appointed lead functional officer and the relevant lead professional officer(s).
- Seek to place appropriate items on relevant Council meeting agendas.
- Keep other councillors up to date with activities within the interest.
- Generally promote the interest.

11. Cabinet members will:

- Acknowledge the right of Champions to be consulted on matters relating to their interest.
- Ensure there is appropriate engagement or consultation with Champions in the formulation of policy and other Executive matters and that any views are contained in the information provided to decision-makers.
- Consider inviting the relevant Champion to represent the Council at any relevant conference/seminar on the subject matter of the interest on the basis that the Champion will report back to the Cabinet member.
- Take full account of any views offered by Champions prior to any Cabinet taking decisions on matters within the interest, and demonstrate this in the record of the decision.

12. Overview and Scrutiny members will:

- Acknowledge the right of Champions to be consulted and to participate in discussion on matters relating to their interest.
- Ensure there is appropriate engagement or consultation with Champions in the formulation of policy and in service review activity.

- Ensure Champions are specifically invited to be contributors to any reviews that have a direct bearing on the interest (recognising the right of a Champion to attend as an observer at any such session).
 - Ensure that opportunity is provided for Champions to contribute to, or comment on, the work programme of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny body.
13. Officers will:
- Ensure there is appropriate engagement or consultation with relevant Champions where the issue clearly relates to the interest.
 - Co-operate fully with Champions in enabling them to perform their functions and to discuss directly with Champions and Cabinet members where proposed actions might prejudice Council or other priorities.

EXTERNAL WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

14. The Champion:
- Will need to acknowledge that there is no statutory authority for the member Champion role.
 - Will need to recognise that the Council does have some legal powers with regard to the scrutiny of external bodies and other working relationships with outside bodies arising from legal provisions.
 - Will monitor and work closely with partner bodies in the field of the interest being championed.
 - Will communicate on behalf of the interest group and the Council to outside bodies.
 - May be the Council's representative on certain relevant external bodies.
 - Will identify the most relevant community bodies whose work is associated with the interest and foster good working relationships with those groups.
 - Will take steps to promote within the wider community the specific issues on which the Champion is to focus and to provide opportunities for local engagement – involving Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Lead Members, as appropriate.