

Local Protocol – Member Champions

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Local Protocol – Member Champions

1. Introduction

1.1 Member champions are elected members who act as an advocate or spokesperson for a specific area of the Council's business. The main responsibility of each member champion is to encourage communication and positive action over the issue they represent.

2. Appointment of Member Champions

2.1 The Leader is responsible for appointing member champions. Any member of the Council may be member champion, including the Leader. The Council currently has the following member champions:

- (a) Armed Forces
- (b) Coast
- (c) Disabilities
- (d) Heritage

2.2 Member champions will generally be appointed following the whole local government elections that take place every four years and will normally be expected to serve for the period of his/her term of office to ensure some stability in the role. However, an appointment may be made during the four year period to any new position that is established or to a position where there is a vacancy. The appointments made by the Leader must be communicated in writing to the Chief Executive.

2.3 Any appointment should have due regard to the suitability for the role and relevant national and local guidance.

2.4 A member champion may be removed from office at any time by the Leader by written notice to the Chief Executive.

2.5 Any member champion may resign from office by giving written notice to the Leader and the Chief Executive.

3. Role of Member Champions

3.1 All member champions will have a job description setting out their respective roles. These will be developed in consultation with the Leader and the champion concerned. Examples of possible roles for champions that may be appropriate to include in a job description are set out in Annex 1 to this protocol.

4. The Parameters of the Member Champion Role

4.1 All member champions must act reasonably in their role and recognise and work effectively within the political management and working arrangements adopted by the Council.

4.2 A champion cannot make decisions (unless the champion is a Cabinet Member with delegated authority) and must not commit the Council in any way or in a manner that could be interpreted as being contrary to established policy and practice. They may, however, confirm a position as stated in a published policy.

5. Cabinet Members – Working Relationship

5.1 The first point of liaison on all relevant issues for the Member Champion will be through the Cabinet Member/Leader.

5.2 Cabinet Members will normally:

- (a) acknowledge the right of champions to be consulted on matters relating to their area of interest;
- (b) take full account of any views offered by champions prior to any decision taken (by a Cabinet member with delegated authority) on matters within their area of interest;
- (c) co-operate with champions in the formulation of any action plans they have agreed with the relevant Cabinet Member; and
- (d) in liaison with the Leader consider nominating the relevant champion to represent the Council at a relevant conference/seminar on the subject matter of the champions interest.

6. Accountability

6.1 At the beginning of each municipal year, each member champion may agree with the relevant Cabinet member and officers a programme of activity, with SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound) targets, taking into account the Council's priorities.

6.2 The Member Champion will report into their Cabinet Member regularly and in consultation with them into the Member's bulletin on at least an annual basis to keep the Council updated on their work.

7. Training

7.1 All member champions will normally have the opportunity to attend appropriate training courses contained in the Council's Member Development Programme.

8. Attendance at Seminars and Conferences

8.1 The attendance by member champions at conferences/seminars relevant to their roles will only be approved following consultation with the Leader in consultation with the Democratic Services Manager. When approved, expenses may be claimed.

9. Allowances

11.1 None of the member champions are entitled to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for carrying out their role.

10. Interests

10.1 Member Champions are reminded to ensure any interests they may have are declared at all appropriate points.

11. Dispute Mechanism

11.1 In the event that a dispute arises in relation to the operation of this protocol such dispute must be referred to the Chief Executive whose decision on the dispute shall be final. The parties to any dispute are expected to provide the Chief Executive (or any person nominated by him to determine the dispute) such information as he may reasonably require to make a decision on the dispute.

Annex 1

Possible Roles of Member Champions

The following examples of roles for member champions may be appropriate to include in their Terms of Reference:

- (a) To champion the adopted policy of this Council for the relevant theme;
- (b) To promote their area of interest both within and outside the Council;
- (c) To contribute to the review and development of policies pertaining to the area of interest;
- (d) To act as a critical friend and question the Council and Cabinet Members on issues affecting their area of interest;
- (e) To attend meetings of the Council, its Committees and the Cabinet and speak on issues (when permitted by the Chairman) relevant to their area of interest;
- (f) To monitor the Forward Plan and seek information from the relevant cabinet members and officers about forthcoming business and exert influence on behalf of the interest in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member;
- (g) To monitor overview and scrutiny plans and activity and seek information and offer views on relevant review subjects and exert influence on behalf of the interest;
- (h) To seek to place appropriate items on member meeting agendas;
- (i) To keep other councillors up-to-date with activities relevant to the area of interest;
- (j) To keep up-to-date with current developments;
- (k) To provide positive support, and on occasions, constructive challenge to Members and officers in driving forward the Council's agenda on relevant issues; and
- (l) Following the approval of the Leader (and Cabinet Member), to act as the Council's representative on relevant external bodies where Council representation is required and approved.