

## Member Champions Protocol

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Member Champions are Councillors who act as an advocate or spokesperson for a specific area of the Council's business and activities. The main responsibility of each Member Champion is to encourage communication and positive action over the issue they represent.
- 1.2 Member Champions have evolved in this Council as a result of:
  - (a) legislation and national initiatives in relation to the development of services, and
  - (b) initiatives undertaken by the Council in wishing to focus member activity on certain aspects of the Council's business and functions.

### 2. Appointment of Member Champions

- 2.1 Member Champions are appointed by the Governance and Business Committee except where the 'champion' role is identified as part of an Executive function. Each political group will be made aware of proposals to appoint Member Champions and given the opportunity to submit nominations. The Member Champion roles established by the Council are:
  - Older People's Champion
  - Early Year's Champion
  - Rural Affairs Champion
  - Tourism Champion
  - Affordable Warmth Champion
  - Play and Sport Champion
  - Historic Environment Champion
  - Member Development Champion
  - Member ICT Champion
- 2.2 Member Champions will be appointed annually in the first cycle of meetings following the Council's annual general meeting. Champions will remain in position (assuming they remain Councillors) until a new appointment is made.
- 2.5 Although there is no legal requirement to apply the political balance rules to the appointments, there will be an expectation that the roles will normally be shared proportionately to reflect the political balance of the Council. However, any appointment should have due regard to the suitability for the role and relevant national and local guidance.
- 2.6 A Member Champion may be removed from office at any time by resolution of the Governance and Business Committee (in the case of

a Council function), or by the leader (in the case of an executive function) by written notice to the Head of Democratic and Partnership Services following consultation with the Party Group Leaders.

- 2.7 Any Member Champion may resign from office by giving written notice to the Head of Democratic and Partnership Services.

### **3. Role of Member Champions**

All Member Champions will have a job description setting out their respective roles. These will be developed by the relevant Head of Service in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member and the Champion concerned.

### **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 Member Champion cannot make decisions (unless they otherwise have executive responsibilities) 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.
- 4.3 Member Champions are to be consulted on any press release relevant to their particular area of interest. A Member Champion may however only be a recognised media contact with the prior approval of the Leader. In all other circumstances, the Champion must make it clear when communicating with the media that he/she is speaking on behalf of a political group (if affiliated to a group) or in a personal capacity and not as the Council's Champion.

### **5. Leader and Cabinet Members – Working Relationship**

- 5.1 The Leader and Cabinet Members will normally:
- (a) acknowledge the right of Member Champions to be consulted on matters relating to their area of interest;
  - (b) take full account of any views offered by Member Champions prior to any decision taken on matters within their area of interest;
  - (c) co-operate with Member Champions in the formulation of action plans they have agreed with the relevant Head of Service; and
  - (d) consider nominating the relevant Member Champion to represent the Council at a relevant conference/seminar on the subject matter of the champion's interest.

## **6. Scrutiny Panels – Working Relationship**

The Scrutiny Panels will normally:

- (a) acknowledge the right of Member Champions to be consulted and to participate in discussions on matters relating to their interest;
- (b) ensure there is appropriate engagement or consultation with Member Champions in the formulation of policy;
- (c) ensure Member Champions are specifically invited to be contributors to any reviews that have a direct bearing on their interest; and
- (d) ensure an opportunity is provided for Member Champions to contribute or to comment on relevant Work Programmes.

## **7. Officer Support to Member Champions**

- 7.1 The Member Champions play an important role in promoting their area of interest on behalf of the Council. In recognition of the importance of the respective roles of Member Champions, officer support will be provided at a senior level.
- 7.2 Each Member Champion will be advised by an appropriate Head of Service, who will meet with the relevant Member Champion on a regular basis to discuss action plans, current activities, national developments or any other matters relating to the interest being championed.
- 7.3 The Head of Service concerned will give reasonable support to the Member Champion, including the provision of Council information, government communications and national publications within their remit.

## **8. Accountability**

- 8.1 At the beginning of each municipal year, each Member Champion shall agree with the relevant Cabinet Member and Head of Service a programme of activity, with SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound) targets, taking into account the Council's priorities.
- 8.2 Each Member Champion will, with the assistance of the relevant Head of Service, prepare an annual report for submission to Council (in the case of a Council function) and the Cabinet (in the case of an executive function) setting out the actions taken during the course of the year. The main measure of performance will be through the annual report.

## **9. Training**

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

**10. Attendance at Seminars Conferences**

The attendance of Member Champions at conferences/seminars relevant to their roles will be in accordance with the existing rules.

**11. Allowances**

At present none of the Member Champions are entitled to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for carrying out their role.

**12. Dispute Mechanism**

In the event that a dispute arises in relation to the operation of this protocol and it cannot be settled informally, then the Chief Executive, having met the person(s) concerned, will arrange and attend a meeting between the Mayor, as Chairman of the Council and the appropriate Party Group Leader(s) (in the case of a Council function) or the Leader and appropriate party group leader(s) (in the case of an executive function) to resolve the situation.

**13. Review of Protocol**

This protocol will be reviewed at the first meeting of the Governance and Business Committee following the annual meeting of the Council each year.

## Annex 1

### Possible Roles of Member Champions

The following examples of roles for Member Champions may be appropriate to include in a job description:

- (a) to promote their area of interest both within and outside the Council;
- (b) to contribute to the review and development of policies pertaining to the area of interest;
- (c) to challenge and question the Council, the Leader and Cabinet Members on issues affecting their area of responsibility;
- (d) to attend meetings of the Council, its Committees and the Cabinet and speak on issues (when permitted by the person presiding the meeting) relevant to their area of responsibility;
- (e) to act as a catalyst for change and improvement in service delivery;
- (f) to monitor the Cabinet Forward Plan and seek information from the Leader, Cabinet Members and officers about forthcoming business and exert influence on behalf of the interest;
- (g) to monitor Scrutiny Panel work plans and activity and seek information and offer views on relevant review subjects and exert influence on behalf of the interest;
- (h) to keep other Councillors up-to-date with activities relevant to the area of interest;
- (i) to network with member champions from other local authorities with the same interest to keep up-to-date with current developments;
- (j) to provide positive support, and on occasions, constructive challenge to officers in driving forward the Council's agenda on relevant issues; and
- (k) to act as the Council's representative on relevant external bodies where appointed to by the Council.

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