

MEMBER CHAMPIONS PROTOCOL

1. INTRODUCTION

Member Champions 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.

Member Champions have evolved in the Council as a result of:

- legislation and national initiatives in relation to the development of services, and
- 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

Member Champions are appointed by the Council, 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.

Member Champions will be appointed at the annual Council meeting each year. Champions will remain in position (assuming they remain an elected Councillor) until a new appointment is made.

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.

A Member Champion may be removed from office at any time by resolution of the Council (in the case a Council function), or by the Leader (in the case of an executive function). A Member Champion may resign from office by giving written notice to the Chief Executive.

3. ROLE OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS

The role of a Member Champion is to:

- promote their area of interest both within and outside the Council;
- contribute to the review and development of policies pertaining to the area of interest;
- challenge and question the Council, the Leader and Cabinet Members on issues affecting their area of responsibility;
- attend meetings of the Council, its Committees and the Cabinet and speak on issues (when permitted by the Chairman) relevant to their area of responsibility;
- act as a catalyst for change and improvement in service delivery;
- 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;
- monitor overview and scrutiny work programmes, work plans and activity and seek information and offer views on relevant review subjects and exert influence on behalf

- of the interest;
- keep other Councillors up-to-date with activities relevant to the area of interest;
- network with member champions from other local authorities with the same interest to keep up-to-date with current developments;
- provide positive support, and on occasions, constructive challenge to officers in driving forward the Council's agenda on relevant issues; and
- act as the Council's representative on relevant external bodies where appointed to by the Council.

4. THE PARAMETERS OF THE MEMBER CHAMPION ROLE

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.

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.

Member Champions will 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 - WORKING RELATIONSHIP

The Leader and members of the Cabinet will normally:

- acknowledge the right of Member Champions to be consulted on matters relating to their area of interest;
- take full account of any views offered by Member Champions prior to any decision taken on matters within their area of interest;
- co-operate with Member Champions in the formulation of action plans agreed with the relevant Service Director; and
- 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. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - WORKING RELATIONSHIP

Overview and Scrutiny will normally:

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

7. OFFICER SUPPORT TO MEMBER CHAMPIONS

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.

Each Member Champion will be advised by an appropriate Service Director, 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.

The relevant Service Director will give reasonable support to the Member Champion, including the provision of Council information, government communications and national publications within their remit.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY

At the beginning of each municipal year, each Member Champion shall agree a programme of activity, taking into account the Council's priorities, with the relevant Portfolio Holder and Service Director.

Each Member Champion will, with the assistance of the relevant Service Director, 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 be able to attend appropriate training courses contained in the Council's Member Training Programme.

The attendance of Member Champions at conferences and seminars relevant to their roles will be in accordance with requirements of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme.

10. ALLOWANCES

Member Champions will not be entitled to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance for carrying out their role.

11. REVIEW OF PROTOCOL

This protocol will be reviewed as required by the Constitution Working Group.