

Report to: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 30 September 2020
Public Document: Yes
Exemption: None
Review date for release None



Subject: Member Champions

Purpose of report: For members to consider the possibility of the reintroduction of a small number of Member Champions.

Recommendation: That Cabinet;

1. Consider the reintroduction of Member Champions following the review by the Democracy and Transparency Portfolio Holder.
2. If it is agreed that there should be Member Champions then to recommend to Council that the Constitution be amended as detailed in Appendix 2 and that the Member Champion areas of interest and appointees be made as detailed in paragraph 4.
3. Agree to receive a report following a further review the role of Member Champions prior to the Annual Meeting of Council in 2021.

Reason for recommendation: So Cabinet can decide whether to reintroduce Member Champions and, if so, to recommend changes to the Constitution to Council together with positions and appointees.

Officer: Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead (Governance and Licensing)

Portfolio Holder: Portfolio Holder Democracy and Transparency

Financial implications: There are no financial implications arising.

Legal implications: There are no legal implications requiring comment.

Equalities impact: Low Impact

Climate change: Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk

Links to background information: [Cllr Millar review paper](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#): Outstanding Council and Council Services

Report in full

1. On 24th June 2020 the Council received a report in relation to its Governance arrangements where the following was reported;

The new administration is of the view that the role of Lead Member needs review and is in an event likely to be superseded by an effective Portfolio Team approach as well as the work of the Governance Review Working Party. While there is likely to be interest in a small number of members supporting the ongoing work of the Council in relation to relevant but discrete areas, it is not appropriate to determine which ones they should be at this time and in light of the timely need to reset our governance framework. It is accepted that should there be an urgent need to reintroduce these roles in the short term, then this could happen with a properly considered report to Council. The changes are therefore to remove Lead Member roles at this time.

2. The Council agreed with this and the Constitution was amended accordingly and no appointments were made.
3. The Portfolio Holder for Democracy and Transparency has completed a review (which can found in the background links) which advocates a small number of Member Champions together with a rationale why. It should be noted that while the Council had called the positions Lead Members, they have previously been referred to as Member Champions.
4. The recommendation from the review is that Cabinet recommend to Council that four new Member Champions be created, and that Cllr Alan Dent be elected Armed Forces Champion, Cllr Vicky Johns be appointed Sport & Exercise Champion, that Cllr Joe Whibley be appointed Culture Champion and Cllr Tony Woodward be appointed Mental Health Champion.
5. There has been discussion about whether these roles should be formalised through the Constitution now, or whether they should be informal to start with and that changes to the Constitution be proposed in May 2021 having reviewed the matter. On balance it is considered that it is appropriate that they are formalised through inclusion in the Constitution now, not least as it gives legitimacy to the role and sets clear expectations and responsibilities.
6. The wording from the Constitution that was deleted in June 2020 is contained at **Appendix 1**. As can be seen it is quite laborious and so it is proposed that a more succinct form of wording is used to effectively give a basic role description, who can hold the role and to set the expectation in terms of responsibilities and reporting on activities. A proposed form of wording for the Constitution is included in **Appendix 2**.
7. The Portfolio Holder is recommending reviewing the position (and remit of any champion role established now if that is the decision) ahead of Annual Council, which is understandable.
8. Looking forward, it might be worth considering whether Member Champions should be subject to questions at Council to further increase the importance of the role and to ensure that the members are accountable for their activities on an ongoing basis. However, this issue can be picked up in the review prior to any further recommendations ahead of Annual Council.

APPENDIX 1

WORDING DELETED FROM THE CONSTITUTION IN RELATION TO LEAD MEMBERS

In Article 6 (Cabinet)

Non-Cabinet Lead Members

A Non-Cabinet Lead Member does not have personal delegated powers to act on the Council's behalf on matters relating to the interest being lead on. The Lead Members will work closely with the Council's Cabinet and with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and within the Council's Constitution.

In this overall context, the principal purpose of the Non-Cabinet Lead Member role is:

1. promoting the interest within the Council, having regard to the Council's overall corporate and service priorities,
2. taking a particular interest in the needs and wishes of any client groups relevant to the interest being lead on,
3. ensuring that decision makers within the Council and externally are aware of issues and opportunities related to the interest
4. contributing to the continuous improvement of services and functions relating to the interest and be a catalyst for change,
5. ensuring good practice within the authority relating to the interest is shared and that examples of good practice elsewhere are brought to the attention of Members and officers,
6. keeping up-to-date with all relevant matters connected with the interest,
7. working with national and local initiatives relevant to the interest,

The primary functional responsibilities are as follows:

8. engaging with relevant local and national bodies and communities of place, culture and interest, promoting the interest, attending meetings as necessary, and relevant conferences with the approval of the relevant Portfolio Holder or Leader,
9. monitoring the work programmes of the Cabinet and of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, working with lead Members proactively to advise, identify, challenge and exert influence,
10. ensuring that all Members of the Council, in particular Cabinet Members, Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen and the Council's Officers are aware of the needs, issues and support available relating to the interest,
11. seeking appropriate opportunities to promote the interest further with Members and Officers through seminars, other awareness events and personal attendance at meetings,
12. to liaise with relevant partner bodies on matters relating to the interest and seek opportunities to direct participation in issue consideration as appropriate,
13. working with a nominated lead Officer in prioritising actions as Lead Member, creating a work plan that achieves a balance between helping to achieve corporate priorities and delivering other priorities identified by the Lead Member,
14. pursuing such personal development and training opportunities to enable effective performance in the role of a Non-Cabinet Lead Member and raise personal awareness of issues relevant to the interest being lead on,

15. presenting an annual report to the Council, in liaison with the relevant Portfolio Holder, on work achieved during the year and identifying priorities for the future.

Note:

A Cabinet Member may also be a Lead Member and in that case their primary responsibility is for the effective performance of executive functions. The Cabinet Lead Member will keep the interest in mind and will raise awareness of this interest and promote as appropriate when executing his executive responsibilities.

[Table of Lead Member positions, holders and related portfolios contained in table after Portfolio Holder list]

Part 5.5

Lead Member Protocol

1. Lead Members have evolved in this Council to focus Member activity on certain aspects of the Council's business and functions.
2. A Lead Member is an Elected Member appointed by the Council to provide a focus on a specific area of the Council's business or a community need to ensure it is given due regard in relation to the activities of the Council and of its partners in local governance.
3. A Lead Member can be an Executive (Cabinet) Member or, more commonly, a non-executive Member.
4. The Council at its annual meeting, or at other Council meetings during the year, will identify the interests to be lead on and will appoint named Councillors to lead on one specific interest. The Council will be entitled to make changes at its annual meeting but the expectation is for a Lead Member to serve a minimum of two years to ensure some stability in the role.
5. Within the context of the interest being lead on, and as part of their overall and individual community leadership responsibilities:
 - A Lead Member will be expected to exert influence on those within the Council who make executive decisions and on other Members of the Council in the context of full Council, regulatory and overview and scrutiny functions.
 - A Lead Member will be expected to exert influence on relevant external partners and bodies in their decision making and planning.
 - A Lead Member will act as a catalyst for change and improvement.
 - A Lead Member will work with others within the Council to maintain efficient, effective and relevant services and policies.
6. By appointing a Member as a Lead Member, the Council is empowering that Member to act in that capacity. It follows, therefore, that the Council will put in place such arrangements as it thinks appropriate to support the Lead Member in that capacity.
7. The above role is set in the context of the specific interest or theme. The following parameters apply to the role.
 - All Lead Members must act reasonably in the role.

- All Lead Members must recognise and work effectively within the political management and executive working arrangements agreed by the Council.

8. A Lead Member who is NOT an Executive Member:

- is effectively given authority by the Council to take all reasonable actions judged by the Member as being necessary to perform the role of Lead Member,
- cannot commit the Council in any way that is contrary to established policy and practice, but may confirm a Council position as stated in published policy,
- cannot make decisions that bind the Council,
- is not a recognised media contact on behalf of the Council, but is permitted to contribute to media publicity with the prior agreement of the relevant Cabinet Member or Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny,
- is entitled to have access to information being held by the Council's Officers relating to the interest being lead on and access to a reasonable amount of Officer time to discuss that information (although the Lead Member may not commit Officer time to such an extent that other priority work required of Officers is prejudiced),
- should agree, with the relevant Portfolio Holder/Leader, a programme of activity that can be generally endorsed and which sets out clearly the areas of activity which the Lead Member can be expected to be involved in and for which practical/administrative support can be given,
- the work programme must reflect the Council's overall priorities.

9. A Lead Member who is a Member of the Executive (Cabinet) already has structured support within the Council and certain legal responsibilities and functions to perform. An Executive Member has the decision making powers delegated by the Leader's Scheme of delegations and to that extent may commit the Council as long as the overall policy framework and Portfolio Holder decision making procedures are complied with and may act as a media spokesperson.

APPENDIX 2

Suggested wording to be inserted into the Constitution for Member Champions

Part 5.5 - Member Champion Protocol

Member Champions

Member Champions exist to provide a voice for traditionally underrepresented groups, or issues which need to be kept at the forefront of council business although they may not be the responsibility of any individual or committee and / or which may cross a number of different areas.

Member Champions are elected councillors (but not a Cabinet Member / Assistant Portfolio Holder) who will seek to make sure that their area of interest is taken into account when Council policy is being developed and decisions taken.

Council, on the advice of Cabinet, will decide on what areas of interest to have Member Champions for and who the appointees shall be. Appointments will be made at Annual Council and while changes can be made each year the expectation is that appointees will be appointed for a minimum of 2 years to ensure continuity in the role.

Responsibilities

Within the context of the powers of the Council and having regard to the Council's overall corporate priorities, the Member Champion will:

- Make sure that their area of interest is taken into account when the Council is developing policy or making decisions and exert influence in that regard.
- Act as a catalyst for change and improvement including working with national and local initiatives relevant to their area.
- Ask questions about performance and resourcing for their area.
- Raise the profile of their area within, and outside, the Council.
- Promote good practice within the Council and make the authority aware of good practice from elsewhere.
- Engage with, and exert influence on, external partners and bodies who work in the area including sharing good practice where appropriate.
- Engage with other members, officers and community groups who have an interest / stake in the area.
- Keep up-to-date with all relevant matters connected with the area and pursue relevant personal development and training opportunities.

Mutual Expectations

The Council is empowering a Member Champion and therefore will put in place such arrangements as it considers appropriate to support the Member Champion – this includes access to information held by the Council relating to their area and access to a reasonable amount of Officer (provided work priority of Officers is not prejudiced).

The Council expects Member Champions to act reasonably when carrying out their role and recognise, and work effectively within, the political management and corporate working arrangements of the Council.

A Member Champion cannot take decisions that bind the Council or commit the Council in a way that is contrary to established policy or practice. Otherwise the Member Champion may take all

reasonable actions judged by the Member as being necessary to perform their role including engaging with the media to confirm a Council position as stated in published policy or expressing a personal view in their capacity as the Member Champion.

Reporting

Member Champions shall provide a written report to Annual Council on work achieved during the year and identifying priorities for the future.