

# **Local Protocol – Member Champions**

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**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 Cabinet is responsible for appointing all the member champions. All group leaders will be consulted before any appointments are confirmed by the Cabinet. Any member of the Council may be member champion, including the Leader of the Council.
- 2.2 Member champions will 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 Cabinet must be communicated in writing to the Chief Executive and a record of decision published.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 A member champion may be removed from office at any time by the Cabinet by written notice to the Chief Executive, the member champion being removed and all the group leaders.
- 2.5 Any member champion may resign from office by giving written notice to the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council.

**3. Role of Member Champions**

- 3.1 Member champions may have a description of their respective roles provided by the decision-maker. Roles may be developed by the relevant Director/Executive Head in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member and the champion concerned. A generic role description for champions is set out in Annex 1 to this protocol which will apply to all member champions.

**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 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. Leader of the Council/Cabinet Members – Working Relationship with Member Champions**

5.1 The Leader of the Council/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 on matters within their area of interest;
- (c) co-operate with champions in the formulation of action plans they have agreed with the relevant officer; and
- (d) consider nominating the relevant champion to represent the Council at a relevant conference/seminar on the subject matter of the champions interest.

**6. Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator/Scrutiny Leads – Working Relationship with Member Champions**

6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator/scrutiny leads will normally:

- (a) acknowledge the right of champions to be consulted and to participate in discussions on matters relating to their interest;
- (b) ensure there is appropriate engagement or consultation with champions in the formulation of policy;
- (c) ensure 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 champions to contribute or to comment on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

**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 champions, officer support will be provided at a senior level.

7.2 Each member champion will be advised by an appropriate officer (normally Executive Head or above). The officer will meet with the relevant member champion as regularly as the officer and the relevant member champion consider necessary to discuss action plans, current activities, national developments or any other matters relating to the interest being championed.

7.3 The officer 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 A member champion may be questioned by another member of the Council on their respective area of interest at a meeting of Council in accordance with Standing Order A12.1 in relation to council meetings.

**9. Training**

- 9.1 All member champions will normally have the opportunity to attend appropriate training courses contained in the Council's Member Development Programme in accordance with the Protocol on Relations between the Leader of the Council and Political Groups.

**10. Attendance at Seminars Conferences**

- 10.1 The attendance of member champions at conferences/seminars relevant to their roles will be in accordance with the Protocol on Relations between the Leader of the Council and Political Groups.

**11. Allowances**

- 11.1 None of the member champions are entitled to receive a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for carrying out their role. The Independent Remuneration Panel may consider whether the position of a member champion should attract an SRA.

**12. Dispute Mechanism**

- 12.1 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/her to determine the dispute) such information as he/she 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 a job description:

- (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 challenge and question the Council and (other) Cabinet Members on issues affecting their area;
- (e) 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;
- (f) To act as a catalyst for change and improvement in service delivery;
- (g) To monitor the Forward Plan and seek information from the relevant officers and (other) Cabinet Members about forthcoming business and exert influence on behalf of the interest;
- (h) 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;
- (i) To seek to place appropriate items on member meeting agendas;
- (j) To keep other councillors up-to-date with activities relevant to the area of interest;
- (k) To network with member champions from other local authorities with the same interest to keep up-to-date with current developments;
- (l) To provide positive support, and on occasions, constructive challenge to officers in driving forward the Council's agenda on relevant issues; and
- (m) To act as the Council's representative on relevant external bodies where Council representation is required or sought.