



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

Date 20th March 2018

Subject: Member Champions Review

Report by:

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Purpose / Summary:

To propose changes to the way in which Member Champions report back to fellow Members, and to look at the way in which the appointments are structured.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1) The number of Member Champions be reduced from the start of the 2018/19 civic year;**
- 2) To not nominate Member Champions for areas where a committee Chair or Vice-Chair already has responsibility from the start of the 2018/19 civic year;**
- 3) Updates from Member Champions to come every 6 months through the West Lindsey newsletter from the start of the 2018/19 civic year;**
- 4) Areas that Member Champions are responsible for to be reviewed again in May 2019; Member Champion roles to be determined for the first meeting(s) of the 2018/19 civic year for both Corporate Policy and Resources and Prosperous Communities;**
- 5) Members are asked to comment on the proposed job description attached at Appendix 4, and recommend its adoption to**

Governance and Audit committee.
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IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

None arising from this report

Financial : FIN/159/18/CC

At present no member champions are entitled to receive Special Responsibility Allowances. Any change to this position would require recommendation by the Remuneration Panel and approval of Full Council. Travel expenses can be claimed for Member Champion duties.

Staffing :

None.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :
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None arising from this report.

Risk Assessment :

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :
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None.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
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None.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

x

1 Background

- 1.1 Currently, there are 13 Member Champions that were appointed at Prosperous Communities committee on 6 June 2017. These were:

Heritage and Tourism
Housing
Planning
ED/Town Centre
Health
Localism/Neigh Plans
Community Safety/ASB
Young People/Skills
Transport
Safeguarding/Mental Health
Volunteering
Democracy
Armed Forces

Paul Howitt-Cowan
Jessie Milne
Stuart Kinch
Sheila Bibb
Angela White
Steve England
Trevor Young
Reg Shore
Lewis Strange
Gill Bardsley
Jessie Milne
Roger Patterson
Tom Smith

- 1.2 At the same meeting, Prosperous Communities committee asked that 'a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee regarding the role, purpose and positions held by Member Champions, in order that their future use could be better assessed'.
- 1.3 On 15 September 2017 an email was sent out to Team Managers asking them for their feedback on work they had done with Member Champions, and how aware of Member Champions they were. The feedback received is summarised in Appendix 1 (full, anonymous responses can be provided on request). There was also the chance at this stage to comment on a draft job description;
- 1.4 Following this, a further email went to the Member Champions themselves gauging opinion on how the role of a Member Champion could be improved or changed. These responses are collected in Appendix 2 (again, full, anonymous responses can be provided on request);

1.5 Lastly, a second email went to member Champions following this asking for feedback on the draft job description, as well as asking the following questions:

- Within the job description, would you like to see further definition on the different Member Champion roles?
- Some of the Member Champion roles overlap with the roles of committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Should this lead to collaborative work between a Member Champion and a committee Chair, or should there be no Member Champion under these circumstances?
- What, in your view, are the areas that need Member Champions?
- Would you favour a review of Member Champion roles every 18 months at Prosperous Communities committee?
- Would you favour reports coming to Prosperous Communities committee every 6 months with an update to committee on the work that has been undertaken by each Member Champion (due to the current number of Member Champions, this would need to be done at two separate meetings)?

The feedback for this email can be seen in Appendix 3. The draft job description is attached at Appendix 4;

1.6 Currently, either the Corporate Policy and Resources committee or Prosperous Communities committee can appoint Member Champions for a civic year. In 2017, only Prosperous Communities appointed any Member Champions.

2 PROPOSALS

2.1 Currently there is no job description for the role of Member Champions, and no single route for them to feed back to their fellow Members, or into the Committee structure. A proposed Job Description is attached at Appendix 4. Having a Job Description would bring Member Champions into line with other positions within the Council that Members can hold;

2.2 All of the areas named in 1.1 are already covered by the remit of a committee. In particular, the Constitution lists Prosperous Communities as having responsibility for many of these areas; this would mean that the Chair and Vice-Chairs of Prosperous Communities have responsibility for these streams of work already.

3 REVIEW

3.1 Out of the research carried out with Member Champions, there were many different ideas on how often a review of roles should be carried out. 2 years seems to be the best option (from May 2019). Clearly, if an important topic arises that would be ideal for a Member Champion (and cannot be covered by a Chair or Vice-Chair of a committee), then it could still be brought to the relevant committee by either of the Policy Chairs for approval;

- 3.2 It is proposed that updates from Member Champions will come six monthly through the new West Lindsey newsletter as from the start of the 2018/19 civic year;
- 3.3 One piece of feedback that came from the Prosperous Communities meeting in June 2017 was that Member Champions should be appointed on 'expertise as opposed to a general interest of a Member'. In the main, Member Champions will be suggested by Policy Chairs at the start of the civic year and voted on by members of the respective Policy committees.
- 3.4 Another piece of feedback from current Member Champions was that overall, it seemed preferable for Members to approach relevant officers once appointed to a Member Champion role, rather than expecting officers to make the first approach.

4 OTHER COUNCILS

- 4.1 **Havering Borough Council:** Havering have six Member Champions supporting Portfolio Holders, and other Councillors with 'designated responsibilities'. Member Champions all provide an annual report to Council;
- 4.2 **Test Valley Borough Council:** Test Valley have five Member Champions commissioned by Cabinet. These are appointed on a yearly basis;

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report and job description aims to give some structure to the appointment and role of Member Champions, whilst still allowing some flexibility particularly when it comes to appointments. It also gives members an insight into how the role is seen by other Member Champions, and Team Managers.

Member Champions Summary

I asked questions of Managers, the Leader, and current Member Champions. The response from Managers was good, and the questions asked were as below (in addition to asking for opinions on the Job Specification that Katie had drafted previously):

I want to find out how aware of 'Member Champions' you all are, and how much involvement you have all had with them (if any). Even if you have had no involvement with any of the Member Champions, can you let me know?

- I haven't had any involvement with Member Champions. It seems a bit strange that some Champions mirror individual service areas (Planning/Housing), etc, while others don't. Also feels strange that there is no Champion for Ops in some form, even if it is linked to the Environment;
- We have met with Jessie Milne previously, however we haven't for a number of months. If I am honest, I don't know how useful it is and in some ways it has been confusing as we are normally dealing with the relevant committee chair. I am not clear as to what we are being asked to do with the champion in terms of engaging them and I think it would be helpful to review their role and effectiveness;
- I was not aware of the full list of champions so thanks for sending that – I have been involved with Tom Smith and I did know he was Armed Forces and I have previously been involved with Jessie for Housing matters and I would have no hesitation in contacting either of them if I needed and advice or support on Housing Benefits or Armed Forces customers. I have been involved with some of the Safeguarding work that Michelle Howard leads and I do know Gill Bardsley is very informed and supportive;
- I knew about Gill Bardsley as she has been to a safeguarding meeting I attended, but I wouldn't have known she was the champion otherwise. I don't know about the others;
- The only one I've had dealings with in the last 2 years is Anne Welburn as web champion, but she's not on your list;
- I was aware of the member champions but not really clear on the role vis a vis committee chairs. Sheila would always be my 'go to' member but in her role as PC chair rather than member champion, and likewise Jeff in his role as CPR chair. In Sheila's case I see she is both chair and member champion so no problems there but leads to the question of whether we need both and how they interact. Certainly I think the role needs more promotion and clarification;
- I engage frequently with Cllr Howitt-Cowan in his role as Heritage and Tourism Champion. We have a bi-monthly Leisure, Culture, Events and Tourism group meeting which works really well and has good level of nominated Member attendance. Cllr Howitt-Cowan chairs this meeting as part of this Member Champion role and this has worked really well when taking papers to Prosperous Communities as recommendations have had scrutiny at our meetings and Members

then become your ambassadors in Committee. Also I've had involvement with Cllr Bardsley who is very supportive of the Safeguarding group and their work.

- I think it's a missed opportunity, we tend to engage with committee chairs who are up the speed with the key challenges and work we are doing.

In terms of others I'm aware of:

1) safeguarding & mental health - Cllr Bardsley actively engaged with us and attends the corporate working group. This role is part of the corporate safeguarding structure and included in the yearbook to give members a member point of contact for safeguarding. This role seems to have more structure and fit.

2) health - Cllr White has been appointed as health champion and part of this is on the health commission. However, given Cllr Bibbs role as chair of the health commission and chair of prosperous she has been much more actively involved in the health work. The health commission has shown me how valuable a member and officer relationship can be and I would advocate this model for key areas of work.

3) armed forces - Cllr Smith has taken an active interest and ensures that armed forces considerations are articulated.

Personally I think there is a role for member champions. However I'm not sure the current model is right and it is not achieving the value it could. Without portfolio holders in our structure, I think there is a place for a champion role for key services / themes and I would welcome further discussion on the champion role and what would be most effective and valuable.

- I am aware of the Member Champions and the role that they play within the organisation. My only real involvement has been with Cllr Young relating to ASB issues which was not really my area and Cllr Bardsley as I sit on the safeguarding working group;

Appendix 2

I then asked current Member Champions a series of questions on their role and how they saw it.

- a Champion may be appointed if there is felt to be a need for one Councillor to take an interest in a particular area of the Council's work
- there may only be a need for a specific champion for a limited period of time, while that area of work is developing, or there is a new Government initiative being rolled out. Other areas may be needed long term;
- In the past the champions role has not been clearly defined, and as such very much what the member made of it, and depended on just what it was being championed. In all cases it should be about representing members views at the same time supporting officers in delivering council's strategy and promoting that strategy to the public and other stakeholders;
- Each champion is chosen because they have a specific interest or expertise to bring to the role, in my case neighbourhood planning (NP) and localism. How that is done is down to the individual, there are no guidelines;
- The relationship between the two is the key to success, one without the other is doomed to fail. The level of co-operation will of course vary dependent on the subject, but mutual respect leads to mutual understanding in all things;
- Neither myself or the officers have taken steps to meet and in planning I think we should be working together rather than me plough a lonely furrow. To give staff their due, I think the creation of champions was ill defined, nebulous and some of us have been left on our own!
- I think there is an important role for champions, in that they are able to flag up both interest and knowledge to facilitate council business;
- I suppose that I ought to do more, but the dice are loaded against anyone trying to change anything. Other councillors represent West Lindsey on health matters:- Councillor Bibb on the Wellbeing Board and Paul Howitt-Cowan on the Lincolnshire Health Scrutiny Committee.
- The relationship between the lead officer and member champion should be one of mutual respect and an ability for the member champion to ask for advice and guidance;
- A Champion is one who focuses on a specific area of council work and supports the responsible officer(s) in their work as well as keeping other members informed. It also involves making members views known to officers and on occasion being the public voice for the relevant area.

Appendix 3

There was one final round of emails to Member Champions asking specifics on the job description, and whether champions wanted to see further definition on the role. Responses were received from Cllrs Bardsley, Howitt-Cowan, Bibb, England, Kinch and Smith. Points are highlighted as below:

- Essentially in my opinion, they are nominated ad hoc, and not set in stone.
- They should not replace or duplicate any other member activity, nor complicate decision making, nor offer another layer of scrutiny which could or is carried out within existing frameworks;
- We may need reassurances that officers have a clear understanding and appreciation of the role of champions;
- Areas of need will come and go, however neighbourhood plans
Heritage/ tourism
Health
Forces Covenant
for eg are staple areas;
- At the end of the day the role is dependent on the enthusiasm, and commitment of the champion, and those who fall short need to be removed;
- There needs to be flexibility as the subject areas and opportunities to engage will differ greatly;
- I would tend to favour no member champions where there is an overlap with a Committee Chair for two reasons - first it is not efficient to have this duplication; secondly where the member champion is a member of an opposition party it could lead to a conflict of interests and also make something political when it shouldn't be.
- Areas for MC's to cover would be those which are not automatically covered in normal committee work e.g. Safeguarding, Employment & Skills, Armed Forces etc. I don't think we need them for areas such as Housing, Planning, Economic Development etc as those should be picked up by the relevant Chairs.
- They do need to be reviewed regularly and 18 months would enable any changes to be made in time for the next civic year;
- There does need to be a reporting mechanism. This could be Prosperous, or alternatively the newsletter;
- I see no conflict in a chair or vice chair being a champion, rather the opposite. Collaboration between all concerned is essential;
- I would suggest annual review before the first full council of the new administrative year, but again with the flexibility to appoint a champion at any time if it was deemed worthwhile;
- Reporting every six months is worthwhile, all though in my case officers provide all members with a monthly progress report, useful given that most members have a neighbourhood plan at some stage in their ward;
- Planning needs a Member Champion for sure! I was member champion for a while but I found it difficult in my position to be critical! I think all other areas are covered;

- where there is a clear overlap between committee chairs and vice chairs they should actively seek the views of the member champion and their knowledge along with the lead officer who works with the member champion to ensure the best outcome is achieved.
- i believe areas that require a member champion are areas that require specialist knowledge, understanding or interest and/or dedication by the elected member to ensure that the issue is given due weight and prevalence in council policies, such as the armed forces children and young people and skills health and safeguarding;
- i would favour the role of member champions being reviewed every four years unless the majority of member champions requested an earlier review and could site reasons for such a request;
- In respect to your question on how frequently should member champions report to prosperous I think every six months is too frequent and would favour a yearly report this would again reduce the risk of any issues relating to committee time and would also enable the member champion to focus on their area of responsibility rather than worrying about writing a report every six months;

Member Champion Role Description

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 communications and positive action over the issue they represent.

2 Role of Member Champions

- 2.1 All member Champions will have an allocated area of responsibility agreed at the first relevant Policy committee on an annual basis
- 2.2 All Member Champions must act reasonably in their role and recognise and work within the Political management and working arrangements adopted by the Council. As such the Member Champion must work with and communicate regularly with the relevant Committee chairs
- 2.3 A member 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.

3 Leader and Committee Chairs

- 3.1 The Leader and Chairs of Policy Committees will:
- 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 the Member Champions prior to making decisions relating to the their area of interest
 - c) Co-operate with member Champions in the formulation of action plans they have developed with lead officers
 - d) Consider nominating champions to represent the Council at relevant conferences/seminar on the subject matter of the member's interest

4. Allowances

- 4.1 At present no member champions are entitled to receive Special Responsibility Allowances. Any change to this position would require recommendation by the Remuneration Panel and approval of Full Council.
- 4.2 Member Champions can, if they wish, claim dependant carers', travelling and subsistence expenses at a meeting or event deemed relevant to the appointed Member Champion position.

5. Terms

- 5.1 In year changes and additions (where necessary, and after consultation with either of the Policy Chairs) to be appointed at the next available relevant policy committee.

6. Roles of champions

- To represent their area of interest both within and outside the Council in line with Council policy.
- To contribute to the review and development of policies pertaining to their area of interest
- To challenge and question the Council, the Leader and the Policy Committees on issues relevant to their area of responsibility
- To act as a catalyst for change and improvement in service delivery
- To monitor the forward plan and seek information from the Leader, Committee Chairs and Officers about forthcoming business and exert influence on behalf of the interest
- To keep councillors of all parties up to date with activities in relevant to the area of interest
- To network with member champions from other local authorities with the same interest to keep up to date with current developments
- To provide positive support and on occasions constructive challenge to officers in driving forward the Council agenda on relevant issues

To act as the Council's representative on relevant external bodies where appointed to by the Council.