

Cherwell District Council

Executive

10 January 2022

Member Champion Review

Report of Director – Law and Governance

This report is public

Purpose of report

To consider the findings of the Member Champion Review.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To merge the roles of heritage and design Member Champion with the Lead Member for Planning portfolio, and the generations together Member Champion with the Lead Member for Wellbeing portfolio, taking effect from the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.
- 1.2 To retain the Military Member Champion role, to be appointed annually.
- 1.3 That the Terms of Reference for Member Champions be amended as shown in appendix 3, taking effect from the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Member Champions were officially introduced at Cherwell District Council (CDC) in May 2012, following approval by the Executive (28 May 2012 meeting). They are referred to in Part 12, paragraph 12.7 of the Constitution.
- 2.2 In June 2021 the Leader of the Council requested that the Director Law and Governance undertake a review of Member Champion appointments and Terms of Reference, to ensure the roles are still fit for purpose.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The role of a Member Champion was to:

“carry out the following functions with the regard to the issue for which they have been appointed Champion, within the Terms of Reference as set out:

- Ambassador - to raise the profile of an issue, provide a visible focus and raise the profile of an issue both internally and externally to the Council;
- Adviser to the Council in relation to the issue to provide a source expertise;
- Bringing issues to the Council's attention;
- Liaising with and providing a bridge between the Council and external groups, bodies and communities; and
- May be appointed by Council to outside bodies by virtue of office".

3.2 The Terms of Reference agreed for the Member Champion roles are attached at appendix 1 to this report.

3.3 As of June 2021 the following Member Champion appointments are currently in place:

Role	Councillor	Appointed in	Appointed by	Appointment ends
Design	Colin Clarke	July 2014	Lead Member decision	May 2023
Military	Andrew McHugh	June 2019	Executive decision	May 2022
Generations Together	Andrew McHugh	June 2019	Executive decision	May 2022
Heritage	Colin Clarke	June 2021	Executive decision	May 2023

3.4 Details of previous Member Champion roles and appointees are included in appendix 2 to this report.

3.5 An appointment was made to the role of Cycling Member Champion in June 2019. This role was reviewed in June 2021 and marked as 'TBC' on the report submitted to Executive.

3.6 Executive resolved to delegate authority to the Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to appoint Members to any outstanding vacancies. An appointment has not yet been made to this role.

3.7 Whilst initially appointed to coincide with a term of office, the number of champions appointed has reduced since the roles were introduced in 2012.

3.8 Only two new Champion roles have been created, Military in 2018, and Cycling in 2019 to coincide with Oxfordshire hosting a stage of the Women's Tour.

3.9 Member Champion Roles were originally introduced to "support...agreed Council policies and objectives", therefore the reduction in appointments is a reflection of the agreed Council priorities for each year; for example, the Climate Change Member Champion role was not re-appointed to in May 2020. The business plan for 2020-2021 included a strategic priority of 'leading on environmental sustainability',

with specific reference to the council's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030, as well as promoting the green economy. These aspects of the priorities fall under the remit of the Lead Member for Clean and Green, so to have a Member Champion would be a duplication of responsibility.

- 3.10 Similarly the business plan for 2021-2022 includes the priority of 'healthy, resilient and engaged communities', with a specific reference to 'provide opportunities to support active lifestyles', of which cycling would be one aspect.
- 3.11 Of the roles which currently have appointees, all with the exception of the Military Champion are covered by the agreed priorities for 2021-2022.
- 3.12 The currently appointed Member Champions, Councillors Colin Clarke and Andrew McHugh, have been involved in the review and have given details of their experiences of the roles.
- 3.13 Councillor Clarke reported that the roles of design and heritage Champion are intrinsically linked to the Lead Member for Planning role, and there is no differentiation between the roles. Link officers for the Champion roles are the same as those that Councillor Clarke liaises with regarding Lead Member issues, and he has not spent any time working on design or heritage matters specifically as Member Champion.
- 3.14 Councillor McHugh reported a similar situation with the Generations Together champion role and the Lead Member for Wellbeing, as the Champion role works well as a combined role with the portfolio. The Champion role involves liaison with the Community Development Team, which is a cross-over with the Lead Member role.
- 3.15 Councillor McHugh explained that the Military Member Champion role is quite different from the Lead Member role. Councillor McHugh spends approximately a day a week on work specifically linked to being Member Champion, and engages with a number of outside bodies including the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association for the South East (SERFCA) and Heyford and Bicester Veterans.
- 3.16 The Corporate Director - Commercial Development Assets and Investments acts as link officer for the Member Champion role at CDC, and also chairs the Oxfordshire Civilian Military Partnership, which prioritises issues related to the Military.
- 3.17 The Corporate Director – Commercial Development Assets and Investments is of the view that a Military Member Champion is a crucial role, particularly as CDC has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and is a Silver member of the Defence Employee Recognition Scheme (ERS), both of which require the council to pledge to support the Military community. Although having a Member Champion is not a specific requirement of either the Covenant or the ERS, all Councils in Oxfordshire and the South East of England have appointed a Champion.
- 3.18 In addition to the Armed Forces Covenant and the ERS, the Armed Forces Bill is currently in the final stages of progression through Parliament and is expected to come into force in 2022.

- 3.19 The Bill will introduce a legal duty for public bodies to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. Having a Military Member Champion would ensure that CDC continue to give the required priority to Military issues.
- 3.20 Since 2018 an annual report has been submitted to the first Executive meeting of the Municipal Year in June, to appoint representatives to Outside Bodies. Details of Member Champion appointments are included in the report, which usually includes a delegation to the Director of Law and Governance to make changes to appointments as required throughout the year, in consultation with the Leader of the Council. Prior to 2018, appointments were made via a Lead Member decision, as the Leader of the Council has appropriate delegation to make such appointments.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Taking into account the feedback from Councillors Clarke and McHugh, it is recommended to merge the roles of heritage and design Member Champion with the Lead Member for Planning portfolio, and the generations together Member Champion with the Lead Member for Wellbeing portfolio, taking effect from the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.
- 4.2 The Assistant Director – Planning and Development has confirmed that the removal of the design and heritage Champion roles would not cause any operational issues, as all aspects of design and heritage are discussed with Councillor Clarke in his role as Lead Member for Planning.
- 4.3 It is recommended that the Military Member Champion role remains in place, to be appointed annually via a report to Executive which also appoints representatives to Outside Bodies.
- 4.4 Terms of Reference for Member Champions are recommended to remain broadly the same as initially introduced, subject to amendments as shown in appendix 3. Text shown in *italics* are proposed inclusions, with text struck through being proposed deletions.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 Councillor Colin Clarke, Lead Member for Planning and current Heritage and Design Member Champion – see paragraph 3.10.
- 5.2 Councillor Andrew McHugh, Lead Member for Wellbeing and current Military Member Champion – see paragraphs 3.11 and 3.12.
- 5.3 Corporate Director - Commercial Development Assets and Investments – see paragraphs 3.13 and 3.14.
- 5.4 Assistant Director – Planning and Economy – see paragraph 4.2

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To retain all Member Champion roles, appointing non-Executive Members to the positions. This is rejected, as the changing Council priorities have aligned the Champion roles with Lead Member portfolios, except the Military Member Champion, as evidenced through discussions with the existing Champions. Maintaining a Champion role alongside the Executive Lead Member portfolio would be duplicating work

Option 2: To abolish/cease all Member Champion roles. This is also rejected, as removing the Military Champion role would give an impression of not giving due priority to the military community

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications as a result of these recommendations. Member Champion roles do not have a special responsibility allowance, and the reduction in the number of roles will not have any budgetary savings. Any travel or subsistence claims made in relation to the remaining Military Champion appointment can be met from existing budgets.

Comments checked by:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director – Finance

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 There are no legal implications as a result of these recommendations, as there is no obligation for the Council to appoint Member Champions.

Comments checked by:

Christopher Mace, Solicitor.

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Risk Implications

- 7.3 There are no risk implications as a result of these recommendations.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader

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Equalities and Inclusion Implications

- 7.4 There are no Equalities and Inclusion implications as a result of these recommendations. The changing Council priorities have led to Executive Lead

Member portfolios including the areas covered by early Member Champion appointments. The Equalities and Climate Impact Assessment asks officers to consider the impact of decisions on armed forces families/veterans so retaining the role of the Military Champion also helps to support our wider commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Comments checked by:

Lauren Rushen, Senior Policy Officer. Lauren.rushen@oxfordshire.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision **No**

Financial Threshold Met: **No**

Community Impact Threshold Met: **No**

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

All

Lead Councillor

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 – Current Member Champion Terms of Reference
- Appendix 2 – Previous Member Champion appointments and post holders
- Appendix 3 – Proposed amendments to Member Champion Terms of Reference

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

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