

COUNCIL: 24 JULY 2014

AGENDA ITEM: 19

REPORT OF COUNTY CLERK & MONITORING OFFICER

MEMBER CHAMPIONS

Background

1. The Council at its meeting on 19 December 2013 agreed to adopt the role description and person specification for Member Champions as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
2. Cabinet, at its meeting on 15 May 2014, recognised the need to build on the this decision by agreeing a framework within which Member Champions can successfully contribute to more effective policy and decision making across the Council. Cabinet resolved that the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer be authorised in consultation with the Deputy Leader to invite expressions of interest from non-executive Members to serve as Member Champions including a Member Champion for Diversity and Equalities to enable appointments to be made at full Council in due course.

Issues

3. Member Champions are elected Members who, in addition to their other Council responsibilities, make sure that the issue or group that they are championing are taken into account when Council policy is being developed and decisions are made.
4. It should be noted that individual Cabinet Members will, due to their Portfolio responsibilities, often also have a Champion role. In addition, certain Committee Chairs will also undertake such roles - for example, the Chair of Democratic Services is the Member Development Champion for the Council.
5. Following the Cabinet decision in May 2014, the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer wrote to all Members seeking expressions of interest. A Workshop event was subsequently held to discuss the potential establishment of member Champions with interested Members.
6. The Report of the Expert Group on Diversity in Local Government "On Balance: Diversifying Democracy in Local Government in Wales" published earlier this year, highlighted the importance of Member Champions with a particular role to encourage the training and development of Councillors. The report recommended that Member Champions in each Council should be

encouraged to play an external role in encouraging greater participation especially among women in local government.

7. Initial discussions between the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Leader on this matter clarified the importance of any Champion role reflecting priorities or objectives set out in the Corporate Plan. Subsequent discussions with the Cabinet Member for Safety, Engagement & Democracy identified the following three areas as appropriate for the initial establishment of Member Champions:
 - Diversity and Equality (to address the issues raised in paragraph 6, above)
 - Community and Food Growing (to address issues raised by the Notice of Motion on Allotments to Council on 17 April 2014)
 - Cycling and Sustainable Transport
8. Each role will need to be set in the context of the specific interest or theme and may include the following functions: -
 - To provide a focus on their specific issues and make the authority aware of good practice;
 - To ask questions about performance and resourcing for the area;
 - To engage with external bodies who work in the area;
 - To engage with community groups with an interest / stake in the area;
 - To engage internally with, and complement the work of, the Cabinet Member and lead officers in relation to the role;
 - To engage internally with the scrutiny function;
 - To report action to other Councillors via relevant Committee and Council meetings; other relevant bodies; or electronically.
9. The appointed Member Champions will recognise and work effectively within the political management and executive working arrangements agreed by Council. The Champions will have no decision making powers; may not commit the Council to any course of action; or any Council resources; and do not attract a Special Responsibility Allowance.
10. It is important to ensure that there are clearly drawn lines of distinction between individual Cabinet Member responsibilities and those of Member Champions to ensure the work of both Members are complementary and in the wider interests of the Council, its communities and citizens. It is proposed, therefore, that the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer be authorised to develop specific individual role descriptions for each Champion role to ensure there is a clearly understood distinction between Cabinet Member roles and responsibilities and those of Member Champions.
11. Following discussions with the relevant Cabinet Member and the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer, it is proposed that the Champion roles identified in paragraph 7, above, be filled by Councillor Corria (Diversity and Equality); Councillor Gordon (Cycling and Sustainable Transport ; and Councillor Holden (Community and Food Growing).

Legal Implications

12. The relevant legal provisions are set out in the body of the report.

Financial Implications

13. The relevant financial provisions are set out in the body of the report. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council

- (1) appoint Councillor Corria as Member Champion for Diversity and Equalities; Councillor Gordon as Member Champion for Cycling and Sustainable Transport; and Councillor Holden as Member Champion for Community & Food Growing;
- (2) authorise the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer to develop specific individual role descriptions for each Champion role to ensure there is a clearly understood distinction between Cabinet member roles and responsibilities and those of Member Champions

MARIE ROSENTHAL
County Clerk and Monitoring Officer
18 July 2014

Member Champion Person Specification

Within the Council

- Understanding of the area of interest being championed in terms of council strategies and policy, good practice, improvement and national agendas and the needs of the client group
- Ability to engage with a range of members and officers around the area of interest and listening to requirements
- Ability to advocate on behalf of the area of interest within the council

In the Community

- Understanding of the needs of the community in relation to the interest
- Ability to engage with citizens and community groups in matters related to the interest.
- Ability to lead and support local initiatives related to the interest.
- Ability to represent the position of the council to the community in relation to the interest.