

Agenda Item

Executive Board

28 November 2007

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Member Champions – role and protocol

Summary

At a recent facilitated workshop, elected Member Champions advised that there was some confusion about their role and felt it would be helpful for the Council to agree a role description and terms of reference.

Recommendation

1. that the generic role description for non-Executive Member Champions and protocol/terms of reference for appointed Member Champions, as set out in appendices to this report, be agreed and the protocol incorporated in the Council's Constitution,
2. that this Council agrees to host the first South West Member Champion networking conference in January 2008 at which general awareness of the role can be developed and best practice shared.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To define the role and terms of reference for the Council's Member Champions to help the Council achieve its priorities. There is a need to clarify the relationship of the Member Champion with other Members and with other service providing partners.

b) Alternative Options

The Member Champions have already been appointed by Council and so clarifying their role and terms of reference is an essential next step.

c) Risk Considerations

Clarification of the Champions' roles and terms of reference mean that there will be less likelihood of misunderstanding of what the Champions have been appointed to achieve. There is a risk that unless a protocol is agreed, that a Champion could be working in isolation and without support. There needs to be a clear connection between the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny and the Council's overall priorities.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

At the Annual Meeting of the Council, Members agreed to the appointment of Member Champions to provide a focus on specific areas of the Council's business or a community need.

e) Date for Review of Decision

The appointment of Member Champions to be reviewed at the Annual Meeting of the Council

1 Main Body of the Report

A number of Member Champions were appointed at the Annual Meeting of the Council when Members agreed to these key responsibilities of Champions.

- Ensuring issues of concern on the interest being championed are taken into account in the preparation of key service and corporate plans,
- Ensuring issues of concern on the interest are taken into account by the relevant decision makers within the council and externally,
- Promoting and taking an interest in the needs of the client group/interest,
- Advocating good practice within the authority on matters relating to the interest,
- Working with key officers to ensure clear understanding of relevant issues,
- Engaging with other Councillors in order to raise their awareness and to seek their views,
- Engaging with relevant community groups
- Undertaking training relevant to the post.

Further Member Champions were appointed at the October meeting of the Council.

The Council now has the following Member Champions:

Business	G P Brown
Community Safety	C F A Gibbings
Culture	Miss V Ash
Data Quality	G Troman
Design	A E J Dinnis
Equalities	A T Moulding
Post Offices	K Potter
Procurement	J M Williamson
Risk Management	R Bloxham
Sustainability (Eco issues)	Mrs F I Newth
Town/Strategic Planning (Exmouth)	P J Skinner
Young People	K D Nicholas

It is essential the Champions complement and enhance the work of the Council. This means that work being carried out by the Champions needs to be linked with the Council's priorities so that they are not duplicating what is already being carried out by Executive Members and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

At a Member Champion Workshop facilitated by a Senior Associate of the South West Provincial Employers, Members felt that clarification was needed to identify where the role of elected Member Champion fitted within this Council's structure. The recognised the need for the role to be embedded within the Council structure, for the Champions to work with elected Councillors and key Officers to develop informed work plans and to raise the profile of their areas of responsibility. For Member Champions to operate effectively, their role must be widely understood both within the Council and outside.

Only one of our Member Champions (Equalities) is also a Member of the Executive Board. All other appointed Champions are non-Executive Champions. The role description and protocol attached for consideration is for non-Executive Member Champions with additional notes relevant to Executive Champions.

Legal Implications

The protocol and role description for non-executive Member Champions is consistent with the legal framework in the Local Government Act 2000. Member Champions are important Councillors in terms of influencing service development and strategic direction, but as this report notes, are not permitted under the Local Government framework to make individual legally binding decisions themselves. Decisions will continue to be made as a result of Committee meetings, Portfolio Holder decisions, or the existing scheme of delegation to Officers. Member Champions will need to make use of these processes in conjunction with help from Officers and/or Portfolio Holders to achieve change.

Financial Implications

Minimal cost for Conference to East Devon District Council – costs incurred could be recouped from attendees.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

The facilitated workshop held on 5 October for Member Champions highlighted a number of areas of concern which would largely addressed with a role description and protocol.

Background Papers

- Member Champions – Guidance and Advice – South West Provincial Employers
- Notes taken at the facilitated workshop and power point presentation.

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Executive Board
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