

Member Champions

Report of the Leader

Recommended:

That the Councillors as set out below be appointed to the following Member Champions roles for 2021/22:-

- **Councillor Matthews** **Armed Forces**
- **Councillor Gwynne** **Climate Emergency Member Champion**
- **Councillor P Lashbrook** **Community Safety and Resilience**
- **Councillor Baverstock** **Culture and Heritage**
- **Councillor Hamilton** **Equality and Diversity**
- **Councillor Donnelly** **Member Development/Community Councillor Role**
- **Councillor Andersen** **Voluntary and Third Sector**

SUMMARY:

- This report provides details of the work undertaken by Member Champions during the year 2020/21.
- The report proposes the appointment of Member Champions for 2021/22.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In 2017 Cabinet approved the introduction of a Member Champions scheme in order that it could benefit from the experience, knowledge and interests of non-Cabinet members, in particular thematic areas.
- 1.2 The role of a Member Champion is to act in an advisory capacity to Cabinet in respect of specific areas of responsibility and, in particular, in the development of ideas that will help deliver the aims of the Council's Corporate Plan and Corporate Action Plan.
- 1.3 It was agreed that Cabinet would commission Member Champions on an annual basis within their particular area of responsibility to:
 - Research good practice in other Councils and organisations
 - Liaise with external bodies such as the Local Government Association (LGA) to identify relevant research and ideas that could help further the Council's corporate aims.
 - Consider what impact any proposed changes to Council policy and or, services might have on their specific area of responsibility. This might involve liaising with relevant groups within the Borough.

- 1.4 Cabinet members, in consultation with their Cabinet colleagues, have the ability to request that a Member Champion undertakes work, as described in paragraph 1.3 above, on behalf of Cabinet.
- 1.5 If a Member Champion wishes to instigate a piece of work, the matter will be first discussed with the Leader and the relevant Portfolio Holder. If they are in support of the proposal, the Portfolio Holder will discuss the merits of the proposal with the Head of Service and then present the idea to Cabinet members for consideration and discussion.
- 1.6 If endorsed by Cabinet Members the Member Champion, Portfolio Holder and relevant Head of Service will meet to discuss a way forward.
- 1.7 The Member Champions roles were established specifically to support Cabinet although the champions themselves need not necessarily come from the ruling group. The roles should not encroach on the independent scrutiny role of OSCOM or indeed into the role of Cabinet members. Member Champions do not have the authority to commit resources on behalf of the Council or to instruct officers to undertake work on their behalf.
- 1.8 The Member Champions are appointed by Cabinet on an annual basis. The role does not attract a Special Responsibility Allowance.

2 Background

- 2.1 In June 2020 the following Member Champions were appointed:
 - Councillor Matthews Armed Forces
 - Councillor P Lashbrook Community Safety and Resilience
 - Councillor Baverstock Culture and Heritage
 - Councillor Hamilton Equality and Diversity
 - Councillor Donnelly Member Development/Community Councillor Role
 - Councillor Andersen Voluntary and Third Sector
- 2.2 In addition to the appointments made in June 2020, at its meeting on 13 January 2021 Cabinet established a Climate Emergency Member Champion and appointed Councillor Gwynne to this role. The role of Climate Emergency Member Champion was established in order to further inform and assist with the on-going Climate Change work.
- 2.3 During the year 2020/21, Member Champions have actively participated in work in respect of their particular areas of responsibility to help in the development of ideas and to contribute to particular projects.
- 2.4 Armed Forces - Councillor Matthews
- 2.5 Councillor Matthews has led an OSCOM panel to review the Armed Forces Covenant with particular reference to Test Valley's obligations, commitment and identifying best practice. Following research and engagement with SME's across Test Valley, two recommendations were made to and agreed by Cabinet on 10 February 2021.

- 2.6 Following approval at Cabinet, Cllr Matthews chaired the first Civilian Military Forum on Friday 19 March which saw fourteen partners attend from a range of groups supporting Armed Forces communities across the borough. In addition the first stages of a single point of contact webpage for the Armed Forces community are in development.
- 2.7 Councillor Matthews has attended Armed Forces partnership meetings hosted externally such as Hampshire County Council's Civilian military Partnership Board where he has given a number presentations. Councillor Matthews represents the Council on the MOD South East Region Covenant Focus Group.
- 2.8 Climate Emergency Member Champion - Councillor Gwynne
- 2.9 In the limited time since his appointment, Councillor Gwynne has actively engaged in discussions with officers and the Portfolio Holder in seeking to ensure opportunities are taken to deliver on the Climate Emergency Action Plan and explore opportunities for further action. This has included making suggestions for additional initiatives and highlighting the role of additional metrics in reporting going forward.
- 2.10 Councillor Gwynne proposed at Council on 6 February 2021, a motion that resulted in a letter from the Council to the Minister of State for Housing and Planning concerning Future Homes Standard, and is chairing an Overview and Scrutiny Panel on TVBC's Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- 2.11 Community Safety and Resilience – Councillor Phil Lashbrook

Councillor Lashbrook has continued to act as the Chair of the Districtwide 'Community Resilience Forum', providing an opportunity for key stakeholders from Police, Fire, EA and HCC amongst others to link and engage with parish representatives to discuss and plan for local emergencies, though worked scenarios and advice. The forum also supports parishes in developing Local Emergency Plans in order to help prepare in the case of emergency. Test Valley currently has more local plans in place than any other Hampshire District. Cllr Lashbrook has also been active as part of the strategic group developing the local response to the pandemic, and in helping to establish and support the process of local based community groups, and in providing updates on local circumstances.

Councillor Lashbrook is also an active member of the 'Community Safety Management Group' which helps develop the co-ordinated local distinct approach to community safety planning and the sharing of intelligence amongst its strategic partners. The group oversees the district partnerships local priorities, action plans and produces the statutory annual Strategic Assessment. Councillor Lashbrook represents the district on the 'Hampshire Police and Crime Panel' through which he is able to raise key concerns and issues from the former group to the attention of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and helps to hold the commissioner to account.

2.12 Culture and Heritage – Councillor Baverstock

2.13 Councillor Baverstock has been supporting the Arts Officer to develop ideas and plans for supporting cultural and creative recovery post-pandemic.

2.14 This includes the potential for a Test Valley Creative conference which would celebrate the breadth of creative and cultural projects, initiatives and organisations across the Test Valley and explore subjects pertinent to our community and new ways of working following the Covid-19 pandemic. The conference would bring together creative practitioners and arts and cultural organisations from across the Test Valley and invite them to learn new skills, exchange and share ideas, develop new projects and new aspirations for a clear creative future.

2.15 Councillor Baverstock has been actively engaged with the Test Valley Arts Foundation in particular with regards to the Test Valley Borough of Culture and is a committee member for the Romsey Festival.

2.16 Equality and Diversity – Councillor Hamilton

2.17 Councillor Hamilton has continued to build upon her work as a member champion in helping the council to develop new models of engagement that ensures the voices of groups from across the protected characteristics are heard as part of an inclusive and evidence-led approach to decision making.

2.18 Covid has made direct engagement with groups from various protected characteristics more challenging, however Cllr Hamilton has continued to seek ways to engage with different communities virtually. In particular, attending virtual meetings with the Romsey Disabled Peoples Partnership, where Cllr Hamilton shared her knowledge and experience on disability awareness and understanding challenges for disabled residents as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.19 Initial plans to hold an equalities workshop have also been developed as an opportunity for meaningful conversation alongside various stakeholders. This was postponed due to the pandemic, however planning of this event will recommence soon and is hoped to take the form of a deliberative approach, which is something Cllr Hamilton is keen to explore the wider use of as a way of engaging people in the future. This comes after the pilot of the Citizens Assembly in Romsey provided a new and interesting format to enable people, with various protected characteristics, an opportunity to influence discussions and enable their lived experience to be shared in a more meaningful and inclusive way.

2.20 Member Development/Community Councillor Role – Councillor Donnelly

2.21 Councillor Donnelly has engaged in a number of discussions with officers throughout the year to consider various aspects of the role of the Councillor, providing insight and suggestions for further consideration in developing initiatives going forward.

- 2.22 Councillor Donnelly is a member of the Member and Community Development Group and has facilitated discussions with officers and member in considering the priority areas for the group. This has included developing a new action plan to steer the work being undertaken to help support Members in their role as community councillors and in identifying and taking forward opportunities for wider member training and development.
- 2.23 Voluntary and Third Sector – Councillor Andersen
- 2.24 The challenges of the pandemic have meant it has been difficult for Councillor Andersen to engage directly with third sector organisations to the extent she would otherwise like to, indeed many smaller organisations stopped meeting altogether for much of the pandemic. However, she has maintained regular briefings with both the Democratic Services Manager and the Community Manager and she has been proactive in keeping well informed of the challenges facing the third sector. She has drawn on her role as a Unity ambassador and the insight of her own experience of volunteering to foster informed debate with officers and offer suggestions for how the Council could work with partners to support volunteers and voluntary organisations.
- 2.25 A particular area of concern in the voluntary and third sector which Councillor Andersen has encouraged officers to find ways to support is the resilience and wellbeing of volunteers, whether those operating in direct response to the pandemic, people trying to volunteer within the restrictions of the pandemic, or who normally volunteer but have been unable to due to Covid-19 restrictions. To support volunteers in responding to this challenge the Council directed £20,000 of MHCLG to Unity to deliver a multi-faceted volunteer resilience project to support volunteers across the borough.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The role of a Member Champion is to act in an advisory capacity to Cabinet in respect of specific areas of responsibility and, in particular, in the development of ideas that will help deliver the aims of the Council's Corporate Plan and Corporate Action Plan.

4 Options

- 4.1 To not appointment Member Champions for the year 2021/22.
- 4.2 To appointment Member Champions for the year 2021/22. Following consultation with Cabinet Members, it is suggested that the following appointments be made for 2021/22:-
- Armed Forces Member Champion
 - Climate Emergency Member Champion
 - Community Safety and Resilience Member Champion
 - Culture and Heritage Member Champion

- Equality and Diversity Member Champion
- Member Development/Community Councillor Role Member Champion
- Voluntary and Third Sector Member Champion

5 Option Appraisal

- 5.1 Member Champions provide valuable insight into their thematic areas providing advice and support to Cabinet Members in particular areas of work and helping to shape and develop projects.
- 5.2 Member Champions ensure that non-Cabinet Members who have specialist knowledge and experience are able to contribute to policy development.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 An evaluation of the risks indicate that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risks have been identified at this time.

7 Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no resourcing implications arising from this report.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9 Equality Issues

- 9.1 No equality issues have been identified.

10 Other Issues

- 10.1 Community Safety -None
- 10.2 Environmental Health Issues - None
- 10.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – Wider issues being consider by the Climate Emergency Member Champion.
- 10.4 Property Issues - None
- 10.5 Wards/Communities Affected - All

11 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

- 11.1 The introduction of Member Champions has involved more members in the process of policy development and at the same time has allowed Cabinet to benefit from the experience, knowledge and interests of non-Cabinet members.

- 11.2 It is proposed that Member Champions be reappointed for 2021/22 to allow the continued contribution of knowledge and experience from non-Cabinet Members.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
None			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	0	File Ref:	N/A
(Portfolio: Leader) Councillor P North			
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	26 May 2021