

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 27TH APRIL 2022
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF MEMBER CHAMPION
ARRANGEMENTS

Purpose of Report

1. To allow Members to consider the recommendation from Governance and Constitution Committee about the review of the Member Champion arrangements.

Recommended: That Members

- [1] Consider the recommendation from Governance and Constitution Committee: *to continue with the existing Member Champions for municipal year 2022-23 with the introduction of the requirements outlined in paragraph 9 to 11 of this report.*

Note:

The rest of this report is identical to the report that was considered by Governance and Constitution Committee. See Minute 4 page 22.

Background

2. The Fire Authority decided, at its meeting on 10th February 2021, that the Governance and Constitution Committee should complete a review of the Member Champion roles, following the observations of the Independent Reviewer made as a result of that review of the Members' Allowances Scheme.
3. Members of the committee had an informal discussion, prior to approving the process and indicative timeline of the Member Champion review on 10th November 2021. The following observations were noted:
 - Not clear why there are so many Member Champion roles
 - Need to clarify expectations
 - Must be quantifiable benefit or the roles can be removed
 - Requirement for some kind of annual report
 - Impact of Covid-19 should not be ignored.

4. All Members received an update on progress with the review at the Members' Planning Day on 14th January 2022.

Information

Findings

5. Research was conducted to analyse how member champion roles within Cheshire compared with member champion roles in other fire and rescue authorities within the family audit group. It was found the Cheshire had significantly more champion roles than others. Other fire authorities placed certain requirements on their member champions, e.g. the production of a quarterly report on their work presented to the fire authority.
6. All Members and lead officers were invited to complete a questionnaire to establish their expectations of the review, their understanding of each role and whether any improvements could be made. It was anticipated that the review would better inform Members about the various roles and allow the opportunity for the roles to be developed. It became clear that not all Members felt they had a good understanding of the champion roles. It was also noted that some roles were clearly active, with others requiring invigoration.
7. The information provided by Members and lead officers was considered and several actions identified that could be expected to improve the member champion arrangements. These are summarised below:
 - Further develop role descriptions.
 - Establish a dedicated officer for each role
 - Create a plan of activities and training and development opportunities associated with each role.
 - Introduce a reporting mechanism to communicate role activities.
 - The allocation of member champion roles should as far as possible ensure that the Fire Authority is making the best use of Members' experience and interest.
8. When Members discussed this issue at the Planning Day in January 2022, they appeared to be supportive of the actions described above: continuing with the existing Member Champion roles for the 2022-23 municipal year; with a view to a further evaluation of the impact of the various roles prior to settling the arrangements for the 2023-24 municipal year.

Member Champion Arrangements 2022-23

9. It is intended that in addition to the Member Champion role description which is set out in paragraphs 6.32 to 6.34 of the Constitution, a specific role profile

will be created for each member champion role. The member champion role profiles will provide:

- An overview of each role;
 - Lead officer contact details;
 - Activities associated with the role such as meeting and event attendance;
 - Training and development opportunities; and
 - How the activities of the champion will be communicated.
10. Democratic Services will create a template role profile for lead officers and Member Champions to complete early in the municipal year 2022-23.
11. The intention would be to submit a report to the Governance and Constitution Committee in April 2023 to consider progress and determine whether any further improvements could be made to the Member Champion arrangements. At that point the Committee could make further recommendations to the Fire Authority in relation to Member Champions for 2023-24.

Financial Implications

12. There are currently 18 Members appointed to a Member Champion role. Member Champions receive a special responsibility allowance which currently stands at £540.96. The funding for Member Champion roles is met through existing budgets. It should be noted that many Member Champions do not receive this allowance, because they already receive another special responsibility allowance, which is higher and only the higher allowance is paid.

Legal Implications

13. There is no legal requirement to appoint Member Champions.

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. All Members and relevant officers had the opportunity to take part in the review.

Environmental Implications

15. There are no environmental implications associated with the review.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS: REVIEW OF MEMBER CHAMPION ARRANGEMENTS
CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE ON
30TH MARCH 2022**