

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: GOVERNANCE AND CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE
DATE: 17TH APRIL 2024
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: MEMBER CHAMPIONS ARRANGEMENTS

Purpose of Report

1. To allow Members to consider the Member Champions arrangements and make a recommendation to the Fire Authority.

Recommended: That

- [1] the Member Champions arrangements for 2024-25 include the roles that are contained in the Table in Appendix 1 to the report.

Background

2. The Governance and Constitution Committee completed a review of the Member Champion roles during 2021-22, following the observations of the Independent Reviewer during her review of the Members' Allowances Scheme.
3. During the initial review of the Member Champion arrangements the Committee came to the following conclusions:
 - 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
4. The Committee decided at its meeting on 30th March 2022 to recommend to the Fire Authority that it continue with the existing Member Champion arrangements and introduce a requirement for a role profile that would include the following information:
 - 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.
5. The Committee considered the new arrangements in April 2023 after 12 months of operation and agreed that the current arrangements would continue with the addition of a requirement for the Member Champions to report annually about their activities.

Information

6. The Member Champions arrangements have continued during 2023-24. The arrangements were further considered by Members at their Planning Day last month. A table summarising the activities associated with the Member Champion roles was provided to Members at the Planning Day. It had been created from information supplied by the Member Champions.

7. It is fair to say that the submissions from the Member Champions about their respective roles varied significantly in length and detail, with a broad range of levels of engagement and activity. The Director of Governance did, however, make the point that overall the Member Champions arrangements added value and did so at minimal cost. He also felt that progress had been made in developing some of the roles that required it during 2023-24, with just a few that needed further work.

8. The following paragraphs summarise the comments made during the discussion at the Member Planning Day.

Some Member Champion roles are aligned to other roles, e.g. chair of a committee/board. Arguably, the Member Champion designation adds little and could be removed.

Significantly less than half of the Member Champions are paid any allowance for fulfilling the role (because they already receive another special responsibility allowance that is greater than the allowance attributed to the Member Champion role).

There seemed to be justification for the Member Champions arrangements to continue in 2024-25, acknowledging the need to continue to develop some of the roles.

9. The Member Champion roles which are intended to be appointed to for 2024-25 are listed in the Table in Appendix 1 to this report.

10. The Member Training and Development Group also discussed the Member Champions arrangements during its meeting on 26th March 2024. It was suggested that a template be produced by officers for Member Champions to complete in order to standardise the content of the submissions that they are expected to prepare and submit.

Financial Implications

11. There are currently 18 Members appointed to a Member Champion role. Member Champions receive a special responsibility allowance which currently stands at £606.84. The funding for Member Champion roles is met through the existing budget for members' allowances.
12. It should be noted that many Member Champions do not receive this allowance, because they already receive another special responsibility allowance, which is higher than the Member Champion allowance and only the higher allowance is paid. Only seven of the 18 Member Champions were paid an allowance during 2023-24. The total cost in 2023-24 is around £4,500.

Legal Implications

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

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. There are no equality and diversity implications associated with this report.

Environmental Implications

15. There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE