

Member Champions

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report examines the Fire Authority's Member Champion roles and asks Members to consider whether the roles as they currently stand should be abolished, with the exception of those for Equality and Diversity, and Risk Management and Audit.

The report also asks whether ad hoc Member Champions should be established to promote, encourage, challenge and drive improvement on specific projects.

2 Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- a) Abolish the standing Member Champion roles with the exception of those for Equality and Diversity and Risk Management and Audit;
- b) Appoint appropriate Member Champions on a task and finish basis, as and when required, to promote, encourage, challenge and drive improvement in specific subject areas as determined by the Fire Authority; and, if agreed,
- c) Complete a Member Skills Audit.

3 Background

In May 2006 the Fire Authority established Member Champions, in part to satisfy the requirements of the Use of Resources Assessment, which was included in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime, but also because it was considered to be best practice. As Members will be aware the fundamental purpose of the Member Champion role is to promote, encourage, challenge and drive improvement in their specific area of appointment.

In most instances, however, owing to competing demands upon their time, Member Champions were not able to engage in these roles as much as they would wish. Officers have also struggled to see how they can involve Member Champions to maximum effect. It would be difficult, therefore, to quantify the value, which the majority of these roles have added to the work of the Fire Authority or the Service.

4 Current Position

Although the following Member Champion roles still exist, there are currently no appointees to the roles with the exception of the first two, which to date have been undertaken by Councillor Dr Jones.

- Equality and Diversity Champion
- Risk Management and Audit Champion
- Asset Management and Procurement Champion
- Civil Resilience Champion
- Information, Communications and Technology Champion
- Learning and Development Champion
- Vulnerable Persons' Champion

Councillor Dr Jones has been actively involved in the Service's Risk Management Group, Health and Safety Committee and Equality and Diversity Steering Group, which has enabled her to make a meaningful contribution in the two roles.

5 The Way Forward

In light of the situation outlined in sections four and five of this report Members are asked to consider whether the Fire Authority should continue to have seven Member Champions. It would seem advisable to retain the roles of Equality and Diversity Champion and Risk Management and Audit Champion, as these have added value to the organisation.

The Fire Authority is also asked to consider whether to appoint Members to champion specific projects as they arise. This would be on a 'task and finish' basis and would seek to draw upon relevant expertise of Members.

Whatever decisions are made, Fire Authority Members will continue to be champions for the Fire Service in their communities and constituent authorities.

6 Member Skills Audit

If the Fire Authority agrees to appoint Members to champion specific projects, it is recommended that all Members complete a skills audit. The audit would seek to identify any specialist skills and experience, which Members may have gained from their Fire Authority or Council positions or from their day-to-day occupations, thus ensuring that the Member/s with the most appropriate expertise is/are appointed to champion a particular project.

7 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8 Legal Comment

The Fire Authority is not legally required to have Member Champions.

9 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising specifically from this report.

10 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

11 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.