

Report To: County Council

Date of Meeting: 6th November 2012

Lead Member / Officer: Councillor Barbara Smith / Gary Williams, Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

Report Author: Lisa Jones – Deputy Monitoring Officer

Title: Role of Champions

1. What is the report about?

Full Council is asked to consider the appointment during this term of office, of Members who are to act as Champions in the following areas:

- Older People's Champion
- Homelessness Champion
- Carer's Champion
- Learning Disabilities Champion

2. What is the reason for making this report?

The report is to consider the draft role descriptions for, and appointment of, the Champions identified in the Council's Constitution and to discuss the process by which other Champion roles may be identified as suitable for adoption by the Council.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 That Council considers making the following appointments: -

- (1) Older People's Champion
- (2) Homelessness Champion
- (3) Carer's Champion
- (4) Learning Disabilities Champion

3.2 That Council adopts the role descriptions set out in the Appendices to this report in respect of the Champions that are appointed.

3.3 That the Corporate Governance Committee be asked to consider whether there is merit in appointing Champions for other interests.

4. Report details

The role of Champions in this authority has evolved from the one appointment of an 'Older People's Champion' which emanated from the guidance in the Strategy for Older People issued by the Welsh Assembly, that every local authority in Wales should have such a Champion.

Denbighshire County Council has since increased the range of Champions into other areas, sometimes as a result of the direction of Members, or from external initiatives. In any event, the Council in its recent review of its Constitution, at paragraph 2.6 of Article 2, now formally recognises the importance of the role of Champions in specific areas, hence embedding this role within the Constitution.

The method of appointing any Champion has not been laid down in law, and it will be up to each local authority to consider how best this is achieved locally. The WLGA and the Welsh Assembly Government Guide on appointing the Older Peoples' Champion states that 'many consider it important that the Champion be based at cabinet level, where local authorities consider it to be so, to ensure that older people's issues are identified at the highest levels. However, this is not always the case and several local authorities have adopted different approaches where this is better tailored to local need.'

Historically, Denbighshire County Council's approach has been to ensure the most appropriate member is appointed to the respective champion role. In previous discussions about Champions, Members have been keen to see a clear role description for Champions which is agreed and adopted and sets out how the role can be undertaken in this particular authority. Draft role descriptions for the roles identified in the Constitution are set out in the Appendices to this report and seek to provide clarity and consistency as to the role of Champion in Denbighshire.

During Full Council's debate on the issue of Champions at its meeting in April 2012 adopting the new Constitution, some Members supported the suggestion of expanding the range of these roles to a Young Persons Champion, given the current economic climate and challenges facing the youth of today. In addition when considering the Armed Forces Covenant there was discussion as to the desirability of having an Armed Forces Champion. It is suggested that Corporate Governance Committee look in detail at the desirability of appointing Champions in respect of other interests and makes recommendations to Council.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The roles contribute to the Council's Big Plan and the Council's Vision for Denbighshire 2025.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no implications for other services as a result of this report.

7. What consultations have been carried out?

Group Leaders have been consulted and were in favour of appointing the four Champions identified in the recommendations contained in this report and of Corporate Governance Committee looking in detail at whether it is appropriate for Champions to be appointed in respect of other interests.

SLT have been consulted and have expressed concern that there is the possibility for confusion and or duplication between the roles of Champions and Lead Members where the issue to be championed falls within the remit of an individual Lead Member.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement.

There are no additional costs directly associated with the appointments.

9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no identified risks in proceeding with the appointments.

10. Power to make the decision

Article 2.6 Council Constitution