

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

26 November 2025

REVIEW OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS

Report of the Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to:

Recommend to Council to amend the Council's Constitution to replace part 8.5, Member Champion Role with the text in Appendix 2.

Executive Summary

2. This report proposes some changes to the role and function of Member Champions and clarifies the appointment process for future Member Champions.
3. Cabinet at its meeting on 18 November 2025 agreed to propose these changes to the Audit & Governance Committee.

Background

4. The County Council operates a system of Member Champions, with an accompanying outline of their role and wider operational arrangements set out in the Council's Constitution attached as **Appendix 1**.
5. These roles are not remunerated and are non-decision making. Their role is to support the Cabinet Member and/or Leader to undertake their role effectively through examining specific areas of interest, engaging widely with stakeholder groups and ultimately drawing attention to matters of significance to the Cabinet Member and/or Leader.
6. Oxfordshire County Council currently has a set of Member Champion roles in the following areas. Their work has been to draw attention to issues within individual portfolios and, in some cases, draw together matters of strategic importance that cut across a series of portfolios.
 - (a) Active Travel and Cycling
 - (b) Public Transport
 - (c) Future Generations
 - (d) Water Resources
 - (e) Military
 - (f) Marmot

- (g) Mental Health and Wellbeing
- (h) Youth Justice (new and vacant)

7. Members who have occupied those roles over the course of the municipal year have done so alongside existing commitments.
8. This report proposes an update to the Council's Constitution to include clarity on the process of appointing and removing Member Champions.
9. To help inform this work, enquiries have been made as to how other councils operate their Member Champion function in accordance with relevant legislative provisions. Proposals have been made in **Appendix 2** to strengthen the role and function of Member Champions as having a clearer reporting line to the Cabinet Member and/or Leader of the Council, and that their work needs to be agreed and reported back on a quarterly basis as a minimum. To further increase the transparency and accountability of Member Champions, it is proposed that a system of removal be introduced.
10. It is proposed that the creation of Member Champion roles and the appointments to these roles do not need to be agreed by the whole Cabinet. This can be undertaken by the Leader using their executive power.
11. By doing this, the Leader can act swiftly to make roles available and appoint. This has the additional benefit of reducing the unnecessary administrative burden of the current approach and enables the Cabinet to focus its resources on key decisions and other matters of strategic importance.

Financial Implications

12. None immediately arising from this report.

Thomas James, Head of Financial Services

Legal Implications

13. Member champions are elected members who take on additional responsibilities to their ordinary council responsibilities to assist in policy development or who provide advice and research to contribute to improved decision making. As such, these are non-statutory roles which have no voting powers.
14. To ensure appropriate transparency and accountability the Constitution provides a framework within which the member champions operate. The protocol aims to avoid any potential for confusion and overlap between the role of the member champion and those of the relevant executive member or overview and scrutiny members, who hold statutory responsibilities under various Acts of Parliament for local authority governance.

15. In order to amend the Constitution, any change to the protocol should be considered by the Audit & Governance Committee who are charged with auditing governance processes to ensure they are effective. As only Council may change the Constitution, the Audit & Governance Committee will make their recommendations on the protocol to the Council.

Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
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Staff Implications

16. None immediately arising from this report.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

17. None immediately arising from this report.

Sustainability Implications

18. None immediately arising from this report.

Risk Management

19. None immediately arising from this report.

Consultations

20. None immediately arising from this report.

SUSANNAH WINTERSGILL
Director of Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships

Annex:

Current protocol in the Constitution – Appendix 1
Proposed protocol in the Constitution – Appendix 2
List of current member champions and vacant posts – Appendix 3

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November 2025