

North Yorkshire Council

EXECUTIVE

18 November 2025

Annual Review of Member Champions

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To enable the Executive to consider whether the Member Champion role and remit remains in line with the Council's priorities/challenges.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Executive on 18 July 2023, it was agreed that there would be an annual review of the Council's Member Champion roles, with the aim of ensuring that they remained appropriate and in line with the Council's priorities/challenges. This is the second such review that has been undertaken. The first review report went to the Executive on 15 October 2024 and can be accessed here – [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Executive, 15/10/2024 11:00](#)
- 2.2 The following Member Champion roles have been determined by the Leader:
- Armed Forces Champion – Councillor Kevin Foster
 - Digital Champion – Councillor Gareth Dadd
 - Flooding Champion – Councillor David Jeffels
 - Cycling / Active Travel Champion – Councillor Malcolm Taylor
 - Road Safety Champion – Councillor Steve Watson.
- 2.3 These roles do not have a Special Responsibility Allowance attached to them.
- 2.4 Appointments to the following Member Champion roles, which attract a Special Responsibility Allowance, are made by Full Council and are as follows:
- Older People's Champion - Councillor Caroline Dickinson
 - Young People Champion - Councillor Alyson Baker
 - Climate Change Champion - Councillor David Hugill.

3.0 MEMBER CHAMPION ROLE AND REMIT

- 3.1 The role and remit of the Member Champions is as outlined in the Council Constitution at pages 167 - [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Constitution, 28/03/2025 00:00](#) and as summarised below:
- 3.2 Member Champions are elected Members who act as an advocate or spokesperson for a specific area of the Council's business. The main responsibility of each Member Champion is to encourage communication and positive action over the issue they represent. In doing so, they will:

- i) represent their area of interest both within and outside the Council in line with Council policy;
- ii) contribute to the review and development of policies pertaining to their area of interest;
- iii) challenge and question the Council, the Executive Members and the Chairs of Committees on issues relevant to their area of responsibility;
- iv) monitor the Forward Plan and seek information from the Leader, Committee Chairs and Officers about forthcoming business and exert influence on behalf of the interest;
- v) keep Members of all parties up to date with activities in relevant to the area of interest;
- vi) provide positive support and on occasions constructive challenge to Officers on relevant issues;
- vii) act as the Council's representative on relevant external bodies where appointed to by the Council.

4.0 MEMBER CHAMPIONS IN OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

4.1 Member Champions are appointed in other local authorities, unitary, county and district and borough councils. The roles vary in in scope and subject matter and they usually restricted from making formal decisions or committing the local authority to any course of action not previously agreed through formal decision-making processes. Instead, the focus is upon communication and positive action concerning the issues within the scope of their role.

4.2 A review of Member Champion roles in other local authorities indicates that common subject areas include: the Armed Forces; Disabilities; Heritage; Dementia; Active Travel; Young People; and Older People. In essence, the appointments tend to be made in an area which the Council believes to be important and/or in need a sharper or renewed focus.

5.0 WORK OF THE MEMBER CHAMPIONS 2024/25

5.1 The Member Champions who are appointed by Council and who receive a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) provide regular reports to Scrutiny Board and the relevant or parent overview and scrutiny committee. Annual reports from the Older People's Champion (Councillor Caroline Dickinson), the Young People's Champion (Councillor Alyson Baker) and the Climate Change Champion (Councillor David Hugill) were presented at the Council meeting on 16 July 2025 - [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Full Council, 16/07/2025 10:30](#)

5.2 The Member Champions who are appointed by the Leader and who do not receive a SRA, link in with the relevant directorate and corporate director or assistant director.

5.3 The Member Champions receive officer support in their role through the relevant directorate and Democratic Services and Scrutiny. The Champions also liaise with the Executive Members. This helps ensure that their work is co-ordinated and that there is no duplication of effort or overlap.

5.4 There is no formal performance assessment process for the role of the Member Champion, as is also the case for an elected member at the Council in any other role, such as a committee chair. A review of Member Champions in other local authorities indicates that there is no common approach to determining the effectiveness or relevance of the champion roles that are in place. It is important to note, however, that at North Yorkshire Council there are reporting and co-ordination mechanisms in place to guide the work of the Member Champions and also hold them to account.

6.0 ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

6.1 The priorities for the Council are articulated in the Council Plan 2025-29. The Strategic Vision is to be the 'most local large council in England, empowering communities and delivering high-quality services that reflect local needs and aspirations'. This vision is then underpinned by four priority themes:

- Support thriving places and empowered communities that live, work, visit and do business in North Yorkshire
- Develop more sustainable and connected places across North Yorkshire
- Ensure the people of North Yorkshire are safe, healthy and living well
- Maximise the potential of North Yorkshire's people and communities.

In turn, these themes are underpinned by four guiding principles:

- Locality Working: Services shaped and delivered locally
- Customer Focus: Responsive and inclusive service design
- Partnerships: Collaboration with public, private, and voluntary sectors
- Innovation: Embracing digital transformation and new ways of working.

6.2 The challenges facing the Council will vary over time but at present the following are notable:

- High levels of demand for adult social care services (people living longer with multiple, complex health issues), Special Educational Needs, social care placements for children with complex needs and school transport for children and young people
- Overall costs faced by the Council are increasing with pressures around wage inflation, contractual costs, raw materials, and increasing demand for services
- The market for adult social care and children social care residential placements and associated costs
- Workforce challenges around recruitment and retention
- Responding to climate change and mitigating the impact that this is having and will have upon our services, not least the emergency response to severe weather events
- Reductions in Council funding (removal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant) and the likely change to the way that funding is allocated to rural councils.

6.3 The above is not intended to be an exhaustive list but to be indicative of some of the high-level challenges currently faced by the Council.

6.4 The areas of work covered by the three member champions that are appointed to by Council reflect the key priorities for and challenges faced by the Council. The roles appointed to by the Leader tend to reflect matters of more localised concern that affect a smaller number of communities, as opposed to the county as a whole. This then aligns with the key ambition to be the 'most local large council in England'.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The Member Champions continue to play a key role in promoting their area of interest on behalf of the Council and in encouraging communication and positive action over the issue they represent. This provides an important additional level of engagement and support on key priorities for the Council.

7.2 The focus of the member champions reflects the priority areas for the Council and the challenges that are faced in terms of managing service demands and providing services to those in need.

7.3 There will always be issues that become high profile, receiving high levels of media coverage and so which are at the forefront of people's minds (for a period of time). The risk then is that part of the solution to addressing these issues is seen simply to be the appointment of a member champion, without consideration of the alternatives. The challenge, however, is to have an area of focus for a member champion that is relevant, that continues to be significant, where additional support or leverage is needed and which is something not covered elsewhere. Increasing the number of member champions also creates a risk around the dilution of the role, as the more that you have in the role the less significant they are perceived to be.

8.0 FINANCIAL & LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The role and remit of the Member Champions is as detailed in the Constitution and appointments are made either by Full Council or by the Leader. A Special Responsibility Allowance is paid, to the three Member Champions appointed by Full Council, of £1,879 each for the financial year 2024-25.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There is a Member Champion whose role is focussed upon climate change mitigation and the promotion of approaches that enable to achievement of the Councils carbon emissions targets and objectives.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no significant equalities implications.

11.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 The report is brought to the Executive to consider as part of an established process for an annual review of the role and remit of the Member Champions.

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The Executive is asked to note the report and consider whether the Member Champion roles remain appropriate and in line with the Council's priorities/challenges.

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10 November 2025

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Background Documents:

Agenda, papers and minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 18 July 2023 (item 12) - [Agenda for Executive on Tuesday, 18th July, 2023, 11.00 am | North Yorkshire Council](#)

The Council Constitution - [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Constitution, 28/03/2025 00:00](#)

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.