

Historic Environment Champion – Options for Consideration

Option 1: A single Historic Environment Champion

- a) The Historic Environment Champion would ensure that the historic environment is properly considered when key decisions are taken and work to identify opportunities where it can make a contribution to wider corporate objectives. The role involves identifying the historic environment 'angle' to the Council's policies on such wide-ranging areas as regeneration and planning and ensuring that it is taken into account at all stages of the decision making process. This also involves ensuring that partner bodies, such as the Local Strategic Partnership, consider the historic environment in the development of their policies and strategies.
- b) The Historic Environment Champion is to persuade both Council colleagues and the wider community that the historic environment offers many opportunities to improve the quality of life for everyone. The Champion will therefore ensure that the historic environment plays a key role in the activities of the Council in terms of policy development and service delivery.

The Champion of the Historic Environment will:

- Ensure that Cabinet portfolio holders and senior officers are aware of historic environment issues and opportunities as they relate to their service
- Be alert to the opportunities for the historic environment to attract inward economic investment and funding
- receive regular training in the historic environment and related issues
- Ensure that the provision of historic environment expertise is adequately resourced to enable the continuity and quality of service to be maintained
- Work closely with corporate property officers and Members to ensure a positive and long-term strategic approach to the management and conservation of the Council's own historic estate.

Advantages

This would provide a strategic overview and create a relatively high profile role. It would raise the profile of the historic environment cutting across Cabinet portfolios and the responsibilities of service officers. Approach may be applicable for other service areas and issues. The role could also be developed to include design and be appointed as a Design and Historic Environment Champion.

Disadvantages

This is potentially a demanding role for a single member, although responsibility would only extend over the Chichester Local Plan area and not the National Park. This could potentially be mitigated by either a revolving Champion spread between a group of members, each taking responsibility for a set period, or a by more than one Champion each covering a different geographical area.

Option 2: Each Ward member given a specific Historic Environment Responsibility

- a) Each Ward member, or a member covering a group of wards, would have a distinct role in promoting and protecting the historic environment within their area. They could provide closer working relationships with Parish/Town Councils who could act as eyes and ears on the ground as a means of providing a conduit for keeping the Council informed of local issues, including heritage crime and heritage at risk.
- b) Members would receive regular training in the historic environment and related issues. This could be linked to a forum involving other historic environment stakeholders.
- c) The Role could cover heritage including historic landscapes and features, but could also extend to promoting good design and local distinctiveness.

Advantages

Would facilitate closer working between local communities and the District Council, which could have knock on benefits for ensuring good heritage policies in neighbourhood plans, promote greater awareness of the benefits of the historic environment to local economies and greater vigilance over heritage crime issues such as night hawking, theft of lead from church roofs etc.

Disadvantages

This is not a model that appears to have been tried before, and it may not provide a strategic overview. This could be considered in conjunction with a higher level Historic Environment Champion taking on issues raised by Ward members with the Council. It may be worth exploring this option in more detail with Historic England.