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## **HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' views on the appointment of a Member as the Historic Environment Champion for Rochford District.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Government is encouraging all Local Authorities to appoint a Historic Environment Champion. A guidance note has been prepared by English Heritage, which explains that Historic Environment Champions will:
- Help unlock the untapped potential of the local historic environment.
  - Provide leadership for heritage issues within the Authority.
  - Join up policy between departments across the Local Authority.
  - Identify opportunities for the Authority to use the historic environment in the pursuit of its wider corporate objectives.
- 2.2 The role of the Historic Environment Champion is to persuade both those in the Local Authority 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 Local Authority in terms of policy development and service delivery, and that both Members and officers of the Council are kept fully informed of both the opportunities and implications for the historic environment.
- 2.3 The guide outlines the key areas of work for the Champion, including:
- Promoting the value of the historic environment as a catalyst for urban and rural regeneration.
  - Being alert to opportunities for inward investment.
  - Ensuring that all relevant historic environment issues are taken into account in the preparation of all relevant corporate strategies and local development frameworks.
  - Ensuring that the provision of historic environment expertise is widely resourced.
  - Working with officers in the planning service to ensure that new development in historic areas responds creatively and sympathetically to its environment.
  - Working with officers and colleagues in the Authority to develop a conservation management strategy.
  - Ensuring that good practice within the Authority relating to heritage and the historic environment is shared.

**3 DISCUSSION**

- 3.1 The principle of appointing a Historic Environment Champion has merit for the Authority, though there is little doubt the role may be demanding.
- 3.2 If Members conclude that an appointment would be beneficial, it is suggested that the specific role for the Historic Environment Champion for Rochford be developed over the next year or so, based on advice from English Heritage.
- 3.3 It is envisaged that regular meetings will be held between the Champion and the Head of Planning Services (together with other officers, as appropriate) to discuss historic environment issues as they relate to the corporate agenda and to the development of planning policy. The Champion will need to consider appropriate mechanisms for briefing all Members, but it is considered that perhaps a twice yearly report on activities to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee would provide a useful mechanism.

**4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The appointment of a Historic Environment Champion is intended to enable the Local Authority to better fulfil its role in the protection and management of the historic environment.

**5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 No significant resource implications arising from this report, though funding may be required for projects, including the preparation of a Conservation Management Statement, but this and other issues will only emerge as a detailed work programme is prepared.

**6 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There is little doubt that the parishes should be encouraged to participate in initiatives to protect and manage the historic environment, and the Historic Environment Champion would be able to promote opportunities for collaborative working.

**7 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That a Historic Environment Champion be appointed in accordance with the principles outlined in the report.

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**Background Papers:-**

Letter from English Heritage, August 2004

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