

# RESIDENTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: *DIVERSIFYING THE STREET CHAMPIONS INITIATIVE*

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Douglas Mills
<b>Cabinet Portfolio</b>	Community, Commerce & Regeneration
<b>Officer Contacts</b>	Mark Braddock, Administration Directorate Helena Webster, Residents Services
<b>Papers with report</b>	Appendix A - Policy Overview Committee review - final report Appendix B - Street Champions Thank You letter and feedback form Appendix C - Flyer for Street Champion meeting event

## HEADLINE INFORMATION

<b>Purpose of report</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To receive the Committee's review into diversifying the Street Champions Initiative.</li> <li>2. To note the recommendation on how integration of the Street Champion initiative with Neighbourhood Watch Schemes can be progressed.</li> <li>3. To consider the implementation of any recommendations arising from the review and/or those from the Cabinet Member.</li> </ol>
<b>Putting our Residents First</b>	<p>This report supports the following Council objectives of: <i>Our People; Our Built Environment; Our Natural Environment; Our Heritage and Civic Pride</i></p> <p>Street Champions contribute to the popular Feel PROUD campaign. Some actions from this report will form part of the Council's emerging ICT/Digital Strategy.</p>
<b>Financial Cost</b>	Within existing Residents Services budgets.
<b>Relevant Policy Overview Committee</b>	Residents' and Environmental Services
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	All

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### That Cabinet:

1. **Welcomes the report from the Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee on their review into diversifying the Street Champions Initiative;**

2. **Notes that all Street Champions have been contacted and thanked for their invaluable contribution to date and asked to confirm their on-going participation in the Street Champions initiative. This was also an opportunity to update their contact details and request their permission for contact details to be shared with Ward Councillors.**
3. **Following due consideration of the Committee's recommendations set out in Appendix A and also advice from the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration and officers, agree that the following actions be taken forward by the Deputy Chief Executive & Corporate Director of Residents Services:**

**That:**

- a) **In conjunction with the Borough Commander, the Cabinet Member will hold two meetings for Street Champions from across all wards for them to meet their Ward Councillors and progress local issues.**
- b) **Ward Councillors continue to receive quarterly summaries of the top issues being reported by Street Champions, enabling them to keep abreast of service matters raised and any trends. This can include updates on new Street Champion registrations/de-registrations.**
- c) **The Community Safety team work with local police on building robust Neighbourhood Watch areas and engaging with the Street Champions who have expressed an interest in joining a local Neighbourhood Watch group.**

### **Reasons for recommendations**

To consider the report of the Residents' & Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee and propose ways in which the Council can further enhance the Street Champions Initiative.

### **Alternative options considered / risk management**

The Cabinet could decide to reject some or all of the Committee's recommendations, or pursue alternative routes in which to progress the objectives of the review.

### **The Street Champions Initiative**

The Street Champions scheme was first piloted in 2005 as a HIP (Hillingdon Improvement Programme) initiative. It was designed to promote active citizenship and neighbourhood integration by encouraging active reporting to address environmental, criminal and anti-social issues whilst helping to create a feeling of community and safety. Benefits of the scheme include providing:

- A motivated group of residents who report issues to the Council either online or offline.
- Residents who act as the eyes and ears of Hillingdon by looking after their local environment and helping to reduce crime.
- Residents who help to increase community spirit in their areas.
- Residents who are actively engaged with the Council and its priorities.

Now in operation for nearly ten years, it has demonstrated durability and the sheer breadth of community engagement that can be achieved across the Borough.

The Council is not complacent and the Cabinet Member and officers continue to review the way the Street Champion initiative works to ensure that it reflects and responds to residents' interests and priorities.

All reporting of problems/issues/faults are prioritised in accordance with the severity and impact of the issue not on the basis of whether the problem was reported by a Street Champion. Officers have looked to see how the Council can:-

- Ensure that active, motivated citizens who care about how their local area looks and feels can be encouraged to sustain this motivation and share their local knowledge to address other issues such as low level crime, and
- Encourage newer generations of residents to join up to Feel PROUD of their neighbourhood.

When the Street Champion Initiative was piloted in 2005 and rolled out during 2006, much focus was on traditional paper reporting through the use of special cheque books. As the world has changed, a growing number of Street Champions are now opting to report via our Website or by email, though the telephone is still the primary method of communication.

To expand this, officers are currently exploring faster 'click of the button' ways to report issues, e.g. to send photos, which are aligned to our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to progress them in an automated and efficient way. Improvements are also planned to the Council's website and our CRM system.

This will make it even easier for Street Champions to report issues on mobile phones and tablet devices. We aim to further improve the Street Champion scheme by:-

- Promoting different ways in which Street Champions can report issues 24/7 including on-line reporting aligned to the Customer Relation Management (CRM) system. This complements the Council's emerging digital strategy and increasing use of social media;
- Improving channels of communication between Street Champions and the Council as well as keeping Ward Councillors informed of local issues being reported within the wards they represent. This could include offering Street Champion's a tour of the Customer Contact Centre, to meet the *'face behind the phone'* and see how their reported issues are progressed, and
- Enhancing links with community safety including Neighbourhood Watch to quickly share information which could affect security and safety. This includes aligning Street Champion meetings and information sharing to match the local policing model, grouping wards as set out in the table below:

<b>Police Area</b>	<b>Wards</b>
<b>Hayes</b>	Barnhill, Botwell, Charville, Townfield and Yeading
<b>North</b>	Cavendish, Eastcote & East Ruislip, Harefield, Ickenham, Manor, Northwood, Northwood Hills, South Ruislip and West Ruislip
<b>Uxbridge</b>	Brunel, Hillingdon East, Uxbridge North and Uxbridge South
<b>West Drayton</b>	(Heathrow Villages, Pinkwell, Yiewsley, West Drayton)

## **The Policy Overview Committee review (recommendation 1)**

The background to the Committee's review and their proposed recommendations, are neatly summarised through extracts from the report's 'overview' section:

*'From the outset of this review, the Committee was keenly aware that the Street Champions initiative has been a highly effective model since it began in 2006. It has encouraged in excess of 4,400 residents to engage in actively improving the Borough's environment through the reporting of a vast range of issues including fly tips, street lighting, abandoned vehicles and litter. Despite the Committee's grave concerns about a significant lack of engagement from current volunteers, it is not inaccurate to describe the active volunteers as the 'eyes and ears' of the Council given the significant individual and collective impacts that they have had by bringing the issues affecting their local environments to the Authority's attention. The efficacy of the scheme was affirmed by the Street Champions who provided evidence to the Committee, all of whom noted that the role had a visible impact upon the safety and appearance of their local areas.*

*In the context of the scheme's success, the Committee was eager not to 'reinvent the wheel' in this review. The basic function and structure of the scheme itself was, therefore, not addressed and a focus instead was placed on ensuring that the Council's support of volunteers was relevant, up to date and reflective of the needs of current and future Street Champions. Consequently, many of the themes that arose throughout the witness sessions centred on the various forms of communication that take place between the scheme's major stakeholders; namely, the Council, Street Champions themselves and Ward Councillors. Consideration was given to the ways in which issues were reported, how progress / resolution were communicated and how residents were made aware of the opportunity to become involved in the scheme. Given the prevalence of digital technologies in daily life, this aspect of the review focused particularly on the use of both internal and external online systems.*

*The issue of awareness raising also became a theme more generally throughout the review as the Committee was eager that the Council took steps to ensure that it had a comprehensive understanding of who Street Champions were and, once this was known, that this information be shared with Ward Councillors. A better awareness of which Street Champions were still active and the fostering of stronger links with other active members of the community was seen as a significant step in diversifying and improving the initiative.'*

The Committee's themed witness sessions included six Street Champions from the wards of Eastcote & East Ruislip, Cavendish, Uxbridge South, Townfield and Pinkwell. Further information on their review, the evidence presented to the Committee and their findings can be found in their report (Appendix A).

## **Update on the Street Champions refresh (recommendation 2)**

A letter thanking Street Champions for their invaluable contribution to date was posted on 27 March 2015. Included with this was a feedback form (see appendix B) which could also be completed on-line, to confirm:

- Contact details;
- Interest in continuing as a Street Champion, and if not their reasons why;
- Permission to share contact details within the Council, including Ward Councillors and strategic partners such as the Metropolitan Police;
- Interest in attending a joint meeting with Ward Councillors, Police and Council Officers, and preference for an afternoon/evening meeting;

- The main issues which they would like to discuss with Ward Councillors, Police and Council Officers, and
- Their ideas for improving the Street Champion scheme.

The Street Champions were asked to respond by 30 April 2015. As of 4 September 2015, there were:

- More than 589 Street Champions who are happy for their contact details to be shared within the council, including Ward Councillors and strategic partners such as the Metropolitan Police;
- More than 540 Street Champions who are happy to be contacted by Neighbourhood Watch;
- Some 494 Street Champions who are interested in attending a joint meeting with Ward Councillors, Police and Council Officers. This is made up of just over 211 Street Champions within the Hayes and West Drayton local policing areas and 283 from the Uxbridge and North areas.

An updated list of Street Champions who had agreed for their contact details to be shared within the Council was emailed to all Ward Councillors on 19 May 2015. The intention is to include contact details for new Street Champion registrations or de-registrations within the quarterly Ward "issue" report.

In conjunction with the Borough Commander, the Cabinet Member will hold two meetings for Street Champions from across all wards for them to meet their Ward Councillors and progress local issues. The first of these meetings for the southern wards took place on 14 September 2015 - flyer is attached as Appendix C to this report. A further meeting will be held in the New Year for Street Champions within the Uxbridge and North areas.

The most common reasons given for not continuing as a Street Champion were:-

- Old age/ill health/disability;
- Deceased, although in a few instances the letter had generated interest from other family members resulting in 12 new Street Champions signing up to the scheme and;
- Moved away/letters returned to sender.

### **The Cabinet Member's recommendations to Cabinet** *(recommendation 3)*

The Cabinet Member has welcomed the Committee's findings, which give many practical suggestions to enhance the Initiative. In tandem with the other work being undertaken outlined in this report, the Cabinet Member has proposed a number of actions to be taken forward as set out in this report's recommendations, that:-

- Over the next ten months, Street Champions within all 22 wards will be given the opportunity to attend a joint meeting with their Ward Councillors, Police and Council Officers to progress local issues and community safety matters.
- Ward Councillors continue to receive quarterly summaries of the top issues being reported by Street Champions, enabling them to keep abreast of service matters raised and any trends. This can include updates on new Street Champion registrations/de-registrations.
- The Community Safety team work with local police on building robust Neighbourhood Watch areas and engaging with the Street Champions who have expressed an interest in joining a local Neighbourhood Watch group.

### **Financial Implications**

Any enhancements to the Street Champions Initiative outlined above can be met within existing Residents Services budgets and officer resources.

## **EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES**

### **What will be the effect of the recommendations?**

The main effect of the recommendations will be to increase participation in a very successful community engagement initiative, building upon the Council's civic pride work and encouraging more and more residents to feel proud of their community and the Borough they live in. The intention is to see how we can:

- Ensure that active, motivated citizens who care about how their local area looks and feels can be encouraged to sustain this motivation and share their local knowledge to address other issues such as low level crime, and
- Encourage newer generations of residents to join up to Feel PROUD of their neighbourhood.

The recent refresh of the Street Champions scheme will facilitate:-

- Promoting different ways in which Street Champions can report issues 24/7 including on-line reporting. This complements the Council's emerging digital strategy and increasing use of social media;
- Improving channels of communication between Street Champions and the Council as well as keeping Ward Councillors informed of local issues being reported within the wards they represent and;
- Enhancing links with community safety including Neighbourhood Watch to quickly share information which could affect security and safety.

### **Consultation Carried Out or Required**

Consultation is integral to the Street Champions Initiative and is outlined in the report. Street Champions also provide continuous feedback on how they feel the Initiative could be improved, some of which is encapsulated above. Further actions and ideas may be progressed as feedback comes in over time for example from the joint meetings with the Council and the Police across all 22 wards and from increased information sharing with Ward Councillors.

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Corporate Finance**

Corporate finance has reviewed the report and concurs with the financial implications detailed above.

### **Legal**

There are no specific legal issues with the proposed recommendations. The Council's General Power of Competence enables it to undertake community engagement initiatives.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NIL