



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

9.30 am TUESDAY, 3 MARCH 2020

COMMITTEE ROOM 1/2 - PORT TALBOT CIVIC CENTRE

**ALL MOBILE TELEPHONES TO BE SWITCHED TO SILENT FOR THE
DURATION OF THE MEETING**

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest
2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (*Pages 3 - 6*)
3. Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (*Pages 7 - 26*)
4. Disability Audit Group (*Pages 27 - 78*)
5. Assessment of Resources for Democratic Services (*Pages 79 - 86*)
6. Forward Work Programme 19/20 (*Pages 87 - 90*)
7. Access to Meetings
To resolve to exclude the public for the following items pursuant to Regulation 4 (3) and (5) of Statutory Instrument 2001 No.2290 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 14 to the Local Government Act 1972

PART 2

8. Webcasting Proposals (*Pages 91 - 110*)
9. Urgent Items
Any urgent items (whether public or exempt) at the discretion of the Chairperson pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972

S.Phillips
Chief Executive

Civic Centre
Port Talbot

26th February, 2020

Committee Membership:

Chairperson: **Councillor J.D.Morgan**

Vice **Councillor A.R.Aubrey**
Chairperson:

Councillors: S.apDafydd, M.Harvey, J.Hurley, S.Miller,
S.Pursey, S.Renkes, A.Llewelyn, A.J.Richards,
S.K.Hunt and E.V.Latham

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

(Committee Room 1/2 - Port Talbot Civic Centre)

Members Present:

14 November 2019

Chairperson: Councillor J.D.Morgan

Councillors: S.apDafydd, M.Harvey, J.Hurley, S.Miller,
S.Purse, S.Renkes, A.J.Taylor and S.K.Hunt

Officers in Attendance: K.Jones, C.Furlow-Harris, S.Curran and
A.Manchip

1. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 September 2019 were approved as an accurate record.

Members noted the following updates:

- Following a recent meeting the IRPW confirmed that it agreed with the views of members, in that the HMRC should treat the carers' allowance as a reimbursement and that it should not be taxed. The IRPW suggested that local authorities write to the HMRC as a collective. Authorities had agreed to provide a template for this letter, however, to date, this had not been received. The Head of Democratic Services would therefore write a response and circulate to other local authorities for information.
- In relation to the Committee's Annual Report, it was agreed that this be presented to Council for information.

2. **UPDATE ON THE MEMBERS IT REFERENCE GROUP**

Committee received the progress report of the IT Reference Group. Members discussed the use of the Case Work application, on which members had previously received a presentation. It was agreed that information on the application be forwarded to the political groups and that they be requested to assess the level of interest in take up prior to further consideration.

In relation to the trialling of Office 365, Members asked when this was going to be rolled out. The Head of Democratic Services advised that a roll out plan would be requested from the ICT Manager.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

3. **DRAFT SURVEY FOR ELECTED MEMBERS 2019/20**

Committee noted, attached to the circulated report, the draft members' survey which it was anticipated would be completed early in 2020. Members noted that the survey would be completed on a 1:1 basis with officers from Democratic Services.

In addition to the questions contained in the draft document, members asked that questions in relation to the following be added:

- Problems experienced by members around disabilities:
- Meeting times:
- Any equality issues:
- More specific questions around members use of IT:
- How useful members felt the survey was.

Following the above discussions it was:

- RESOLVED:**
1. That following the addition of questions in relation to the above, a pilot of the survey be undertaken;
 2. That the Chair of the Disability Working Group write to all members encouraging those with disability issues to discuss such disabilities, if they were affecting members participation in Council business, with the Head of Democratic Services in order that assistance could be provided for them to carry out their duties as councillors.

4. **UPDATE ON THE DISABILITY AUDIT GROUP**

Members received an update on the work of the Disability Audit Group. It was noted that the Group would next meet with officers from estates and the accommodation working group to discuss the

proposals put forward by Proudlock Associates in relation to the Civic building at both Neath and Port Talbot. Thereafter a final report would be submitted to this committee for consideration.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

5. **UPDATE FOLLOWING MEETING WITH THE IRPW ON 22 OCTOBER 2019 ON THE IRPW'S DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT, FEBRUARY 2020**

Members received, as an appendix to the circulated report, a copy of the draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) which set out its proposals for the remuneration of Members of principal Councils in Wales for 2020/21.

Members' attention was drawn to the proposal to increase members' basic allowance by £350 per annum with effect from the new financial year. Committee noted that their rate of remuneration had fallen behind the benchmark. Committee agreed that any increase should be from the new Civic Year.

In relation to providing sufficient support to members, the range of support already in place was set out in the report and noted.

Committee noted that the IRPW had requested that the carers' allowance was promoted further to encourage take up.

Clarification was sought as to what the IRPW was suggesting regarding telephones. Members queried whether there was a possibility of transferring the sim cards from the i pads to mobile telephones. It was agreed that this would be discussed further and fed into the IT Reference Group for consideration.

RESOLVED: That the Head of Democratic Services respond to the IRPW's consultation with a view that the increase in basic allowance appeared acceptable but should apply from the new Civic Year and not the financial. That the IRPW draft report be circulated to all Members with a reminder that members can respond on an individual basis if they so wished.

6. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 18/19**

RESOLVED: That the Forward Work Programme be noted and that the Disability Audit Group and the Members' Survey be added to the planner for the 3 March meeting.

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

3 March 2020

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All wards

Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and Draft Supplementary Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

Purpose of the Report

1. To advise Members of the Democratic Services Committee of the content of the final Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales for the civic year 2020/2021.

The link to the Annual Report is [Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales: annual report 2020 to 2021](#)

2. To advise Members of the Democratic Services Committee of a consultation exercise initiated by the IRPW on draft supplementary guidance which proposes a set of principles that the Panel propose should be adopted by all relevant authorities to increase the take up of financial support for Members who have care responsibilities or personal needs.

Background

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) exercises powers set out in various legislation and can also make recommendations. It has the power to set the level of remuneration

payable to elected members and co-opted members of local authorities. It has also been given a general power to review councils' pay policy statements as far as they relate to heads of paid service, extended on a temporary basis to chief officers of principal authorities.

Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

Each year, and before making its final determinations for the next civic year, the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales publishes a draft report and invites comments on its draft proposals. The proposals proposed for the civic year 2020-21 were considered by this Committee on 14 November 2019 and the following comments were forwarded to the IRPW:

“Whilst Committee supported the increase to the basic allowance, Members felt that the implementation of the changes should be the new Civic Year and not the Financial Year as proposed in the report.

The Council will continue to promote the use of the Carers' Allowance, as suggested in the report, and will shortly be making representations to HMRC in relation to the taxation of the allowance.

In addition, Council will endeavour to schedule a meeting where you will be able to meet with representatives of the County Borough Council along with representatives of the Community and Town Councils within our area.”

The IRPW has now published its final proposals for the civic year 2020-21 and Members are asked to note that proposals are unchanged from those contained in the draft report.

Summary of changes to be implemented in 2020/2021

1. Salaries

The changes that will affect the existing arrangements in this Council are summarised in the table overleaf:

Element of Remunerations	2019/20	2020/21	Change (% change)
Basic Salary	£13,868	£14,218	+£350
Leader	£49,100	£49,450	+£350
Deputy Leader	£34,600	£34,950	+£350
Executive Members	£30,100	£30,450	+£350
Chairs of Committee	£22,568	£22,918	+£350
Leader of largest opposition Group	£22,568	£22,918	+£350
Leader of other political Group	£17,568	£17,918	+£350
Civic Head	£22,568	£22,918	+£350
Deputy Civic Head	£17,568	£17,918	+£350

Notes:

1. Increases to the senior salaries of £350 are inclusive of the increase proposed to the basic salary of £350
2. The limits on the number of senior salaries available to the Council remain unchanged as does the threshold for other opposition group leaders to qualify for the other political group leader salary.

2. Other matters

The Panel has re-emphasised the need for Democratic Services Committees to ensure that all elected members are given the support necessary for them to fulfil their duties effectively.

AS advised on 14 November 2019, work undertaken to date by the Committee is summarised below for reference:

- The Democratic Services Committee in Neath Port Talbot is in the process of undertaking the Members Annual Survey;

- The Democratic Services Committee in Neath Port Talbot has reviewed the arrangements for Member Annual Reports and Member Annual Development Reviews and agreed actions in relation to both of these matters;
- The Member ICT Scheme was reviewed and amended at the end of the last administration. The Democratic Services Committee has set up a Member IT Reference Group to keep Member ICT arrangements under review;
- The Democratic Services Committee in Neath Port Talbot continues to assess Members' facilities to ensure they are fit for purpose;
- Members are reminded at regular intervals about the carer provisions in a general sense, but also when circumstances change, individual Members are approached by the Head of Democratic Services to ensure they consider taking up the provisions available; and
- A Task and Finish Group has been established to take forward the webcasting of council meetings and the development of a Public Participation Strategy.

The IRPW ask that the following arrangements be promoted to all elected members. Please also note that they propose to issue supplementary guidance also in relation to carers' allowances which is dealt with later in this report:

- The Panel has determined that, through the Democratic Services Committees, authorities should ensure all voting co-opted members are given as much support as is necessary for them to fulfil their duties effectively.

As the Democratic Services Committee has not yet considered the support needs of co-opted Members, it is suggested that this be included in the Committee's Forward Work Programme for 2020-21.

Draft Supplementary Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

The IRPW has issued draft guidance that it proposes to issue as a supplementary report on the “Principles Relating to the Reimbursement to Costs of Care” in an effort to promote the take up of the care element of the financial support available. Appendix 1 provides a copy of the table extracted from the draft guidance, together with this council’s current position on the actions IRPW propose we should take:

Financial Impact

The draft budget proposals for the Council for 2020/21 includes as uplift to cover the additional costs created by the £350 increase in the basic salary for Members.

Equality Impact Assessment

The draft supplementary guidance would have a beneficial impact on those Members who have caring responsibilities and may assist in attracting people from diverse backgrounds to stand for election as councillors.

Workforce Impacts

There are no workforce impacts identified in relation to the proposed changes.

Risk Management

Any increase to Member remuneration has the potential to attract public criticism at a time of severe and enduring austerity. The Panel acknowledge this in making its proposals but points to the workloads and responsibilities being borne by elected Members as justification for the proposed changes. Furthermore, the Panel provides details of how councillor remuneration is continuing to diverge from the benchmark rate.

Legal Powers

The Panel are exercising powers set out in Part 8 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, as amended by the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 and the Local Government (Wales) Act 2015.

Consultation

All Members were sent a copy of the draft Report. I wrote, on behalf of the Chair and Committee to the IRPW, summarising Members' views on the draft proposals as outlined above.

Recommendation

1. Members of the Democratic Services Committee are invited to note the contents of the final Annual Report issued by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.
2. Members are asked to consider the draft supplementary guidance on the costs of care that the Panel are proposing to make and offer views on those proposals.
3. Members ask the Head of Democratic Services to provide a formal response to the draft supplementary guidance based on the discussion at the meeting.

Appendices

Appendix 1 –Draft Supplementary Guidance – Costs of Care

Officer Contact:

Mrs Karen Jones, Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer:
[Tel:01639 763284](tel:01639763284) or e-mail: k.jones3@npt.gov.uk

Mrs Caryn Furlow-Harris, Strategic Manager, Policy and Democratic Services, Tel: 01639 763242 or e-mail: c.furlow@npt.gov.uk

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To:

Leaders and Chief Executives of County and County Borough Councils
Chairs and Chief Executives of National Park Authorities
Chairs and Clerks of Fire and Rescue Authorities
Chair and Chief Executive of One Voice Wales
Leader and Chief Executive of Welsh Local Government Association
Head of Democratic/Members Services of County and County
Borough Councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities
Clerks to Community & Town Councils

19 February 2020

Dear Colleague

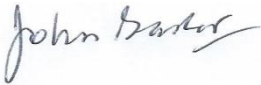
Independent Remuneration for Wales – Annual Report 2020/2021

Attached is the finalised Annual Report in respect of 2020/2021. My thanks to the individuals and organisations who responded to the draft Report issued in September last year. The Panel has considered the views and comments that were expressed and have been taken in to account in reaching the conclusions reflected in the Report.

The Panel has confirmed the increases in the basic salary for elected members of principal councils, with consequential increases for members of National Park and Fire and Rescue Authorities. There is no additional increase proposed for senior salary holders but they will receive the addition to the basic salary element. There are no other substantive changes to the draft Report.

Responses to the draft raised issues in respect of the date of the implementation of the Panel's determinations and the taxation of some of the payments. I have set out the Panel's position on these matters in the Foreword to the Report.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Bader". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

John Bader
Chair

Draft Supplementary Guidance – Costs of Care

The Minimum Authorities should do	How this could be done	Current practice/comments
1 Be clear who it is for	<p>1.1 Members with primary caring responsibilities for a child or adult and or personal support needs where these are not covered by statutory or other provision.</p> <p>1.2 For personal support. This might also include a short term or recent condition not covered by the Equality Act 2010, access to work, Personal Payments, insurance or other provision.</p>	<p>Democratic Services Committees and or Staff to review members' needs annually and when circumstances change</p> <p>The IRPW should direct any guidance to democratic services committees or the heads of democratic services. It is not appropriate for directions to be given by the IRPW to democratic services staff as they do not have the power to issue such instructions.</p> <p>In terms of responding to Members' needs, all councillors are regularly reminded about the carers allowances. Additionally, when the circumstances of individual members change, members are approached by the Head of Democratic Services to encourage them to take up the carers allowances.</p>
2 Raise Awareness	2.1 Ensure potential candidates, candidates and current members are aware that RoCoC is available to them should their current or future circumstances require.	<p>Ensure clear and easily found information is available on website and in election and appointment materials, at Shadowing and at induction and in the members' "handbook". Signpost to IRPW Payments to Councillors leaflets</p> <p>The Council promoted the IRPW arrangements on the Internet in the run up to the 2017 local government elections as part of the on-boarding arrangements that were agreed.</p> <p>The remuneration arrangement were also then covered in more detail during the induction of newly elected members.</p> <p>The Remuneration Scheme is updated annually in line with IRPW determinations and this is</p>

			sent to all councillors. We also encourage councillors to participate in IRPW consultations.
3 Promote a Positive Culture	3.1 Ensure all members understand the reason for RoCoC and support and encourage others to claim where needed.	Encouragement within and across all parties of Relevant Authorities to support members to claim. Agree not to advertise or make public individual decisions not to claim.	See above Additionally, Council has decided as a matter of policy not to publish details of individual members minded to claim the carers allowances.
4 Set out the approved duties for which RoCoC can be claimed	4.1 Meetings – formal (those called by the Authority) and those necessary to members’ work (to deal with constituency but not party issues) and personal development (training, and appraisals.) 4.2 Travel – in connection with meetings. 4.3 Preparation – reading and administration are part of a member’s role. Some meetings and committees require large amounts of reading, analysis or drafting before or after a meeting. 4.4 Senior salary holders with additional duties may have higher costs.	Approved duties are usually a matter of fact. Interpretation of the IRPW Regulations are set out in the Annual Report. “Any other duty approved by the authority, or any duty of class so approved, undertaken for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the authority or any of its committees.”	The Council’s Remuneration Scheme does not deviate from the IRPW arrangements. There have been compliance audits of our Scheme.

<p>5 Be flexible about the types of care that can be claimed</p>	<p>5.1 Members should not be “out of pocket”</p> <p>5.2 Models of care and needs vary</p> <p>5.3 Members may use a combination of several care options</p> <p>5.4 Patterns of care may alter over the civic and academic year</p> <p>5.5 Not all care is based on hourly (or part hourly) rates</p> <p>5.6 Where a whole session must be paid for, this must be reimbursed even where the care need is only for part of a session</p> <p>5.7 Members may need to:</p> <p>5.7.1 book and pay for sessions in advance</p> <p>5.7.2 commit to a block contract: week, month or term</p> <p>5.7.3 pay for sessions cancelled at short notice</p> <p>5.8 Where care need straddles two sessions both should be reimbursed</p>		<p>Should Members wish to claim carers allowance they simply have to provide receipts to evidence the expenditure up to the maximum allowance provided for in the IRPW framework.</p> <p>We have not imposed any onerous conditions on claiming the allowance.</p> <p>We try to schedule a lighter programme of meetings during school holidays at the request of Council and have a full recess every August. This is to accommodate Members who have caring responsibilities for children of school age.</p> <p>The suggestion about advance payment will need to be carefully worked through to ensure that any expenditure is appropriate balanced against other spending pressures that authorities are experiencing.</p>
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6 Have a simple claim process	<p>6.1 Members should know how to claim.</p> <p>6.2 The claim process should be clear, proportionate and auditable</p>	<p>Check claim at members' appraisals and regular review</p> <p>Flexibility to accept paperless invoices</p> <p>On line form</p> <p>Same or similar form to travel costs claim</p>	See above.
7 Comply with IRPW Publication rules	<p>7.1 The IRPW Framework states: "In respect of the publication of the reimbursement of the costs of care, the Panel has decided that relevant authorities should only publish the total amount reimbursed during the year. It is a matter for each authority to determine its response to any Freedom of Information requests it receives. However, it is not intended that details of individual claims should be disclosed."</p>		See above



To:

Leaders and Chief Executives of County and County Borough Councils
Chairs and Chief Executives of National Park Authorities
Chairs and Clerks of Fire and Rescue Authorities
Chair and Chief Executive of One Voice Wales
Leader and Chief Executive of Welsh Local Government Association
Head of Democratic/Members Services of County and County
Borough Councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities
Clerks to Community & Town Councils

13 February 2020

Dear Colleagues

Draft Supplementary Report – Principles relating to the reimbursement of Costs of Care

For several years, the Panel has endeavoured to find ways to increase the take up of the financial support for members of councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities who have care responsibilities or personal needs. We believe that this provision is an important factor to increase and sustain diversity of membership of local authorities.

We keep this provision under constant review and welcome comments and suggestions about ways in which the take up of this financial support can be increased.

This draft Supplementary Report is a stage in this continuing review process. It proposes a set of principles that should be adopted by all relevant authorities. It is a consultation document and the Panel would appreciate comments prior to the publication of the final Report. The consultation will run for eight weeks and responses should be submitted by the **9 April 2020**.

Yours sincerely,

John Bader
Chair

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Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

Draft Supplementary Report

The Principles relating to the Reimbursement
of Costs of Care

February 2020

Draft Supplementary Report

The Principles in respect of the Reimbursement of Costs of Care (RoCoC)

Introduction

The Panel's core principles have been a fundamental feature of its work since it was established and are contained in each Annual Report. These include:

Remuneration

1.3 The Framework provides for payment to members of relevant authorities who carry a responsibility for serving their communities. The level of payment should not act as a barrier to taking up or continuing in post. There should be no requirement that resources necessary to enable the discharge of duties are funded from the payment. The Framework provides additional payments for those who are given greater levels of responsibility.

Diversity

1.4 Democracy is strengthened when the membership of relevant authorities adequately reflects the demographic and cultural make-up of the communities such authorities serve. The Panel will always take in to account the contribution its Framework can make in encouraging the participation of those who are significantly under-represented at local authority level.

The provision of financial support for members with care responsibilities or personal needs is an important factor in improving and sustaining the diversity of membership. It is essential that there is clarity in the availability of and the access to this support. We therefore propose to supplement our core principles with additions specifically relating to the costs of care. This draft Supplementary Report sets out our proposals for consultation.

The purpose is:

To enable all members and co-opted members of relevant authorities to carry out their duties effectively

The Relevant Authorities are:

22 Local Authorities, 735 Town and Community Councils, 3 National Park and 3 Fire and Rescue Authorities

The Minimum Authorities should do		How this could be done
1 Be clear who it is for	<p>1.1 Members with primary caring responsibilities for a child or adult and or personal support needs where these are not covered by statutory or other provision.</p> <p>1.2 For personal support. This might also include a short term or recent condition not covered by the Equality Act 2010, access to work, Personal Payments, insurance or other provision.</p>	Democratic Services Committees and or Staff to review members' needs annually and when circumstances change
2 Raise Awareness	2.1 Ensure potential candidates, candidates and current members are aware that RoCoC is available to them should their current or future circumstances require.	Ensure clear and easily found information is available on website and in election and appointment materials, at Shadowing and at induction and in the members' "handbook". Signpost to IRPW Payments to Councillors leaflets.
3 Promote a Positive Culture	3.1 Ensure all members understand the reason for RoCoC and support and encourage others to claim where needed.	Encouragement within and across all parties of Relevant Authorities to support members to claim. Agree not to advertise or make public individual decisions not to claim.
4 Set out the approved duties for which RoCoC can be claimed	<p>4.1 Meetings – formal (those called by the Authority) and those necessary to members' work (to deal with constituency but not party issues) and personal development (training, and appraisals.)</p> <p>4.2 Travel – in connection with meetings.</p> <p>4.3 Preparation – reading and administration are part of a member's role. Some meetings and committees require large amounts of reading, analysis or drafting before or after a meeting.</p> <p>4.4 Senior salary holders with additional duties may have higher costs.</p>	Approved duties are usually a matter of fact. Interpretation of the IRPW Regulations are set out in the Annual Report. "Any other duty approved by the authority, or any duty of class so approved, undertaken for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the authority or any of its committees."

<p>5 Be flexible about the types of care that can be claimed</p>	<p>5.1 Members should not be “out of pocket”</p> <p>5.2 Models of care and needs vary</p> <p>5.3 Members may use a combination of several care options</p> <p>5.4 Patterns of care may alter over the civic and academic year</p> <p>5.5 Not all care is based on hourly (or part hourly) rates</p> <p>5.6 Where a whole session must be paid for, this must be reimbursed even where the care need is only for part of a session</p> <p>5.7 Members may need to:</p> <p>5.7.1 book and pay for sessions in advance</p> <p>5.7.2 commit to a block contract: week, month or term</p> <p>5.7.3 pay for sessions cancelled at short notice</p> <p>5.8 Where care need straddles two sessions both should be reimbursed</p>	
<p>6 Have a simple claim process</p>	<p>6.1 Members should know how to claim.</p> <p>6.2 The claim process should be clear, proportionate and auditable.</p>	<p>Check claim at members’ appraisals and regular review</p> <p>Flexibility to accept paperless invoices</p> <p>On line form</p> <p>Same or similar form to travel costs claim</p>
<p>7 Comply with IRPW Publication rules</p>	<p>7.1 The IRPW Framework states:</p> <p>“In respect of the publication of the reimbursement of the costs of care, the Panel has decided that relevant authorities should only publish the total amount reimbursed during the year. It is a matter for each authority to determine its response to any Freedom of Information requests it receives. However, it is not intended that details of individual claims should be disclosed.”</p>	



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Democratic Services Committee

3rd March 2020

Report of the Chair of the Disability Audit Working Group – Cllr. Sandra Miller

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Disability Audit Working Group

Purpose of the Report:

To provide the Democratic Services Committee with the findings of the recent Working Group on the Disability Audit of Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres.

Executive Summary:

This report highlights the work of the Group undertaken over a period of several months. The Group consisted of a small number of Members and considered evidence and insights from internal Council departments as well as external specialists, Proudlock Associates.

Background:

Democratic Services Committee Members requested that arrangements be made for a disability audit to take place in both Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres in order to remove any barriers for Members to access their workplace and facilities.

The Facilities Management team carried out an accessibility survey and discovered that a number of areas were identified as needing improvement, in the Civic Centres.

Following this the Democratic Services Committee formed a Working Group to carry out a disability audit of Members' facilities at Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres.

Financial Impacts:

There are financial impacts associated with the recommendations set out in this report. However, the Group consulted officers in arriving at the final recommendations and they have been ranked according to what is considered important and affordable in the short term as well; as those recommendations that would be progressed in the longer term as part of a more significant programme of works

Integrated Impact Assessment:

This work was specifically commissioned to address the needs of disabled people, specifically elected members, to ensure that people with disabilities can participate in the business of the Council.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

This report focuses on the needs of people with disabilities and there are no direct impacts for valleys communities.

Workforce Impacts:

There are no direct workforce impacts associated with this report however, changes introduced to meet the needs of disabled Members will also benefit staff with disabilities and also the wider public.

Legal Impacts:

The work has specifically considered how well existing arrangements meet duties set out in the Equality Act 2010 and relevant health and safety and building regulations.

Risk Management Impacts:

There is a risk that without implementing the recommendations, the needs of elected members with disabilities will not be met, impairing their ability to fully participate in the business of the Council.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations:

That the Democratic Services Committee considers the report developed by the Task and Finish Group and commends the recommendations included in the report (appendix one) to the Cabinet.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To make reasonable adjustments to Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres in order to improve disabled access for Members and assist the Council in meeting its equality duties.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period

Appendices:

Appendix one – Report of the Working Group

Officer Contact:

Chloe Plowman, Democratic Services Officer
Email: c.plowman@npt.gov.uk Tel: 01639 763301

A Report of the Democratic Services Committee Task and Finish Group: Disability Audit of Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres



March 2020

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

When we embarked on this audit this volunteer group was eager to ensure our buildings were fit for purpose to accommodate the challenges that face our Members and be in compliance with supporting our Staff maintain their working lives as best as they can.

I would like to thank Proudlock Associates for their help in shaping our work, giving us a structured programme that will enable us to undertake the priorities needed going forward.

Our Officers have worked with us to confirm this final document. The recommendations outlined in this report will give this Council a platform of improvements that will also benefit both public and employees and to help them to remove any barriers they face daily.

*Chair of the Disability Audit Working Group
Councillor Sandra Miller*

BACKGROUND

The Equality Act became law in October, 2010. It replaced previous legislation (such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and ensured consistency in what employers and employees needed to do to make their workplaces a fair environment and comply with the law. All buildings constructed after 1994 must comply with Approved Document M of the Building Regulations – Access to and use of buildings. Part M sets out minimum requirements to ensure that a broad range of people are able to access and use facilities within buildings.

All buildings occupied by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council are routinely surveyed, to assess their suitability for disabled users to access facilities and services, and to identify any reasonable adjustments to be undertaken. The accessibility survey identifies where the buildings fail to comply with the relevant legislation, ascertains what work is required to remove physical barriers and indicative costs to undertake the work.

As part of Members discussions during a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on 27 July 2017, a request was made to undertake a survey to establish if there were any reasonable adjustments that should be considered to improve disabled access for Members, staff and the general public within civic buildings.

Work to undertake the survey was conducted by the Facilities

Management team during September 2017. Members were presented with the findings of the survey in a meeting on 19 October 2017. It was brought to attention that Neath Civic Centre, which was built in 2005, and the Quays completed in 2009, both comply with Part M of the Building Regulations and were designed to be fully accessible. With regard to Port Talbot Civic Centre, which was constructed in 1987, prior to the introduction of any significant legislation to improve access for disabled people, a number of areas were identified as needing improvement. It was resolved that arrangements be made for a disability audit to take place in both Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres, and a report to be prepared identifying the issues for consideration.

Officers made progress in relation to setting up a disability audit and in a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on 5th September 2018, they provided Members with an update. It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group be set up to carry out a disability audit of Members' facilities at Neath and Port Talbot Civic Centres with support from Shaw Trust, in order to enable Members to carry out their role, and to assist in facilitating the democratic processes of the Council. Carrying out the disability audit would remove barriers for Members to access their workplace and facilities, and assist the Council to meet its equality duties.

APPROACH

The following Elected Members volunteered to sit on the Group:

- Cllr S Miller (Chairperson)
- Cllr A Woolcock
- Cllr S ap Dafydd
- Cllr O Davies
- Cllr W Griffiths
- Cllr S Hunt
- Cllr S Jones
- Cllr R Mizen
- Cllr S Paddison
- Cllr S Penry
- Cllr L Purcell
- Cllr J Warman
- Cllr D Whitelock
- Cllr C Williams

There was originally a delay with setting up the Task and Finish Group due to Shaw Trust being unable to provide support initially; however the correct support was enlisted with Proudlock Associates (sub-contractors for Shaw Trust). The first meeting of the Group took place on 14th March 2019.

The First Meeting

Members received the access auditing proposals produced by Proudlock Associates, which contained two options. Following discussion, the Group agreed to proceed with option one as they

felt it best reflected the instruction given by the Democratic Services Committee; opposed to option two which was detailed to be a full compliance audit, usually dealt with by the Council's Facilities Management section.

The segment below was extracted from the access auditing proposal from Proudlock Associates and details the option that was chosen by the Group:

Option 1 – Light touch audit and walk-through followed by notes sent afterwards.

This involves an initial inspection of the building by the auditor in an approach to identify the considerations that should be made and to formulate some initial recommendations. Taking notes and measurements for around 2 hours in each building, the auditor is then accompanied immediately afterwards by members / staff / building management in a walk-through of the building in order for the auditor to explain the recommendations being considered by the auditor, to give reasons and discuss any options / preferences. We envisage this will take around 90 mins more per building. The visit would be followed by a summary report of the recommendations including giving the necessary guidance, rather than a full Audit Report. The Summary report would be loosely based on the same headings as that for the main proposal above, and comments may also be made on the internal surfaces, signage, way finding, lighting, acoustics, means of escape and building management but only where necessary in this light-touch approach to the work.

The Group emphasised the importance of covering means of escape from the civic buildings during the audit, in particular Members with disabilities, and queried how the audit would be funded. Officers clarified that the cost of the audit would be accommodated within the existing budget for Member Development.

The Disability Audit

Neath Port Talbot Council commissioned Proudlock Associates to provide inclusive design and access auditing services for Elected Member areas within the two main buildings:

- Neath Civic Centre
- Port Talbot Civic Centre

The Group had decided that the following Members would attend the walk-through audit with Proudlock Associates, and an Officer from Democratic Services:

- Cllr S Miller
- Cllr S ap Dafydd
- Cllr O Davies
- Cllr L Purcell

A 'light touch' audit and a walk-through of the premises was agreed and carried out on 15 April 2019. Proudlock Associates started their audit at Port Talbot Civic Centre in the morning, before moving onto Neath Civic Centre in the afternoon.

The work commissioned was to make an initial inspection of the buildings in an approach to identify the considerations that should

be made and to formulate some initial recommendations. Proudlock Associates began their audit in each building by walking through independently to take notes and measurements. They were then accompanied immediately afterwards by the nominated Members and Democratic Services Officers in a walk-through of the building, where the auditor explained the recommendations being considered, gave reasons for the recommendations and provided opportunity to discuss any options and/or preferences.

Following the audit, Proudlock Associates provided a report on the inclusive design and access audit notes, which included recommendations for both Civic Centres.

Considering the Report

The Group reconvened on 9 September 2019 and received the final report of the disability audit completed by Proudlock Associates. It was noted that the report was divided into two sections, Neath Civic Centre and Port Talbot Civic Centre, and included recommendations and priorities for each building.

It was queried whether the council would be required to achieve all of the recommendations included in the report or whether the group would be able to prioritise a select few. Members were informed, that as a public body, the council would be compelled to comply with the Equality Act (2010) and the Health and Safety at Work Act, to abide by legislation and to prevent incurred charges. It was stated that reasonable adjustment must be considered for both employees and the public.

It was decided that the best way forward would be to organise two workshops, one to discuss Neath Civic Centre and the other to discuss Port Talbot Civic Centre; and use these workshops to prioritise and organise the recommendations detailed in the audit report, to help identify which recommendations are definitely achievable, possibly achievable and not achievable.

The following suggestions were made in relation to the process of organising and prioritising recommendations:

- Refer particular recommendations of a high cost and would require a lot of resources to officers so that they could be considered for future refurbishments plans.
- Create a list including the recommendations that were not achievable at the time, to evidence that they were considered by the Group.

Following the workshops, it was decided that Democratic Services Officers would arrange an additional meeting with the appropriate officers to obtain their feedback on the work completed by the Group. It was emphasised the Officers role will be key in deciding cost effective solutions and quick fixes that will significantly make an improvement to the civic centres.

The Workshops

The workshops took place on the following dates:

- 23 September 2019 – Neath Civic Centre
- 10 October 2019 – Port Talbot Civic Centre

Democratic Services Officers produced a table for both Civic Centres to utilise in the workshops in order to capture the Groups own comments, priorities and actions against each of the recommended actions provided by the auditors. The tables also contained the observations and comments, priorities and estimated costs which were included in the auditor's report.

The tables from both workshops can be found under the 'tables of evidence' section, detailed in this report.

Following both workshops, Democratic Services Officers circulated the tables to Simon Brennan and Richard Jenkins in order for them to be able to provide their response to the recommendations.

Meeting with Officers

The Group invited Officers Simon Brennan (Head Of Property And Regeneration) and Richard Jenkins (Building Premises Manager) to attend a meeting on 20 January 2020, in order to obtain their professional views on the recommendations, as well as provide information on any pre-planned maintenance or works and/or improvements which would either fully or in-part address the recommendations. Members also welcomed Officers views on the recommendations that could not be implemented within a reasonable time and/or cost.

Councillor Annette Wingrave, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Sustainable Development, was also invited to attend as it was identified there was a link between both areas of work.

Simon Brennan and Richard Jenkins presented their comments in the format of a table, as a response to each recommendation provided by Proudlock Associates. The comments on both Civic Centres, as well as the Groups response to the comments, can be found under the ‘tables of evidence’ section, detailed in this report.

During the meeting, Members had opportunity to raise any questions and/or queries in relation to the comments provided by Officers, before agreeing the final recommendations to take to Democratic Services Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DISABILITY AUDIT

Neath Civic Centre

1. There are Blue Badge bays outside and in the adjacent car park, which are all correctly marked out. The direct route from the car park involves negotiating doors which include the outer door to the car park building, which is very heavy and has a handle that is difficult to grip.

Officer's comments: The Multi Storey car park is not a facilities run building but there are automatic doors on the main entrance / exit.

Discussion in meeting: There have been occasions when the automatic doors do not open. Sliding automatic doors seem to work more efficiently; this could be taken into consideration for the future. The lift in the Multi Storey car park is sometimes out of order, this is often due to vandalism which prevents the lifts from working. The issue is always reported, however it takes time for the organisation who completes the repairs to obtain the parts needed and complete the repairs.

Recommendation: No current action, however take on board the comments made regarding using sliding automatic doors for any future refurbishment.

2. The approach to the building from the car park has some uneven slabs and edges that need repair, or they could cause an accident by trapping a wheelchair castor or a heel. The surface is also reportedly very slippery when wet.

Officer's comments: This area is a mixture of responsibility between Facilities and Street care. Streetcare to be consulted on the treatment that was used in Pontardawe but as a quick fix the slabs have been power washed to remove any build-up of slippery film. Any loose areas have been repaired.

Discussion in meeting: Officers have been in touch with engineers and a quotation is being undertaken.

Recommendation: A quotation be undertaken for repair work on the uneven slabs and work will be undertaken following this.

3. The main approach comprises curved lengths of tactile corduroy paving; this should only be used to indicate a hazard and gives the tactile underfoot warning to visually impaired users 'proceed with care'. This is inappropriate and could be confusing. The entire surface is also reportedly very slippery when wet.

Officer's comments: It is believed that this was installed after the construction of the Civic Centre following the recommendations of the NPT disability access group. If deemed necessary these slabs will need to be lifted up and replaced with ones to try and match the existing ones in the adjacent areas.

Recommendation: No current action, however take on board the comments made regarding redesign of tactile corduroy paving, for any future refurbishment.

4. Both entrances comprise revolving doors with side pass. These are not inclusive design as they require many disabled people to be separated from able-bodied people and this is discriminatory.

Officer's comments: Due to the building design with the OSS and reception area in the foyer the use of revolving doors is considered necessary to avoid gusts of cold air affecting the staff working there. As mentioned there are opening doors adjacent to each revolving door that are available for disabled access and for emergency evacuation.

Recommendation: Signpost the disabled access button clearer and move it closer to the door. Look into a sensor to enable these doors to open automatically.

5. The main entrance has its side pass door to the side and is barely visible. This is also not treating people as equals and gives the feeling of a secondary entrance, less important.

Officer's comments: As 4 although signage could be improved to highlight the location of the door.

Recommendation: Signage to be improved to highlight the location of the door.

6. The side pass door requires the user to take a large detour from their direct line of approach, which is neither convenient nor intuitive when trying to locate and use the control pad.

Officer's comments: A control pad was specified to avoid the door opening unnecessarily and as a result avoid the OSS staff from becoming cold. We would recommend the control pad being relocated on a standalone post that includes signage.

Recommendation: Relocate the control pad to a standalone post and include signage.

7. Inside, the foyer comprises a double height space with hard surfaces all around. This makes the acoustics very difficult, especially considering the activities include using chairs in the eatery which scrape on the floor, clattering crockery, general conversations as

<p>people meet, as well as trying to communicate with reception and at the booths / kiosks in that area.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: Sound absorbing panels can be added to the limited walls and also the ceiling but due to the atrium situation it is felt that this will have little effect. Investigations have found that rubber finials may be able to be added to the coffee shop seating. A trial of these will be undertaken.</p> <p>Recommendation: Trial of rubber finials to be undertaken and implemented if successful.</p>
<p>8. The pillar in reception is not clearly defined and could be a collision hazard.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: The reception is being decorated soon and this will be taken care of.</p> <p>Recommendation: The pillar to be considered as part of the reception refurbishment.</p>
<p>9. Comfortable seating is all of one type whereas people have differing needs.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: Investigate seating options and costs. The existing seating is nearing 15 years old and could do with being refreshed.</p> <p>Discussion in meeting: It would be beneficial to obtain the advice of someone with a disability before purchasing seating; they will be able to assist in making suitable decisions.</p> <p>Recommendation: The seating will be refreshed, ensuring there is a mixture of seating options. A representative of the Disability Audit Working Group to be present to assist in this process.</p>
<p>10. There are no hearing induction loops at the main receptions, although there is one at the cash desk it does not work.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: Agreed that these need to be implemented.</p> <p>Recommendation: Hearing induction loops at the main reception to be installed as possible.</p>
<p>11. The main reception desk is a single high surface at 1060mm AFL, which is too high for a wheelchair user or someone of short stature.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: When designed the reception / OSS area did not have any screens dividing the counter up in to separate customer areas. There is an accessible point but this has subsequently been charged and taken as a designated OSS customer point. It is recommended that the end point closest to the reception area is removed.</p>

Recommendation: The end point closest to reception area be removed.

12. Many circulation doors are heavy to open:

Ground floor – both sets of double doors to reach committee rooms, committee room C door and both doors leading into Male and Female toilets respectively

First floor – right hand leaf off the stairs into the main corridor, circulation door to reach mezzanine above reception and both doors leading into Male and Female toilets respectively.

Officer's comments: Undertake a survey of all doors and adjust / replace door closers as required. The doors leading off the coffee shop area to the committee rooms can be added to the fire alarm system and held open if that is what would be what members wish.

Discussion in meeting: Certain legislations conflict, such as fire safety legislation and disability legislation. In relation to the financial position, Officers need to ensure they are balancing the budget buy taking into consideration what needs to be replaced and what could be replaced.

Recommendation: Undertake a survey of all doors and adjust / replace door closers as required. Also look into adding push buttons to open the disabled toilet doors and reminder to the relevant staff to replace door closers regularly as they deteriorate with time.

13. Tactile signage on the WC doors is very low, being installed at appx 1100mm AFL. It is also very high on the Committee room C door, at 1700mm.

Officer's comments: Move the signage to the appropriate level if it can be done without damaging the finish of the doors, otherwise it is recommended to add supplementary signage.

Discussion in meeting: the signage will either be moved or a new one will be added.

Recommendation: Signage to be moved to the appropriate level or supplementary signage to be added.

14. The two unisex accessible WC's are both right sided transfer: one should be left sided to offer users a choice.

They also need minor adjustments:

The alarm cords are inadequate in reaching down towards the floor with a suitable hoop to grip;

The resets for the alarms are not reachable from the WC pans;

Visual contrast in the fixtures and fittings is poor;

There are no low-level coat hooks.

Officer's comments: To alter the location of the toilets would be a significant job that would involve re-routing the soil pipe. The other recommendations can be achieved at a reasonable cost and will be programmed in.

Recommendation: The alarm cords to be altered to allow for reaching down towards the floor with a suitable hoop to grip. The resets for the alarms to be made reachable from the WC pans. Visual contrast in the fixtures and fittings to be considered and low-level coat hooks to be installed. The alteration of the location of the toilets to be considered in future renovations.

15. The ground floor accessible WC has a lock that always shows red on the outside.
The first floor accessible WC has a very small lock on the door, which some users may find awkward.

Officer's comments: Order issued for the works

Recommendation: Toilet locks to be altered during the upcoming toilet renovations.

16. There are Male and Female WC's on both floors. These do not have ambulant disabled cubicles, which are required in regulation. The Female washroom layout facilitates ease of adapting the end cubicle, but the Male facility would require extensive reconfiguration of the WC layouts.

Officer's comments: With full accessible toilets adjacent to each location it is not felt that this is a priority.

Recommendation: No action required.

17. In the Mayor's Parlour, there is a single WC provided. There was no light activated nor switch able to be located on entering.

Officer's comments: Job issued to rectify the lighting problem.

Recommendation: Light in the Mayor's Parlour WC, to be rectified accordingly.

18. To exit the Mayor's Room, the release switch is a small rocker switch that lacks visual contrast.

Officer's comments: All door exit buttons to be changed for the larger type the next system service.

Recommendation: Door exit buttons to be changed for the larger type in the next system service, with the addition of moving buttons closer to the door to make them more accessible.

19. Visual alarms are not provided in the WC's or washrooms. A hearing-impaired person may have difficulty in knowing when there is a need to evacuate and this could put them and others at risk.

Officer's comments: Visual alarms (flashing beacons) are provided they are built in to the fire alarm sounders. The fire wardens also sweep the toilets on an evacuation as part of their duties.

Recommendation: No action required.

20. There are no evacuation lifts, however a fire safe area appears to be provided at the top of the stairs, with a telephone and evac-chair. There is no statutory BS compliant Emergency Voice Communication (EVC) that allows reliability and assured availability for use - the provisions made also require too much dexterity.

Officer's comments: Disabled refuges provided at every landing with telephone communication device to the ground floor. If telephones are not acceptable the use of intercoms can be explored. However as previously mentioned as we operate a fire warden fire evacuation procedure no one should be left un attended in the refuge.

Discussion in meeting: EVAC chair training for fire wardens will be completed by the end of February 2020. It was highlighted that currently, there aren't any Elected Members trained in using the EVAC chair; Democratic Services Officers to liaise with facilities in regards to the dates of the training, and invite Elected Members to attend. More meeting space on the ground floor of the civic centre is also being looked into.

Recommendation: No action required.

21. There is an evacuation chair provided by the stairs, but this encroaches the circulation by the telephone. The evac chair was thick with dust, suggesting it may have not been used for some time.

Officer's comments: The location of the evac chairs will be assessed across the building, in relation to the dust, the chairs are not used on a regular basis but should be subject to an annual inspection.

Recommendation: Assess the location of the EVAC chairs to identify if there is a more suitable location for them. Inspect them on an annual basis.

Port Talbot Civic Centre

1. There are Blue Badge bays outside, which overall provide 2 accessible bays out of 60 car parking spaces in total. This is just over 3%, whereas BS 8300 states (on average) for the various uses they serve there should be around 5% at least. Part M also requires one space to be provided for each disabled employee that needs it in addition to this.

Officer's comment: There is no formal agreement in place with the church to use the Civic car park although there are currently 8 spaces designated for their use. The current disabled parking bays are as close to the building as possible for members of the public. Having said this they are in excess of the recommended 50m maximum distance to the main entrance. In order to achieve closer public spaces and still maintain a closed barrier controlled car park will require a full redesign and possibly the relocation of the barrier.

Discussion in meeting: It is possible for staff to be notified that a blue badge holder will be visiting the civic centre by appointment, this would notify security to lift the barrier for the blue badge holder so that they can have closer access to the entrance of the building. There is also the opportunity to provide those who are visiting the building, with assistance if they need it; however this has not been advertised. It was added that home visits could be considered.

Recommendation: Council to consider advertising blue badge appointments for those visiting the civic centre. An additional recommendation to be included in the report regarding an 'on exit' survey for the public.

2. The Blue Badge bays are too small (2.3 x 4.4m; they should be 2.4m x 4.8m) and on a slope of 1:27 gradient. They also lack any vertical signage

Officer's comments: Whilst we are unable to alter the gradient of the ground where the bays currently are we can increase the sizes, the knock-on effect of this will be that we will lose a space.

Discussion in meeting: Members were informed that the square is pedestrianised and is not often allowed to be opened for vehicles; this would require thought into a complete re-design of the area.

Recommendation: No action required.

3. The entrance to the ramp to approach the building from the car park is concealed from view by a raised bed with a hedge in it.

Officer's comments: Easily achieved and can be progressed.

Recommendation: Visuals of the ramp to be improved.

<p>4. There are two ramps to both sides of the main entrance. None of these meet standards. The gradients are 1:15 to 1:16 except for the ramp on the far left of the building, which is 1:10. They all have one or no handrails when two are required, and none have visual contrast.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: This can be done but should be considered with points 5 & 6, the rails should be installed after any modifications to the ramps have been made. In the past there have been some conversations around the refurbishment of the Civic square. If this is likely it would be better to link the ramp works in with this to provide a seamless scheme.</p> <p>Recommendation: No current action required, but to be considered in line with any future re-design.</p>
<p>5. By the theatre entrance, the cross-fall in the path is 1:12, which is far too steep.</p>
<p>See 4 for comments.</p> <p>Recommendation: No current action required, but to be considered in line with any future re-design.</p>
<p>6. To the left side path, there are flower beds that narrow the path and could be a hazard to visually impaired people.</p>
<p>See 4 for comments.</p> <p>Recommendation: No current action required, but to be considered in line with any future re-design.</p>
<p>7. The steps have no tactile paving at the bottom of the flight.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: This can be done relatively easily by replacing the current block paving at the bottom of the steps.</p> <p>Recommendation: Replace current block paving at the bottom of the steps with tactile paving.</p>
<p>8. Inside the entrance, the security reception desk has no lowered section for wheelchair users or people of short stature, and there is no hearing induction loop.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: Agreed that this is not a public reception point.</p> <p>Recommendation: No action required.</p>
<p>9. The entrance towards the lift and café has double doors that are both narrow (700mm) and very heavy (over 50N is required to open one leaf). The door handles are confusing as the pull handles are also on the push side, and signage has been added to state push / pull. The signage adds to unwanted visual clutter.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: These sets of doors are an original set of aluminium and glass installed in an aluminium and glass side screen. It may possible to automate these doors although due to their age a specialist firm will need to be called in to assess the possibility. The other option is to remove the existing glazed scree and doors and replace with a new timber door set.</p>

Discussion in meeting: The specialist firm could visit the civic centre to discover the best option and prices; changes to make the doors more accessible could then be completed at an appropriate time, when needed. Facilities staff to send a reminder to all staff regarding cluttering the corridors and space outside of the security area.

Recommendation: Consider replacement of doors when they reach the end of their natural life and consider linking the fire alarm system to these doors. Facilities staff to send a reminder to all staff regarding cluttering the corridors and space outside of the security area.

10. The lift is the minimum size to meet regulations (1.1 x 1.4m) and not large enough for some mobility scooters.

Officer's comments: Both sets of public access lifts were upgraded around four years ago, this work included putting the largest size cars possible in along with new lower buttons and voice notifications. They currently comply with the statutory requirements. Whilst they may be small for mobility scooters these are only really intended to assist the mobility impaired in getting around externally to any buildings.

Recommendation: No action required as this is a structural matter.

11. A few circulation doors are heavy to open:

- Café entrance (>50N)
- Both doors leading into Male and Female toilets at both ground and 1st floor levels (all >40N)
- Door at the end of the corridor at 2nd floor level leading to the stairs and safe refuge area (>50N)
- Door at top of the Council Chamber ramp (>40N)

Officer's comments: The door closers on these doors have probably failed due to the age of the units. These will be replaced with new. In relation to the automation of the chamber door I suggest the chamber is dealt with as a separate entity.

Recommendation: Undertake a survey of all doors and adjust / replace door closers as required. A survey to be completed on all doors that could be linked to the fire alarm regulations.

12. The café area has accessible tables, allowing access and knee space for wheelchair users, but is all of one type / height and the chairs lack visual contrast against the floor.

Officer's comments: Options around different types of hygienic seating to be explored.

Recommendation: Explore different types of hygienic seating.

13. There are accessible WC's at ground and first floor level which are both too small, being 1.8m x 1.5m. They should be at least 2.2m x

<p>1.5m. They are also both left sided transfers, and the sinks within them are too far from the WC pan. Other issues identified were as follows: One handrail only by the sink, no full height mirror, alarm cords inadequate in reach / bangles fitted, light switch too high, flush handle on the wrong side of the cistern, visual contrast poor. 1st floor nib space on door is absent.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: Due to the location on the accessible WCs and that they are constructed in solid masonry with rooms abutting them increasing their size will require considerable work. However improving them by relocating the wash hand basins and the emergency pull cords can be achieved relatively easily.</p> <p>Recommendation: The alarm cords to be altered to allow for reaching down towards the floor with a suitable hoop to grip. The resets for the alarms to be made reachable from the WC pans. Visual contrast in the fixtures and fittings to be considered. Wash hand basins to be relocated. The alteration of the location of the toilets to be considered in future renovations.</p>
<p>14. There is no tactile signage on the WC doors.</p>
<p>Officer's comments: To be programmed.</p> <p>Recommendation: Include tactile signage on the WC doors as part of the upcoming toilet refurbishment.</p>
<p>15. There are Male and Female WC's on both floors. Although one Male cubicle at 1st floor level has one handrail installed, there are no fully compliant ambulant disabled cubicles in either, and these are required in regulation. The Female washroom layout facilitates ease of adapting the end cubicles; the Male facility requires a mirror moving and a side door creating in the side by the urinals to achieve this.</p>
<p>Officer's comment: This has been designed in to the toilet refurbishment.</p> <p>Recommendation: Move mirror and create a side door by the urinals as part of the upcoming toilet refurbishments.</p>
<p>16. The urinals on ground and 1st floor levels do not have visual contrast against the walls.</p>
<p>See 15 for comments.</p> <p>Recommendation: Visual contrast to be improved as part of the upcoming toilet refurbishments.</p>
<p>17. On the 1st and 2nd floors, many of the double doors in the corridor are too narrow and have their pull handles too high to facilitate reaching by a wheelchair user or someone of short stature. This</p>

<p>does not affect the doors on the level access to the chamber from the lift, however this does apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other doors on all corridors; • The doors on the 2nd floor to the room by the Council Chamber; • The Committee room doors, apart from the one to Committee Room 3 which is wider.
<p>Officer's comments: It is proposed to undertake a survey of all cross corridor doors, with the view of placing all doors that are not required to be closed for security reasons to be placed on hold open magnets linked back to the fire alarm. Those doors that are required for security will need to be replaced. The structural opening on the committee room doors will need to be surveyed to see if larger doors are able to be fitted.</p> <p>Discussion in meeting: link this into survey (see point 11)</p> <p>Recommendation: Undertake a survey of all doors and adjust / replace door closers as required. A survey to be completed on all doors that could be linked to the fire alarm regulations.</p>
<p>18. Lighting is too low in some areas: 1st floor corridor to the right on exiting the lift (20 lux) and in the main corridor the other way after the angled corner (50 lux); On 2nd floor level, in the same places above (levels are 25-40 lux), but also on the approach landing towards and on the Council Chamber ramp (25 and 40 lux). In the Council Chamber the levels are 70-80 lux on the desks in all rows apart from the 3rd row, where they are 160 lux.</p>
<p>Officer's comment: It is recommended that an LED lighting upgrade is undertaken with priority given to these areas, not only will light levels be improved but they will be more energy efficient.</p> <p>Recommendation: Progress with suitability study of LED lighting upgrade in consideration with the upcoming webcasting requirements of the Council Chamber.</p>
<p>19. Circulation areas are fitted with carpets, which make mobilising in a manual wheelchair difficult for some disabled people.</p>
<p>Officer's comment: To be actioned on any future refurbishment.</p> <p>Recommendation: No current action required, but to be considered in line with any future re-design.</p>
<p>20. At the back of the first floor corridor, there is a social space with seating. This has a low ceiling that could be a hazard. There is also a projecting shelf on the column.</p>
<p>Officer's comment: This area is in the bar of the Theatre and the manager will need to be consulted on any alterations, however there is no minimum room height requirement in Building Regulations.</p> <p>Recommendation: No action required.</p>

<p>21. There are desk mic's provided for the committee meeting room; these amplify the ambient sound in the rooms via speakers. They require users to switch them on before speaking. There are no hearing induction loops provided and some hearing impaired people will not be able to communicate without this.</p>
<p>Officer's comment: Fixed or portable induction loops can be provided. Consultation with the committee section will be undertaken to provide the most suitable solution.</p> <p>Recommendation: Fixed or portable induction loops to be installed in the committee meeting rooms; facilities to consult with Democratic Services to provide the most suitable solution.</p>
<p>22. There is a ramp leading to the Public Gallery at the back of the Council Chamber. This is too narrow (900mm wide) and far too steep and long (1:10 for 6m length)</p>
<p>Officer's comment: These recommendations along with those in items 11, 18, 23 & 24 should all be considered in a full redesign of the Council Chamber as the existing layout does not easily lend itself to being disabled access friendly. In relation to the lighting an upgrade of the lights was undertaken around three years ago and whilst this improved the levels they are still low. This is linked to the walls of the chamber being a dark wood and absorbing the light as opposed to reflecting it around the room. Any modifications that involve works to the ceiling is extremely difficult as the existing ceiling tiles are very fragile and obsolete.</p> <p>Recommendation: To be considered in any re-design of the Council Chamber but to be mindful of these issues when making any changes for the upcoming webcasting requirements of the Council Chamber.</p>
<p>23. There are multiple levels to the Council Chamber. One row is at entrance level, which provides accessible spaces and includes access (min 800mm wide discounting chairs) to the straight row of places for the Leader and other senior members. However, the remainder is not accessible due to steps; the Public Gallery has no access other than the overly steep ramp, which is not reasonable.</p>
<p>See 22 for comments.</p> <p>Recommendation: To be considered in any re-design of the Council Chamber but to be mindful of these issues when making any changes for the upcoming webcasting requirements of the Council Chamber.</p>
<p>24. Other levels in the Council Chamber are also stepped, but there is no suitable location for a standard platform lift since it would block the aisle(s).</p>
<p>See 22 for comments.</p>

<p>Recommendation: To be considered in any re-design of the Council Chamber but to be mindful of these issues when making any changes for the upcoming webcasting requirements of the Council Chamber.</p>
<p>25. Pictures</p>
<p>N/A</p>
<p>26. Visual alarms are not provided in the WC's or washrooms. A hearing-impaired person may have difficulty in knowing when there is a need to evacuate and this could put them and others at risk.</p>
<p>Officer's comment: An order has been issued for this work and it will be undertaken in conjunction with the toilet refurbishments.</p> <p>Recommendation: Install visual alarms in the WCs and washrooms as part of the upcoming toilet refurbishment.</p>
<p>27. There are no evacuation lifts, however fire safe areas appear to be provided at the top of the stair cases, with evac-chairs. There is no statutory BS compliant Emergency Voice Communication (EVC) that allows reliability and assured availability for use. The evac chair by the first floor social space is not easily visible from the primary route to the stair core.</p>
<p>Officer's comment: Voice refuge systems are installed at every stair landing so we're not sure why this was picked up. All fire wardens are going through evac chair training along with the Theatre staff. PEEPs are included in the corporate Fire Safety procedure CP/23.</p> <p>Recommendation: Assess the location of the EVAC chairs to identify if there is a more suitable location for them. Inspect them on an annual basis.</p>

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 – That a secondary disability audit be considered to focus on mental health and neurodiverse barriers within Council buildings.

Recommendation 2 – That the Cabinet Member for Equalities be tasked with considering a public exit survey, which should be produced and completed, by visitors to the Civic Centres, to obtain feedback on the disabled access of each building and any issues they faced.

Recommendation 3 – That Terms of Reference for the Disability Audit Working Group are amended to allow the Group to meet on a consultative basis, as and when required, and to monitor the recommendations from this report.

Recommendation 4 – That Evac Chair training is made available to Elected Members.

TABLES OF EVIDENCE

The tables of evidence provide opportunity to view the work of the Disability Audit Group. The evidence displays how they considered each of the recommendations provided by Proudlock Associates.

The work is evidenced in the following tables:

- Neath Civic Centre – Recommendations Workshop
- Port Talbot Civic Centre – Recommendations Workshop

Inclusive Design and Access Audit Notes Key

Priority 1	Where there are potential health and safety risks to disabled people or where failure to implement changes would be highly likely to attract legal implications. Immediate action is recommended to put changes into effect.
Priority 2	Where action is recommended within the short term to alleviate an access problem or make improvements that will have a considerable impact.
Priority 3	Where action is recommended within 12 – 24 months to improve access.
Priority 4	Where the recommendation should be implemented as part of a long-term plan, due to large scale works being required, considerable cost implications or some other similarly restricting and insurmountable factor(s).
Est Cost: L	Low (L) None - £500
Est Cost: M	Med (M) £500 - £1,000
Est Cost: H	High (H) £1,000 - £5,000
Est Cost: Str	Structural (Str) £5,000 - £10,000
Est Cost: Ex	Extensive (Ex) £10,000 or more

NEATH CIVIC CENTRE RECOMMENDATIONS - WORKSHOP

No.	Observation / Comments	Recommended Action	Priority	Est. Cost	Action	Priority	Comments
1	There are Blue Badge bays outside and in the adjacent car park, which are all correctly marked out. The direct route from the car park involves negotiating doors which include the outer door to the car park building, which is very heavy and has a handle that is difficult to grip.	Seek contact for car park and advise them: The handle should be replaced with a circular section pull handle, visually contrasting and located between 900 and 1100mm AFL. To service, repair or replace 3 door closer to provide maximum opening force of 30N to 30 degrees and 22.5N to 60 degrees.	2	L	Seek advice from officers on how they would suggest proceeding with the recommendation.	Low	Other access is available so the Group does not consider this an urgent priority.
2	The approach to the building from the car park has some uneven slabs and edges that need repair, or they could cause an accident by trapping a wheelchair castor or a heel. The surface is also reportedly very slippery when wet.	Repair loose slabs and re-lay slabs as required to eliminate gaps. Treat or replace surface to ensure it is non-slip when wet or dry.	2 3	M Str	Maintenance schedule to be checked and repairs to be addressed urgently. Explore the 'Pontadawe texture resurfacing' model – texturing/grooving of slabs.	Medium	This has recently been completed, which has removed the slippery surface issues at relatively low cost and equipment and technique is known to the Council.

3	The main approach comprises curved lengths of tactile corduroy paving; this should only be used to indicate a hazard and gives the tactile underfoot warning to visually impaired users 'proceed with care'. This is inappropriate and could be confusing. The entire surface is also reportedly very slippery when wet.	At the next refurbishment, consult with visually impaired users and remove corduroy if agreed. It is nearly always used only at the ends of flights of outdoor steps. Note that if way finding paving is intended, only the correct way guidance path (see DETR guidance) should be used. Treat or replace surface to ensure it is non-slip when wet or dry.	3 3	H Str	Seek views of someone with a visual impairment (RNIB) to determine whether or not this is a problem.	Low	Initial observations and feedback from service users is that the tactile paving is beneficial to those with a visual impairment and it was suggested that the recommendation could be a subjective view.
4	Both entrances comprise revolving doors with side pass. These are not inclusive design as they require many disabled people to be separated from able-bodied people and this is discriminatory.	The configurations meet building regulations, however for best practice an entrance to both sides that could be shared should be created, such as double-leaf automatic sliding doors. A lobby arrangement could assist with reducing air movement (two pairs of doors for each entrance) if necessary.	4	Ex	No action required.	Low	Take on board the comments and recommendations but it is not considered a priority and no action will be taken.
5	The main entrance has its side pass door to the side and is barely visible. This is also not treating people as equals and gives the feeling of a secondary entrance, less important.	See above recommendation. As an interim measure, provide clear signage to the side door, using wheelchair symbol (see appendices).	2	L	Same action as above, but do take forward the recommendation of providing clear signage to the side pass door.	Low	

6	The side pass door requires the user to take a large detour from their direct line of approach, which is neither convenient nor intuitive when trying to locate and use the control pad.	Relocate control pad on visually contrasting back plate on visually contrasting bollard on the route towards the door from the pavement, 1400mm back from the door swing.	3	M	Explore the potential of installing a sensor to keep the door open before considering other elements of the recommendation as a sensor could alleviate the issues raised.	Medium	Action to be completed as a high priority.
7	Inside, the foyer comprises a double height space with hard surfaces all around. This makes the acoustics very difficult, especially considering the activities include using chairs in the eatery which scrape on the floor, clattering crockery, general conversations as people meet, as well as trying to communicate with reception and at the booths / kiosks in that area.	At the next refurbishment, add sound absorbing surfaces such as new wall or ceiling materials. A wheelchair-accessible low-pile firm carpet may also help but should be consulted on and tested out first.	4	H	<p>Explore the possibility of locating noise reducing notice boards in strategic locations across the concourse.</p> <p>Look to introduce hearing-loop solution as a high priority.</p> <p>Consider equalities training for Customer Services staff on identifying and working with members of the public with disabilities/stress and anxiety/difficult situations.</p>	High	As a full refurbishment of the building is not planned, the Group took on board the comments but instead considered other mitigating options as detailed in the action log.

					Source different foot covers for the legs of the chairs in the reception area to reduce scraping noise when moving the chairs.		
8	The pillar in reception is not clearly defined and could be a collision hazard.	Provide visual contrast to entire pillar or to band 150mm deep at 1500mm AFL.	3	L	Consider painting or taping the pillar to provide visual contrast.	Medium	
9	Comfortable seating is all of one type whereas people have differing needs.	Provide variety of heights and types, including some seating with arms. See appendices.	4	M	Action the recommendation.	Medium	
10	There are no hearing induction loops at the main receptions. Although there is one at the cash desk, however it does not work.	Provide hearing induction loops at the main receptions / at least one of each type of service desk. Include signage and staff training on how to switch on / how they work / how they are tested and maintained.	2	M	As per item 7.	High	
11	The main reception desk is a single high surface at 1060mm AFL, which is too high for a wheelchair user or someone of short stature.	Provide low section to main reception desk, no higher than 760mm AFL, and at least wide enough for a wheelchair user + carer (1500mm).	3	M	Action the recommendation.	High	
12	Many circulation doors are heavy to open: Ground floor – both sets of double doors to reach	Service, repair or replace door closers to provide maximum opening force of 30N and as detailed in the appendix.	2	L	Consider electric doors or a sensor for the doors, to	High	Ground floor doors are a high priority, especially the entrance doors.

	committee rooms, committee room C door and both doors leading into Male and Female toilets respectively First floor – right hand leaf off the stairs into the main corridor, circulation door to reach mezzanine above reception and both doors leading into Male and Female toilets respectively.				allow for easier access.		
13	Tactile signage on the WC doors is very low, being installed at appx 1100mm AFL. It is also very high on the Committee room C door, at 1700mm.	Consult users and if agreed relocate to 1400mm – 1700mm and as near to mid-range as possible, as per the guidance of Sign Design Guide (see appendices).	2	L	Move the tactile signage to a more appropriate level.	Medium	
14	The two unisex accessible WC's are both right sided transfer: one should be left sided to offer users a choice. They also need minor adjustments: The alarm cords are inadequate in reaching down towards the floor with a suitable hoop to grip; The resets for the alarms are not reachable from the WC pans; Visual contrast in the fixtures and fittings is poor;	At the next refurbishment, reconfigure 1st floor facility to left sided. Provide full length alarm cords with two hoops / bangles on each. Relocate resets to next to the WC pans. Provide visual contrasting to the grab rails and WC seat (e.g. replace with black / dark colour)	3 All 2	H All M	No action required. Action the recommendation.	 High	Take on board the comments and recommendations but it is not considered a priority and no action will be taken. Grab rails are usually bulk provided in white. The Group recognised that purchasing dark coloured grab rails could prove more difficult and costly.

	There are no low-level coat hooks.	Install hooks on the wall above open floor space at 1050mm AFL. See also rows below.					
15	The ground floor accessible WC has a lock that always shows red on the outside. The first floor accessible WC has a very small lock on the door, which some users may find awkward.	Provide lock that indicates accurately whether the facility is occupied and avoiding red-green (which colour-blind people cannot discern between).	3	L	Action the recommendation.	High	
		Provide lock that is usable with a closed fist.	2	L	Action the recommendation.	High	
16	There are Male and Female WC's on both floors. These do not have ambulant disabled cubicles, which are required in regulation. The Female washroom layout facilitates ease of adapting the end cubicle, but the Male facility would require extensive reconfiguration of the WC layouts.	Provide ambulant disabled WC in the Male facility at the next major refurbishment. As an interim arrangement, disabled men could make use of the accessible WC.	4	H	No action required.		Take on board comments and recommendations but it is not considered a priority and no action will be taken.
		Provide ambulant disabled WC cubicle by adapting the far end cubicle in the Female washrooms (see photo), rehanging the door to hinge on the other side and outwards, with higher WC pan seat and as guided by the appendices.	3	M	No action required.		Take on board comments and recommendations but it is not considered a priority and no action will be taken.
17	In the Mayor's Parlour, there is a single WC provided. There was no light activated nor switch able to be located on entering.	Check lighting works and repair if necessary.	2	L	Action the recommendation.	Low	Take on board comments and recommendations but it is not considered a
		For best practice, fit out as ambulant disabled, as per the appendices.	4	L	No action required.		

							priority and no action will be taken.
18	To exit the Mayor's Room, the release switch is a small rocker switch that lacks visual contrast.	For best practice relocate large push button door release to within 200mm of the door frame, and ensure it has visual contrast.	4	L	Action the recommendation.	Medium	
19	Visual alarms are not provided in the WC's or washrooms. A hearing-impaired person may have difficulty in knowing when there is a need to evacuate and this could put them and others at risk.	It is advisable to check that all disabled people have a Personal Emergency Egress Plan (PEEP) in place wherever they are in the building. Visitors should be the responsibility of the host who should explain the procedure for them to evacuate. Alternatively, visitors should have their own plan provided by the building management on arrival at the ground floor. Note that there are some heavy doors which should be corrected (see other recommendations earlier in this report) and this potential barrier must be overcome even if it means temporarily using assistance. Provide visual alarms in the longer term.	1	L	Action the recommendation.	High	Fire Wardens have the responsibility to check their allocated areas.
			3	H	Action the recommendation.	High	
20	There are no evacuation lifts, however a fire safe area appears to be	It is advisable to check that all disabled people have a Personal Emergency Egress	1	L	Check if staff who have a disability	Medium	

	<p>provided at the top of the stairs, with a telephone and evac-chair. There is no statutory BS compliant Emergency Voice Communication (EVC) that allows reliability and assured availability for use - the provisions made also require too much dexterity.</p>	<p>Plan (PEEP) in place wherever they are in the building. Visitors should be the responsibility of the host who should explain the procedure for them to evacuate or also have a PEEP. Note that the cores have heavy doors which should be corrected (see further recommendations) and this potential barrier must be overcome even if it means temporarily using assistance.</p> <p>An Emergency Voice Communication is also recommended, and in the interim a manual message system must be in place to ensure communication to / from the refuge area is facilitated by staff. See appendices.</p>	1	M	<p>have a PEEP in place.</p> <p>No action required.</p>		<p>The Council is exploring wider elements in relation to webcasting and public participation, so facilities will need to be adapted in line with this. Emergency voice communication could be considered as this wider work is taken forward.</p>
21	<p>There is an evacuation chair provided by the stairs, but this encroaches the circulation by the telephone. The evac chair was thick with dust, suggesting it may have not been used for some time.</p>	<p>Relocate evac chair to allow a space 900mm x 1400mm by the telephone or EVC. NB The evacuation chair will need to be deployed by trained staff, who must be at hand to respond in case of the need by a disabled person. It therefore must be clearly visible. The PEEP associated with any disabled individual who may</p>	1	LM	<p>Identify how often the evac-chair is used for training and who is trained to use it.</p> <p>Gather information on Fire Warden roles and training</p>	High	

		<p>be evacuated this way should address this, naming the staff trained to assist them, ensuring they are up-to-date with using the evac chair by practising regularly, etc.</p>			<p>How many Fire Wardens are there and their allocation? How often do fire drills take place and what type? Do full evac-chair exercises take place and if so, how often?</p> <p>Check pre plan maintenance of evac-chair equipment.</p>		
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PORT TALBOT CIVIC CENTRE RECOMMENDATIONS - WORKSHOP

No.	Observation / Comments	Recommended Action	Priority	Est. Cost	Action	Priority	Comments
Page 67	<p>There are Blue Badge bays outside, which overall provide 2 accessible bays out of 60 car parking spaces in total. This is just over 3%, whereas BS 8300 states (on average) for the various uses they serve there should be around 5% at least. Part M also requires one space to be provided for each disabled employee that needs it in addition to this.</p>	<p>Seek out other contacts for users of the car park (e.g. in the church) and consult other users with a view to increasing this provision to at least 5%.</p>	2	L	<p>Look at the contract and agreements with the church. Identify what their requirements are and potentially renegotiate disabled spaces.</p> <p>Find out the requirements of Part M and gain a better understanding of what Part M is, to be able to determine if it is achievable.</p> <p>Survey blue badge applicants, asking how they got here, where did they park and any accessibility issues.</p>		<p>Need to identify what people's issues are and what they require before taking the action.</p>
2	<p>The Blue Badge bays are too small (2.3 x 4.4m; they should be 2.4m x 4.8m) and on a slope of 1:27</p>	<p>The bays should be at least 2.4m x 4.8m with 1200mm safe transfer zones to one side (preferably two) plus on one</p>	3	H	<p>Action the recommendation as per officer's advice.</p>		

	gradient. They also lack any vertical signage.	end. They should be on level ground, ie less steep than 1:40, less than 1:60 preferably. Provide vertical signage if relocating to the car park edge.					
3	The entrance to the ramp to approach the building from the car park is concealed from view by a raised bed with a hedge in it.	Provide signage (min 300mm tall) to indicate the ramped path leading to the building from the car park. See appendices for guidance.	2	L	Action the recommendation.		No. 3 to 7 are linked together and could be considered as one piece of work.
4	There are two ramps to both sides of the main entrance. None of these meet standards. The gradients are 1:15 to 1:16 except for the ramp on the far left of the building, which is 1:10. They all have one or no handrails when two are required, and none have visual contrast.	Provide compliant ramps by extending them to give compliant gradients. Ensure that each has two handrails, as detailed in the appendices, and a visual contrasting surface.	3	Str	Railings to be put up against the external ramp at the side of the building.		
5	By the theatre entrance, the cross-fall in the path is 1:12, which is far too steep.	Rebuild path to eliminate cross-fall steeper than 1:40	3	Str	Officers to consider risks and costings before deciding what action will be taken.		To be considered when refurbishments are being completed.
6	To the left side path, there are flower beds that narrow the path and could be a hazard to visually impaired people.	Relocate the beds to outside the width of the path, allowing an upstand kerb and balustrade on the path edge, thereby increasing the available path width. Use paving that is non-slip even when wet.	3	Str	Officers to consider risks and costings before deciding what action will be taken.		To be considered when refurbishments are being completed.

7	The steps have no tactile paving at the bottom of the flight.	Provide tactile paving in accordance with the DETR guidance.	2	L	Risk assessments and number of complaints against the paving to be sourced before deciding what action will be taken.		
8	Inside the entrance, the security reception desk has no lowered section for wheelchair users or people of short stature, and there is no hearing induction loop.	At the next refurbishment, provide security reception with surface at 760mm AFL and a hearing loop with the correct BS signage.	3	M	No action needed. Recommendation not accepted.		Security is not a reception desk.
9	The entrance towards the lift and café has double doors that are both narrow (700mm) and very heavy (over 50N is required to open one leaf). The door handles are confusing as the pull handles are also on the push side, and signage has been added to state push / pull. The signage adds to unwanted visual clutter.	Replace doors with a door that allows an effective clear width (ECW) of at least 800mm. Provide view through door and pull handle only on the pull side, push plate only on the other, and visual contrasting to these features. Remove sign. See appendices for details.	2	M	Action the recommendation.		
10	The lift is the minimum size to meet regulations (1.1 x 1.4m) and not large enough for some mobility scooters.	For best practice, at the next opportunity, increase lift size to preferably 1650 x 1400mm	4	Str	Explore all possibilities to maximize the lift capacity/size.		Wheelchairs do not fit in the lifts. Excludes wheelchair users from accessing meetings etc. To be considered when refurbishments are being completed.



11	<p>A few circulation doors are heavy to open:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Café entrance (>50N) • Both doors leading into Male and Female toilets at both ground and 1st floor levels (all >40N) • Door at the end of the corridor at 2nd floor level leading to the stairs and safe refuge area (>50N) • Door at top of the Council Chamber ramp (>40N) 	<p>Service, repair or replace door closers to provide maximum opening force of 30N and as detailed in the appendix.</p> <p>Consider automatic door for ramp into Council Chamber. See also further recommendations below for Council Chamber access.</p>	2 3	L M	Action the recommendation.		Consider technological solutions to exist in the doors.
12	<p>The café area has accessible tables, allowing access and knee space for wheelchair users, but is all of one type / height and the chairs lack visual contrast against the floor.</p>	<p>Provide variety of visually contrasting seating, varying the heights and types, including some seats with arms. See appendices.</p>	4	M	Action the recommendation.		Contrasting seating to be sourced at the next refreshment of furniture but different sizes of seating to be sourced immediately.
13	<p>There are accessible WC's at ground and first floor level which are both too small, being 1.8m x 1.5m. They should be at least 2.2m x 1.5m. They are also both left sided transfers, and the sinks within them are too far from the WC pan. Other issues identified were as follows: One handrail only by the sink, no full height mirror, alarm cords inadequate in reach / bangles fitted, light</p>	<p>Reconfigure Accessible WC's at both levels to provide the required size, including door arrangement and layout, min 2.2m x 1.5m, making the ground floor facility right and the 1st floor left sided transfer. Fit out to meet the guidance in the appendices.</p> <p>As an interim measure, correct the alarm cords by providing longer reaches and correctly aligned hoops / bangles as guided by the appendix.</p>	3 2	Str L	To be considered by Officers and enact the interim measures.		To be considered when refurbishments are being completed.

	switch too high, flush handle on the wrong side of the cistern, visual contrast poor. 1st floor nib space on door is absent.					
14	There is no tactile signage on the WC doors.	For best practice, install tactile and braille signage to all WC doors.	4	M	Action the recommendation.	Explore the introduction of a braille panel of the layout of the building, to be put in the entrances.
15	There are Male and Female WC's on both floors. Although one Male cubicle at 1st floor level has one handrail installed, there are no fully compliant ambulant disabled cubicles in either, and these are required in regulation. The Female washroom layout facilitates ease of adapting the end cubicles; the Male facility requires a mirror moving and a side door creating in the side by the urinals to achieve this.	Provide ambulant disabled WC in the Male facility at the next major refurbishment. As an interim arrangement, disabled men could make use of the accessible WC. See also recommendation above which may also affect these facilities. Provide ambulant disabled WC cubicle by adapting the far end cubicle in the Female washrooms (see photo), rehanging the door to hinge on the other side and outwards, with higher WC pan seat and grab rails as guided by the appendices. See also row above, which also affect these facilities.	4 3	H M	To be considered by Officers and enact the interim measures.	To be considered when refurbishments are being completed.
16	The urinals on ground and 1st floor levels do not have visual contrast against the walls.	Provide visual contrast to all urinals	2	L	Action the recommendation.	

17	<p>On the 1st and 2nd floors, many of the double doors in the corridor are too narrow and have their pull handles too high to facilitate reaching by a wheelchair user or someone of short stature. This does not affect the doors on the level access to the chamber from the lift, however this does apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other doors on all corridors; • The doors on the 2nd floor to the room by the Council Chamber; • The Committee room doors, apart from the one to Committee Room 3 which is wider. 	<p>Replace double door sets with a leaf-and-a-half arrangement, including a leaf at least 800mm in ECW and relocate door handles to facilitate reaching 900-1100mm at most.</p> <p>In the interim, assistance should be provided when needed.</p>	3 2	H L	Action the recommendation.		Consider technological solutions to exist in the doors.
18	<p>Lighting is too low in some areas: 1st floor corridor to the right on exiting the lift (20 lux) and in the main corridor the other way after the angled corner (50 lux); On 2nd floor level, in the same places above (levels are 25-40 lux), but also on the approach landing towards and on the Council Chamber ramp (25 and 40 lux).</p>	<p>Increase lighting in circulation areas to at least 150-200 lux, in accordance with guidance.</p> <p>Increase lighting to at least 250 lux on desks / tables intended for reading hard copy on, preferably to 400 lux.</p>	3 3	M M	Action the recommendation.		

	In the Council Chamber the levels are 70-80 lux on the desks in all rows apart from the 3rd row, where they are 160 lux.					
19	Circulation areas are fitted with carpets, which make mobilising in a manual wheelchair difficult for some disabled people.	At the next refurbishment, provide carpet or surface that is firm, non-slip and easy to push on. Consult with wheelchair users if possible before acquiring.	4	H	To be considered when refurbishments are being completed.	Current carpets are also unhygienic.
20	At the back of the first floor corridor, there is a social space with seating. This has a low ceiling that could be a hazard. There is also a projecting shelf on the column.	Block access with barrier such as artwork to effectively cordon off the area where headroom is less than 2.1m. Provide white or light colour corner trims at least 110mm width wrapping around the projecting vertical corner edges to the shelf.	2 3	L L	Action the recommendation.	
21	There are desk mic's provided for the committee meeting room; these amplify the ambient sound in the rooms via speakers. They require users to switch them on before speaking. There are no hearing induction loops provided and some hearing impaired people will not be able to communicate without this.	Provide hearing induction loop to the room or provide portable desk mic's with integrated induction loop, consulting with members before acquiring to ensure the solution is appropriate. Where provided, add signage. Disability equality and deaf awareness training is recommended to all council members and staff with whom they regularly meet or liaise, to ensure that they are aware of	3 2	H M	Action the recommendation.	Desk microphones in Committee Rooms work well. Equalities and etiquette training is currently being organised for Members and staff, in particular customer services staff.

		the etiquette around disability and communicating, for example the importance of good lighting on faces, speaking clearly with unobstructed lips, having suitable meeting room layouts (round tables are generally preferred), with suitable hearing enhancement systems installed (switched on, tested out regularly and maintained).				
22	There is a ramp leading to the Public Gallery at the back of the Council Chamber. This is too narrow (900mm wide) and far too steep and long (1:10 for 6m length)	It is not deemed reasonable to adjust the ramp. See next row.	-	-	To be considered when refurbishments are being completed. Officers to be asked to comment on the recommended actions.	No. 22 to 24 to be considered together.
23	There are multiple levels to the Council Chamber. One row is at entrance level, which provides accessible spaces and includes access (min 800mm wide discounting chairs) to the straight row of places for the Leader and other senior members. However, the remainder is not accessible due to steps; the Public Gallery has no access other than the	To access the Public Gallery, remove the steps (see photo), reconfigure the space by the middle doors (currently the entrance is stepped) and provide a through-doors type platform stair lift giving access to a newly formed level at the same height as the top of the ramp. There should also be new steps adjacent to the ramp. (See appendices for details). It is advised to replace the entire Public Gallery parts with a single level, adding a	3	Ex	As above (No.22)	Ceredigion Council Chamber to be used as a reference.

	overly steep ramp, which is not reasonable.	new balustrade, in order to give plenty circulation (at present the level is split). The ramp outside the room should remain, as it could feasibly form a means of (assisted) escape, subject to a suitable strategy being in place.					
24	Other levels in the Council Chamber are also stepped, but there is no suitable location for a standard platform lift since it would block the aisle(s).	Carry out feasibility study with a view to providing a Sesame-type platform lift (see photo for similar product). See appendices for details.	4	Ex	As above (No.22)		
25	 		2	L	N/A		

26	Visual alarms are not provided in the WC's or washrooms. A hearing-impaired person may have difficulty in knowing when there is a need to evacuate and this could put them and others at risk.	It is advisable to check that all disabled people have a Personal Emergency Egress Plan (PEEP) in place wherever they are in the building. Visitors should be the responsibility of the host who should explain the procedure for them to evacuate. Alternatively, visitors should have their own plan provided by the building management on arrival at the ground floor if they may be alone at any time. Note that there are some heavy doors which should also be corrected (see other recommendations earlier in this report) and this potential barrier must be overcome even if it means temporarily using assistance with these doors. Provide visual alarms in the longer term.	1	L	Action the recommendation.		
			3	H			
27	There are no evacuation lifts, however fire safe areas appear to be provided at the top of the stair cases, with evac-chairs. There is no statutory BS compliant Emergency Voice Communication (EVC) that allows reliability	An Emergency Voice Communication is recommended in each safe refuge area, and in the interim a manual message system must be in place to ensure communication to / from the refuge area is facilitated by staff. See appendices.	1	H	No action required.		
			1	L	Identify how often the evac-chair is used for training and who is trained to use it.		

<p>and assured availability for use. The evac chair by the first floor social space is not easily visible from the primary route to the stair core.</p>	<p>Check that the evac chair is suitably located for use by the relevant people.</p> <p>The PEEP associated with any disabled individual who may be evacuated this way should address this, naming the staff trained to assist them, ensuring they are up-to-date with using the evac chair by practising regularly, etc.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Gather information on Fire Warden roles and training -How many Fire Wardens are there and their allocation? -How often do fire drills take place and what type? -Do full evac-chair exercises take place and if so, how often?</p> <p>Check pre plan maintenance of evac-chair equipment.</p> <p>Check if staff who have a disability have a PEEP in place.</p>		
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NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

3 March 2020

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All wards

Democratic Services – Assessment of Resources to support the Democratic Services Function

Purpose of the Report:

1. To report the outcome of an assessment of the adequacy of resources available to support the democratic services function of the Council.

Background:

2. The Head of Democratic Services has a statutory responsibility to organise the discharge of the “democratic services functions” in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 which includes:
 - The production of reports, as required, on the number of staff required to support democratic services and how the staff should be organised to ensure the Council, the Cabinet and Committees receive high level support in the discharge of its democratic functions.
3. Since I reported my last assessment to the Democratic Services Committee, there have been a number of developments that have impacted on the workload of Democratic Services:

- a) Further strengthening of the scrutiny function to respond to developments agreed by the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the scrutiny committees;
 - b) Establishment of support for the Joint Scrutiny Committee charged with holding the Joint Committee for the Swansea Bay City Deal to account;
 - c) Publication of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill by the Welsh Assembly Government - this Bill proposing significant new duties including: mandatory webcasting of all Council meetings; mandatory petition schemes; a duty to create a public participation scheme that will strengthen public involvement in the Democratic Process; and further development of family absence provisions for elected members.
4. Attention will also need to be given towards the end of the next civic year to preparations for the local government elections 2022. A significant piece of work will be to design and deliver the induction programme for Members returned in those elections.
 5. Taken together, these developments will increase the workload of Democratic Services and introduce changes to roles.
 6. The structure chart in Appendix 1 sets out the current structure of the Democratic Services Team.

Assessment of Resources

7. To support the further development of scrutiny activities and the servicing of the Joint Scrutiny Committee for the Swansea Bay City Deal, changes to the duties of scrutiny officers were made in 2019-20, in particular, to relieve those officers of taking the minutes of meetings to concentrate on support to chairs of the scrutiny committees during meetings and to carry out preparatory work to support the work of the scrutiny committee outside of the meetings. This change has transferred the workloads involved in taking minutes to the committee/Member services team. It has not been possible to fully absorb this workload within the existing capacity and accordingly, it is necessary to establish additional capacity in the committee/Member services team to accommodate the additional workload.

8. Following the departure of the former Electoral and Democratic Services Manager, management oversight of Democratic Services has been provided on a temporary basis by the Principal Officer - Business Support Policy & Democratic Services. Given the significant new developments to be introduced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill it is necessary to establish permanent management capacity.
9. A revised structure has been created and this is set out in Appendix 2. The key changes are:
 - Establishment of a full-time Democratic Services Manager role;
 - Realignment of the existing Grade 5 role in the Service which is currently vacant to provide additional capacity to committee/Member services.
10. The changes proposed to the structure for Democratic Services can be delivered within the overall cash limit set across the budgets for the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer. A further assessment of resources will be needed when the Bill is enacted.

Financial Impact:

11. The financial costs of the above changes can be met within existing salary budgets across the responsibilities of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer.

Equality Impact Assessment:

12. No impact.

Workforce Impact:

13. These changes will provide for more manageable workloads for the Democratic Services workforce and also provide additional leadership and management capacity to implement the changes that will arise from the Bill and to prepare for the local government elections in 2022.

Risk Management:

14. Without these changes, staff morale is likely to deteriorate and the quality of the work undertaken is likely to reduce.

Legal Powers:

15. Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

Consultation:

16. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item. Democratic Services staff have been consulted about the proposals in accordance with the Council's Management of Change in Partnership Policy.

Recommendations:

17. That the Democratic Services Committee endorses the proposed structure set out in Appendix 2 and commends this change to Council.

Reason for Decision

18. To enable the Head of Democratic Services to discharge the statutory duty placed upon her as set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

Implementation of Decision:

19. After the three day call in period.

Appendices:

20. Appendix 1 – Current structure chart –
Appendix 2 – Proposed structure chart – March 2020

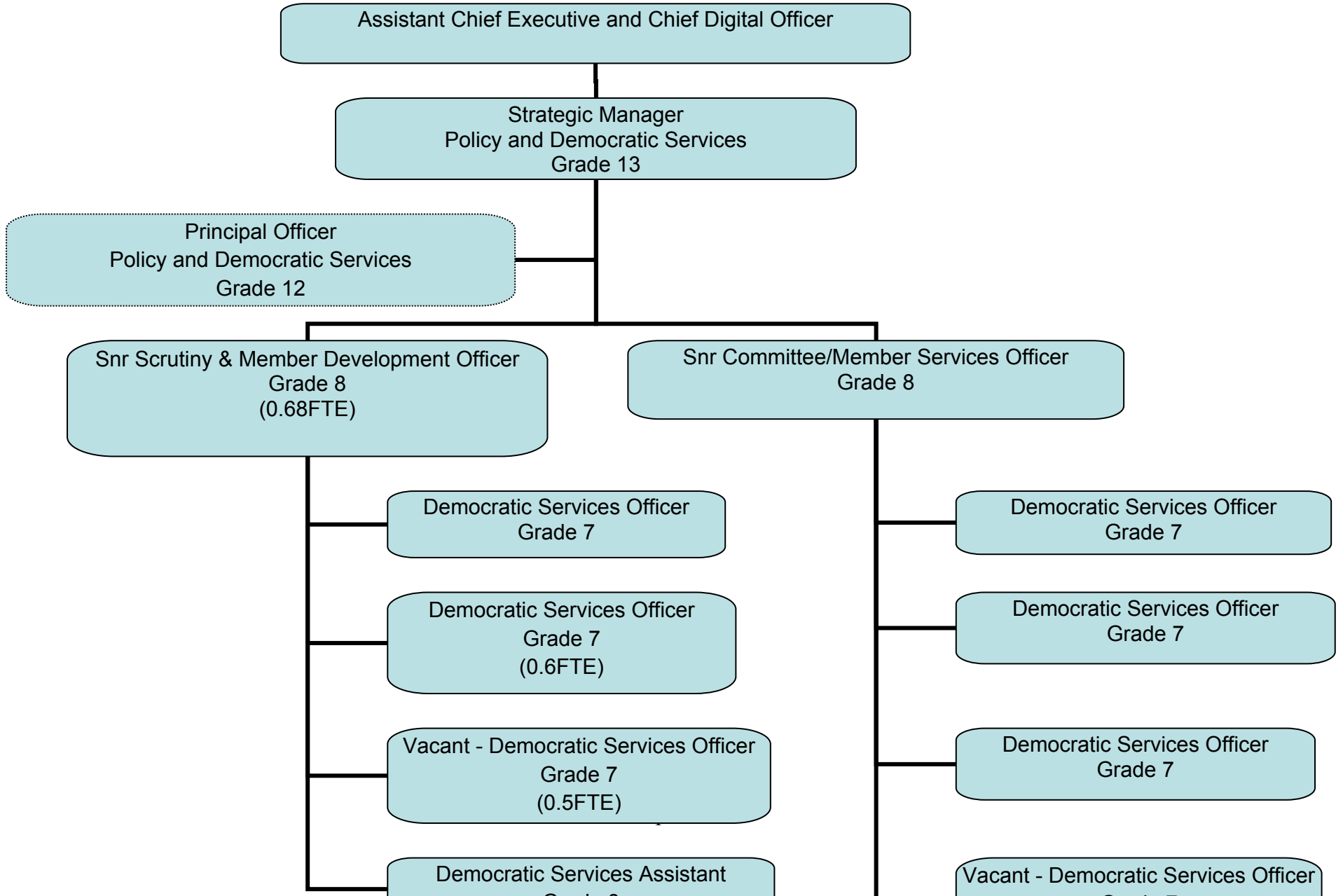
List of Background Papers:

21. None

Officer Contact:

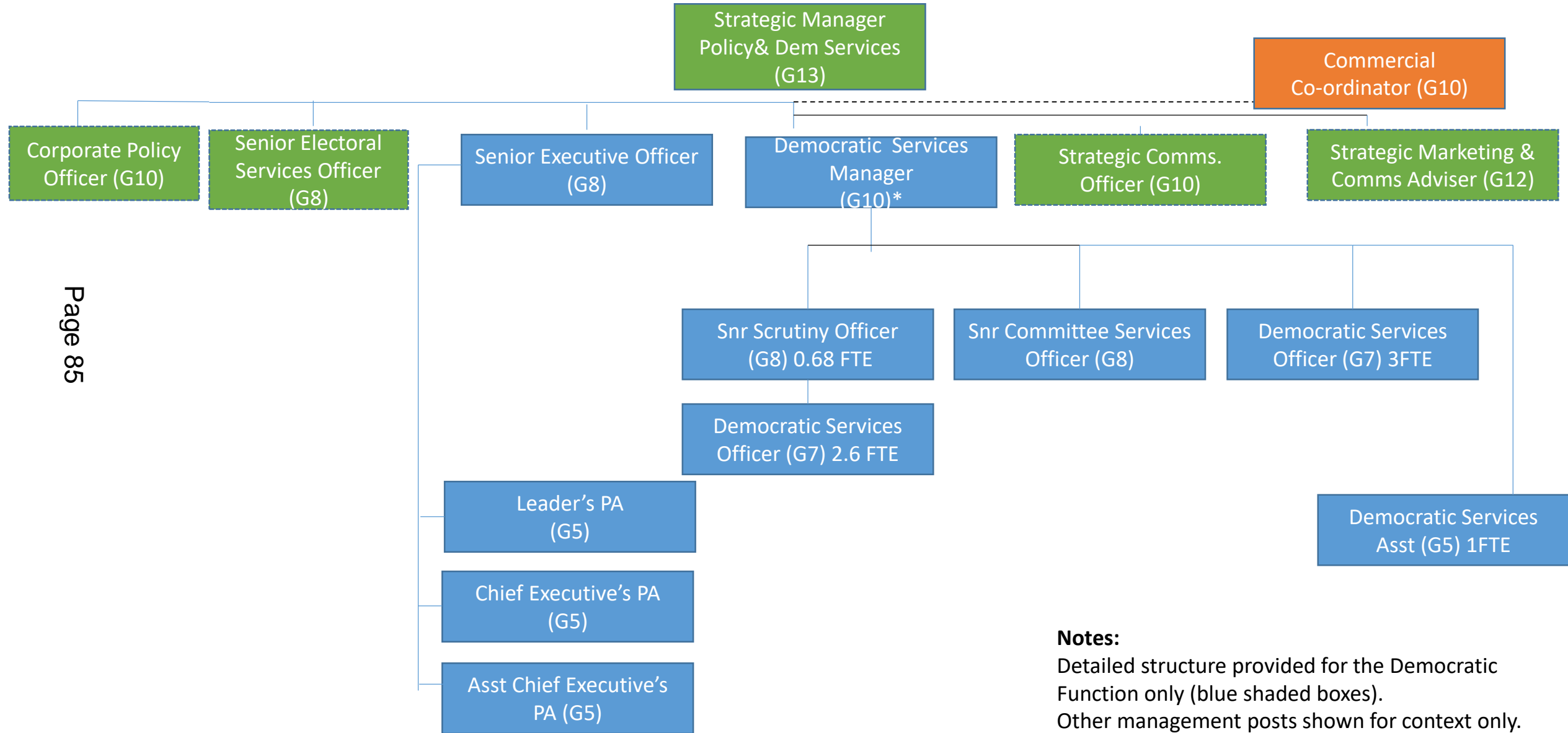
Mrs Karen Jones, Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer:
Tel:01639 763284 or e-mail: k.jones3@npt.gov.uk

Democratic Services - January 2019



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Policy and Democratic Services Division
Proposed Staffing Structure (February 2020)



Notes:

Detailed structure provided for the Democratic Function only (blue shaded boxes).
Other management posts shown for context only.

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**WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

MEETINGS TO START AT 9.30am AND FINISH AT 11.00am

DATE	Agenda Items	Type - Decision, Monitoring or Information	Rotation - Topical, Annual, Biannual, Quarterly, Monthly	Contact Officer/Head of Service
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<p>14 November 2019</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IT Reference Group Update• Disability Audit Update• Annual Member Survey• IRPW Draft Report• Update following meeting with the IRPW on 22 October 2019 on the Draft Annual Report			
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<p>3rd March 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment of Resources for Democratic Services• IRPW Final Report• Webcasting• Public Participation• Member Training and Development Priorities for 2020/21			
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